

SUBTHEME THREE

**STRENGTHENING CAPACITY OF LOCAL UNIVERSITIES TO
PROMOTE, FACILITATE AND TEACH RURAL INNOVATION
PROCESSES**

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Abstract (E3005)

Previous approaches in Agricultural Research and Development have had limited and often unsustainable impact. This can be attributed to limited active participation by a broad range of stakeholders necessary for effective innovation delivery systems. The Government of Kenya recognizes the need for collective action between and within institutions to achieve sustainable and positive impact in the agricultural sector with resulting development and change. Agricultural faculties need to take their rightful role in bringing desired change in the agricultural sector. However, the current capacity (knowledge, skills, mindsets, attitudes) of these faculties to effect the desired changes is limited because of a common culture of individuals working alone- the “lone-ranger syndrome”. This makes meaningful inter-institutional partnerships and engagement with communities difficult to achieve. Therefore, an EDULINK supported initiative called SUCAPRI (Strengthening University Capacity for promoting, facilitating and teaching rural innovation processes) was initiated in 2008. The main objective of SUCAPRI is to strengthen the capacity of local universities to participate in decentralised national agricultural research systems, and to prepare professionals with the competencies needed to promote agricultural innovation through collective action of multi- stakeholders. The methodology adopted in the initiative is centered on developing change agents in participating universities through a series of learning cycles based both on theories of learning and practical experience. The initiative has achieved the following: built capacity of 21 academic staff from four universities (Nairobi, Egerton, Jomo Kenyatta and Kenyatta) on personal and team skills, communication, facilitating learning and action research; facilitated multistakeholder platforms in mango, dairy goat and potato value chains; facilitated stakeholder engagement in curricula development; improved intra-and inter-institutional networking among participating staff. The major lesson learnt is that working together does not come naturally for most people and therefore there is need for capacity building in collective action.

Key words: SUCAPRI, learning, innovation, networking, stakeholders, facilitation