New partnership to accelerate innovation in African farming

The Global Forum for Innovations in Agriculture (GFIA Africa) has announced a new partnership agreement with the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), a joint institution of the African, Caribbean, Pacific (ACP) States and the EU.

Salvatore Vuono via freedigitalphotos.net

Strengthening agricultural

"We believe this new partnership strengthens our overall objective for GFIA Africa, to demonstrate how innovation can provide technologies that accelerate agricultural productivity and improve nutrition and social prosperity in developing countries," says Mark Beaumont, GFIA project director. "CTA, through its mission to advance food security, increase prosperity and sound natural resource management in ACP countries, shares many of GFIA Africa's objectives," he says.

Through its partnership with GFIA, the CTA will facilitate a comprehensive programme of events at GFIA Africa when it launches at the Durban Exhibition Centre in KwaZulu-Natal from 1 - 2 December this year. "We are pleased to partner with GFIA Africa for this event as our organisation remains dedicated to strengthening agricultural policy processes, improving agricultural value chains for small-scale producers and enhancing knowledge management capacities for rural development," says Michael Hailu, director of CTA. "We are always looking for opportunities to partner with initiatives that empower agricultural and rural communities in ACP countries with the knowledge and skills they need to fight poverty and hunger," he says.

CTA will be hosting 120 African farmer organisation delegates at GFIA Africa events, which will run in collaboration with some of CTA's long-standing associate farmer organisations, including the Pan African Farmers Organisation, Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions, Eastern Africa's Farmers Federation and the Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organisations of West Africa.

Addressing challenges and opportunities for agribusiness

The CTA-hosted events will be focused on helping farmers to commercialise their operations - to help small-holders evolve their farms into small businesses, to help commercial farmers scale up their productions with new technologies and improved access to markets and finance. Sessions will include a Continental Briefing for farmer representative organisations, a Plug and Play Day featuring the latest ICTs used in agriculture, as well as a Hackathon and Taster Sessions for organisations interested in learning more about the applications of social media.

"Through a series of panel discussions and interactive demonstrations, the CTA-hosted sessions will address the challenges and opportunities for agribusiness offered by innovative technologies in Africa," says Hailu. "Topics will include: climate-resilience agriculture in Africa, demonstrating the potential of ICTs to leapfrog African agriculture, and the role of

capacity building, entrepreneurship support and developing young talent."

Promoting the use of environmentally sustainable innovations

GFIA's African debut in December is being presented by International Events Organiser, Turret Media and will follow a similar format to its international predecessor events held annually in Abu Dhabi. In addition to an international exhibition, the GFIA Africa conference programme includes a powerful mix of multinational, governmental, academic, not-for-profit and commercial partners.

"The launch of GFIA Africa is driven by a growing commitment from governments in Africa to promote the use of environmentally sustainable innovations as a means of increasing agricultural productivity to end poverty," says Beaumont. "GFIA Africa will bring industry leaders from across the continent together to facilitate conversations and develop strategies to implement real change in agriculture that promotes sustainability, long-term productivity and profitability for all those along the value chain," he concluded.

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