

Job Description

DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH & INNOVATION

1. Background

The Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa is an Inter-Governmental Organization that was established by National Agricultural Research Institutes (NARIs) from 10 countries in Eastern and Central Africa in 1994. Since then, its membership has reached 15 Member States, namely: Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Kenya, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. ASARECA's core mandate is to undertake Agricultural Research of Development (AR4D) on behalf of its Member States in partnership with NARIs. It aims to contribute to increased productivity, commercialization and competitiveness of the agricultural sector in Eastern and Central Africa (ECA) so as to ensure sustained economic growth and development.

ASARECA's interventions are guided by its 10-year Strategy and Results Framework (ASRF: 2019-2029) as well as its second Medium-Term Operational Plan (MTOP II: 2024-2028). The Strategy identifies four key intervention areas that significantly impact the sub-region, namely: (i) transformative capacity strengthening and integration; (ii) agricultural transformation technologies and innovations; (iii) enabling policy, functional markets, market access and institutional arrangements; and (iv) knowledge and information management.

The mandate of the rebranded, refreshed and repositioned ASARECA is to: (i) identify regional research priorities and opportunities through credible, authentic and participatory strategic visioning; (ii) commission, broker and manage strategic research partnerships to address identified regional priorities in the most effective, efficient and synergetic ways; (iii) nurture pathways for on-time delivery, spill over and scaling up of regional agricultural research results to deliver agricultural outcomes and impact; (iv) mobilize, allocate and manage regional AR4D investments to support generation of regional agricultural research public goods and services; and (v) monitor and evaluate returns on AR4D investment and repackage lessons and best practices for informed decision-making.

ASARECA works closely with Member States on priority activities such as: (i) coordinating generation, dissemination and uptake of technologies, innovations and management practices of priority commodities along selected value chains; (ii) enhancing capacity strengthening and partnerships development at systemic, organizational and individual level; (iii) coordinating policy analysis, advocacy and reforms; (iv) enhancing access to national and regional markets; (v) mitigating effects of climate change by supporting member countries to mitigate and adapt where necessary; (vi) enhancing market linkages and trade at the national and regional level; and (vii) facilitating communication, information and knowledge management.

2. Overall Purpose

The Director of Research and Innovation will be central to the implementation of all the programs, projects, and initiatives implemented by ASARECA. The role will seek to enhance the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of action research and innovation, overseeing the work performed within the program areas to achieve ASARECA's goals articulated in the

Strategic Plan, A-SRF: 2019-2028. The role will provide direction to the Programs Unit and its staff.

The incumbent will also lead and coordinate sustained resource mobilization for implementation of assorted priority programs, strengthening effective partnerships; and facilitating planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of critical impacts of regional agricultural research programs. He/she must demonstrate commitment to coordinating capacity development programs that maximize individual and institutional goals across the organisation, including best practices in science, technology and innovation.

3. Key roles and responsibilities

Leadership and managerial roles and responsibilities

- Provide leadership to and coordinate day-to-day management of programs, including managing regional programs, projects, and initiatives.
- Manage and supervise the technical program team, including monitoring staff performance, and development activities.
- Facilitate staff administrative duties such as approving overtime and duty travel for Program team.
- Provide effective guidance and coaching of theme managers and program officers and assist them in developing their skills and abilities to ensure optimal performance.
- Undertake budgetary planning and authorisation of program funds.
- Provide strategic direction and vision for the Association's research and innovation agenda, aligning with organizational goals and priorities.
- Lead the development and execution of research projects and programs, ensuring they are scientifically rigorous, innovative, and address key agricultural challenges facing the region.
- Foster a culture of innovation within the organization, promoting creativity, experimentation, and the adoption of new technologies and approaches to enhance agricultural productivity, sustainability, and resilience.

Resource Mobilization

- Lead and contribute to development of strategic initiatives for resource mobilization efforts, and participate in specific resource mobilization activities, including developing and strengthening donor relations.
- Direct the preparation of proposals for resource mobilization efforts and review proposals for relevance, quality, and scope in contributing to ASARECA's goals and objectives.
- Coordinate donor mapping and scanning to identify relevant ones to pursue and engage.

Strategic Planning and Policy Making

- Contribute to the development and monitoring of ASARECA's vision, mission, goals and strategies for research and development and ensure that targeted impacts are achieved. This entails contributing to the development of programs and projects' vision, goals and strategies for research and development; assisting in the development of program operational plans; and ensuring these targets are met.
- Ensure the quality, integrity, and ethical conduct of research activities, including adherence to relevant regulations, standards, and best practices.
- Contribute to and provide guidance in the development and institutionalisation of policies, procedures, processes, and infrastructure (databases, information systems, etc.) for ASARECA.

Program Management

- Lead overall development of program of work and budget for ASARECA's research and development activities.
- Provide leadership in planning and coordinating overall research development activities within and across the programs. This entails encouraging and ensuring the coordination and alignment of goals, strategies and activities amongst the programs and projects.
- Oversee and contribute to the development and update of the Association's policies, manuals, and protocols regarding programs (i.e., M&E, MIS, etc.).
- Organise and conduct regular program reviews and evaluation at the project level, program level and overall organisational level.
- Develop and drive the implementation of scientific standards and processes to assure high-quality outputs and achievement of targeted impacts.
- Oversee the implementation of impact assessments for the ASARECA portfolio. This includes overseeing the development of associated Terms of Reference for and commissioning of External Independent Evaluators / Evaluation Team.

Reporting

- Coordinate the preparation of semi- & annual program Progress/Performance reports.
- Ensure the preparation of high quality and timely reports to donors. This involves reviewing, editing, and monitoring reports prepared by program managers in consultation with the Head of Finance.
- Prepare ASARECA's Annual Report and other Technical Reports for review by the ED.

Liaison Role

- Proactively contribute to the establishment and maintenance of strategic alliances and partnerships, which involves preparing and delivering presentations and/or chairing sessions in regional and international fora.
- Represent ASARECA in a range of regional, continental, and global fora of strategic concern to the achievement of ASARECA's vision, goals and strategies.

4. Education requirement and job experience/qualifications

- Minimum of a PhD qualification in Agricultural Sciences or any other agricultural related field.
- At least fifteen (15) years of technical agricultural research experience, eight (8) of which should be in senior management and coordination role at regional research systems in Africa.

5. Additional Skills

Besides these qualification requirements, the post holder should possess proven and demonstrated:

- Experience of resource mobilization, including clear understanding of compliance mechanisms and program management cycles of major development partners funding agricultural research and development in Africa in general and ECA sub-region in particular.
- High level of adaptation, creativity and innovation in organizing and providing leadership in the implementation of the program's activities to ensure that multiple stakeholders with various interests and motivations working in various areas and disciplines of the program contribute collectively to success in delivering program results.

- Commitment to coordinating capacity development programs that maximize individual and institutional goals across the organisation, including best practices in science, technology and innovation.
- A successful track record in setting priorities and delivering concrete results.
- Deep knowledge of the external environment, particularly in terms of priorities, program and expectations from the various stakeholders: policymakers, regional and international institutions i.e. Regional Economic Communities (COMESA, EAC, IGAD, ECCAS), NEPAD-CAADP, FARA, AUC, UN, CGIAR, etc.).
- Analytical, organisational and problem-solving skills which support and enable sound decision making.
- Excellent communication and relationship building skills with an ability to negotiate and work with a variety of internal and external stakeholders.
- Experience in working in a rapidly changing environment as well as leading multi-disciplinary teams of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds.
- Personal qualities of integrity, credibility and dedication to the mission of ASARECA and agricultural development in the ECA sub-region.
- Track record of management in a regional setting including management of human and financial resources, among others.
- Knowledge of French language is an added advantage.

6. Supervision and work centre:

The post holder reports directly to the Executive Director, who serves as his supervisor. The work centre for this position is in Entebbe, Uganda.

7. Contacts

Internal contacts:

- Executive Director – provides updates or progress reports on on-going initiatives (frequent);
- Theme Managers – program development and implementation; budget monitoring (frequent);
- Head of Finance – Financial issues relating to programs and projects (frequent)
- Procurement Officer – Contracts, terms of reference for consultancy services and supply of goods/equipment (frequent)
- Head of Human Resources and Administration – staff issues (regularly).

External contacts:

- Donor / Development partners – supply funding; wanting to visit the Secretariat; report reviews (frequent).
- National Agricultural Research Systems in member States (frequent).
- CGIAR system and other technical partners at both regional and international arena – collaboration (frequent).

8. Work Environment

This job involves frequent travel for projects development, monitoring and participation in various fora exposing the post holder to a significant level of hazard and security risk. While in the office, the working environment is safe. The job involves frequent work beyond normal working hours at headquarters and travel over weekends.