

Job Description

Theme Manager – Policy, Markets and Transformative Institutions

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: 2019-2028) 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

Reporting to the Director of Research and Innovation, the job holder will be responsible for providing leadership in implementation of the *Enabling Policy Environment, Functional Markets and Transformative Institutions* Thematic Area. He/she will be responsible for providing leadership and operational guidance for all aspects of delivering on the Thematic Area and reporting as per the guidance and procedures of the Operation Manual. The incumbent will collaborate closely with the Theme Manager: M&E & Knowledge Management to support data collection, analysis and dissemination as well as ensure effective management of the collected data.

The ideal candidate must be organized and detail-oriented, comfortable working with diverse teams and must possess skills in program development and management. Additionally, they should have experience in policy, forecasting and foresight analysis. They should demonstrate advocacy capabilities for creating enabling environments in markets and trade sector; as well as experience in engagement the private sector and wider stakeholder networks in national and multi-country dialogues and other policy-enactment processes.

3. Duties and responsibilities

Theme development and management

- Provide overall strategic, technical and analytical leadership of the Thematic Area by enhancing operationalization of an enabling policy environment for the member countries.
- Provide intellectual leadership in the implementation of regional sub-projects to ensure quality and relevance of research and lead preparation and finalization of regional sub-projects, work plans and budgets for activities on trade, agricultural markets and associated policies.
- Prepare consolidated synthesis and technical reports on the Thematic Area that shows impacts and overall performance for timely decision making.
- Coordinate strengthening, establishment, convening and technical backstopping of regional policy working groups at national and regional levels.
- Facilitate development of priority agenda for policy harmonization towards improved technology transfer, commercialization and trade across participating countries.
- Strengthen capacity for generating and making available evidence to inform policy action on regional agricultural markets and trade in technologies and products thereof.
- Fast track development and implementation of functional framework for intellectual property rights management.
- Identify and strengthen capacity of the national teams in policy formulation, analysis, advocacy as well as market research and analysis.
- Coordinate establishment of linkages with regional trade facilitation projects on non-tariff barriers to trade as well as implementation of measures for their reduction and elimination.
- Provide technical leadership on analysis of priority value chains to inform development of business and investment plans for upgrading farm-level capacities to engage with agribusinesses.
- Cultivate transformative partnerships with research, donors, policy, and development organizations, driving collaborative efforts for thematic and institutional goals.

- Identify and prioritize areas for the theme, potentially modifying current focus areas.

Resource Mobilization & Partnerships

- Coordinate resource mobilization and effective partnerships for the promotion of the Thematic Area as well as for the Organization.
- Backstop and foster effective linkages and multi-stakeholder partnerships with RECs, private sector, academia, and public policy institutions, to catalyze policy approval processes, enactment and domestication.
- Oversee project sequencing, content, and implementation for sustainable funding, staff development, and policy contribution.

Project monitoring

- Work closely with the Theme Manager: M&E & Knowledge Management to support data collection, analysis and dissemination.
- Effectively manage data and knowledge.
- Safeguard evidence integrity and align scientific outputs with staffing and funding levels.
- Manage staff issues, staff performance, identify and ensure monthly planning of activities for administrative staff.

Reporting

- Ensure accurate and timely reporting for decision making.
- Prepare quarterly, semi-annual and annual technical reports.

Communication and coordination

- Provide intellectual leadership in dissemination of research findings and other relevant information on technology generation, transfer and commercialization through appropriate media.
- Ensure close coordination and frequent communication with national and regional teams.
- Develop and maintain transparent and honest communication and relationships.
- Represent ASARECA at high-level meetings (e.g. Ministerial meetings at all levels).
- Perform other duties as required

4. Education requirement and job experience/qualifications

- PhD in Agriculture, Policy Management, Biophysical Sciences, Agricultural Economics, Natural Resources Management, or any other agricultural related field.
- At least ten (10) years, technical agricultural research experience, six (6) of which should be in a senior management and coordination role in national and regional research systems in Africa.
- Experience in policy, forecasting and foresight analysis; advocacy for enabling environment on markets and trade; and in engagement of private sector or wider stakeholder networks in national and multi-country dialogues and other policy-enactment processes.
- Proven experience in resource mobilization, including a clear understanding of compliance mechanisms and management cycles of major development partners that fund AR4D in ECA sub-region;

- High level of adaptation, creativity and innovation in providing leadership in implementation of programs and projects leading to tangible regional and national public goods.
- Deep knowledge of the external environment, particularly in terms of priorities, program and expectations from the various stakeholders including policymakers, regional and international institutions, and donors.
- Analytical, organisational and problem-solving skills which support and enable sound decision making coupled with successful track record in setting priorities and delivering concrete results;
- 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.
- Knowledge of French language is an added advantage.

5. Duration of services

The initial period of the services will be three (3) years, renewable upon Satisfactory Performance and availability of funds.

6. Duty Station

The Theme Manager will work full time in the project office located at the ASARECA Secretariat, Entebbe, Uganda.

7. Supervision

Reports to the Director of Research and Innovation.