

TRAINING AGREEMENT WITH AFRICA – 'HSWT INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL'

BACKGROUND/STARTING SITUATION

African agriculture is faced with a multitude of challenges. These include growing demand for food due to the increase in the global population and limited space for arable and pasture land, scarcity of resources, low productivity in small-scale agriculture, food spoilage after harvest during storage and transport, and the global inequalities in terms of distributing the food that has been produced.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

With this in mind, Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences (HSWT) has set itself the goal of assisting with the development of the knowledge society in Africa, working together with the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) on the project '[Green Innovation Centres for the Agriculture and Food Sector](#)' (GIC) and the special initiative '[ONE WORLD – No Hunger](#)'. The 'Training Agreement with Africa' (AmA) is funded as part of the GIC. The countries participating in the GIC project are shown in Figure 1.

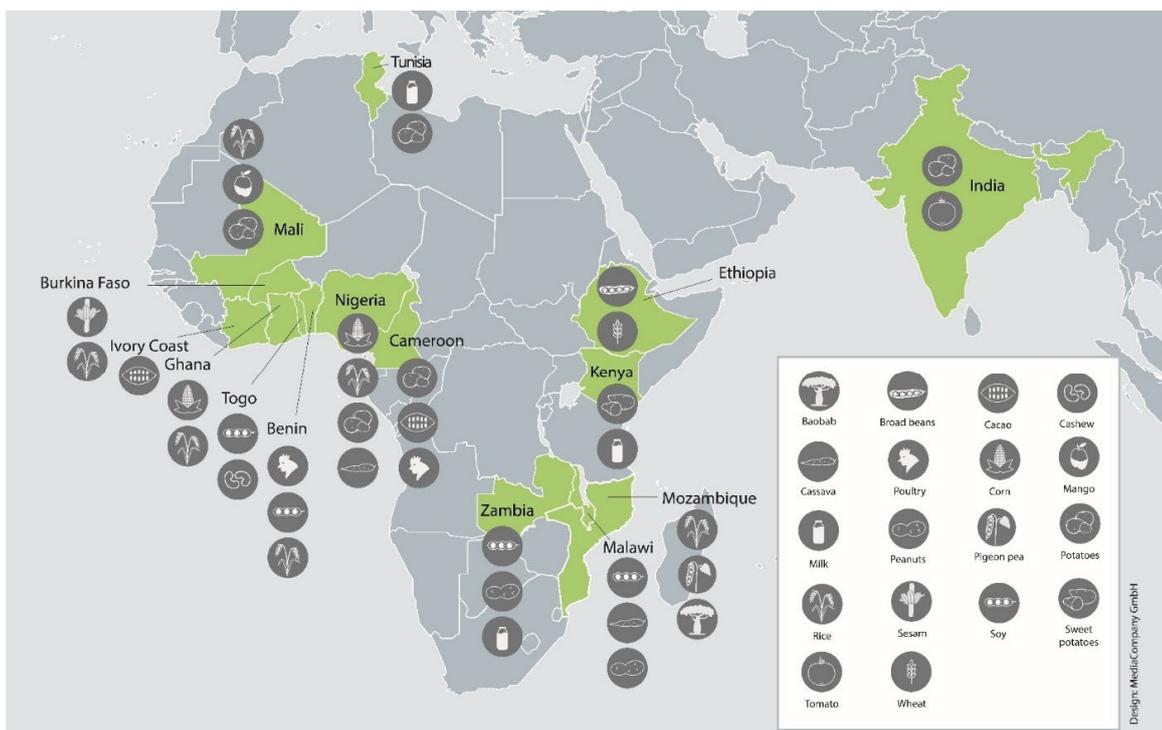


Fig. 1: Countries participating in the GIC project

This project will contribute towards providing the basis for a stable and functioning society while laying the foundation for a successful business hub. This should help pave the way to creating new jobs, supporting small-scale farming operations in their efforts to sustainably increasing production and income, and shifting value creation to rural areas. HSWT places a firm emphasis on practice-oriented teaching and research in the field of life sciences and technologies in line with the motto 'Applied Sciences for Life'. At its Weihenstephan and Triesdorf campuses, the university offers one of the most modern agricultural education and training centres in the country and, indeed, the world. HSWT is a successful example of a modern and goal-oriented agricultural educational model with high scientific standards. Adapting the German model of universities of applied sciences to the local situation in the relevant countries is a high priority both for Germany and for the target countries. A key element of this concept is the focus on practical training as a basis for understanding processes, for example in agricultural enterprises. In many African countries, these practical units are not included in agricultural higher education courses. Agricultural education in Africa is often theoretical in nature and there is less focus on practical elements. For this reason, high applicability, the direct integration of practice and theory and the variety of training opportunities offered by HSWT are of great importance in cooperating with African partners. Developing degree programmes with a high practical relevance, including company internships, represents a huge organisational and cultural challenge, but is essential to the further development of African agriculture. HSWT's wide-ranging experience and practice-oriented network are particularly useful in this regard.



Fig. 2: Postgraduate course 2018



Fig. 3: Practical training with Dr Walther in a grain field

OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

The 'HSWT International School' is responsible for the content and organisation of the 'Training Agreement with Africa'. The training agreement is based on the five pillars shown in Figure 4. The illustration shows three key measures that are being implemented as part of the first funding phase and two possible further measures to be implemented in the event of additional funding. There is particular emphasis on the exchange of experiences and ideas between the partner universities and institutions, as well as networking among the partners themselves.

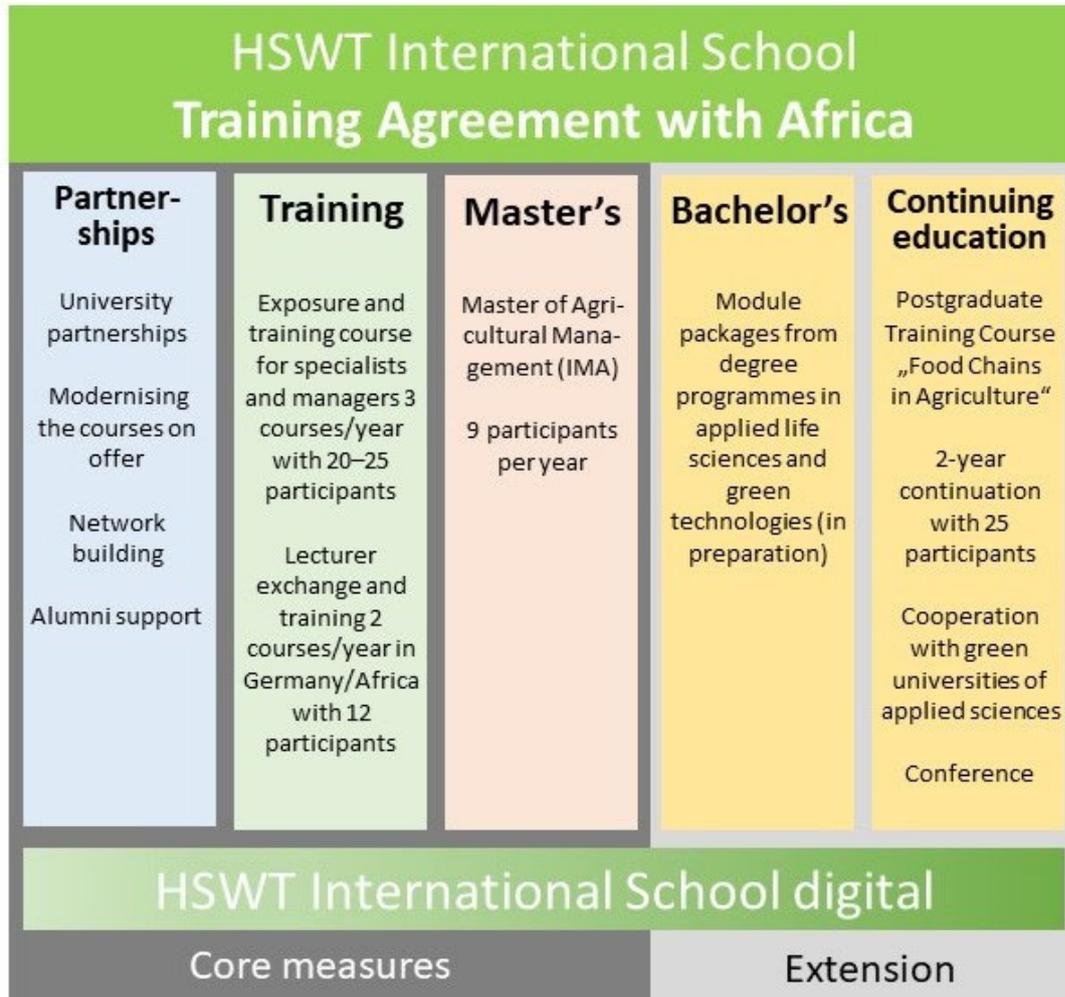


Fig. 4: Five pillars under the umbrella of the 'HSWT International School'

The first pillar is formed of partnerships. These are used to build on the relationships between HSWT and the African partners and the work in common areas of interest by organising staff exchanges between the universities and establishing long-term collaboration through training and education. These university partnerships form the basis for running the postgraduate course, the International Master's in Agricultural Management (IMA) and the alumni network. The cooperation with partner universities focuses in particular on the modernisation of educational concepts. The goal of the partnerships is also to build networks and to establish long-term contact with and between alumni. A number of African partner universities were identified during a series of trips in 2019 and 2020: Arsi University, Bahir Dar University, and Hawassa University – all in Ethiopia – as well as Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (JOOUST) and Maseno University, both of which are in Kenya.



Fig. 5: Wheat cultivation with traditional farming methods is common in the Ethiopian region of Arsi



Fig. 6: Prof. Ralf Schlauderer presenting the IMA programme at JOOUST University in Kenya

The second pillar includes training in the form of exposure and lecturer courses. Exposure courses for specialists and managers last for one to two weeks. The focus here is on the exchange between specialists from the partner countries, the experience gained in Germany and transferring knowledge to the partner countries. The certificate for this course is issued in conjunction with the GIZ. The lecturer exchange and training programme focuses on modern learning methods and exchanging ideas and concepts. The aim is to convey modern methods of practical education. Each year, a course is offered for 12 participants each in Germany and in an African partner country. Target groups are teaching staff in the partner universities, primarily younger and/or female staff. The intention is to train a total of 120 participants in five-day courses by 2022. HSWT issues a certificate to course participants.

The third pillar relates to the Master's degree programme 'International Master's in Agricultural Management (IMA)'. HSWT has been offering this degree programme for 20 years, primarily in cooperation with Eastern European partner universities. The network is now being expanded to Africa as part of the Training Agreement with Africa. By 2023, the intention is to have 18 participants from African partner universities taking part in the practical semester of the degree programme, with 12 of those students then proceeding to take the Master's degree. Students successfully completing the entire course will be awarded a Master's degree from HSWT. There are also plans to introduce the International Master's in Agricultural Management at the universities and universities of applied sciences in Africa. The IMA has been publicly commended on several occasions and in 2008 was awarded the quality label for international Master's degree

programmes by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in conjunction with the Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft (Donors' Association for the Promotion of Sciences and Humanities in Germany).

HSWT International School digital is a multi-disciplinary initiative. Providing teaching materials to prepare for courses in advance and for follow-up afterwards via a learning platform within the context of blended learning is an essential part of the intensive support provided to course participants.

The fourth pillar covers international, English-speaking bachelor's degree programmes in the field of life sciences and green technologies. The first module packages for the Agriculture degree programme at the Triesdorf campus were launched in a pilot phase during the summer semester of 2019.

The fifth pillar focuses on the area of continuing education. One of the subareas is the postgraduate course 'Food Chains in Agriculture'. The five-month course is held each year from 2018 to 2022, with 25 African participants joining each year. The programme is aimed at Master's graduates from African countries. The aim is to understand agricultural value-added chains in all their complexity. Students also learn how to combine this knowledge with their own experiences in designing and managing chain models. The ideas generated here are intended to then be transposed to the participants' home countries. The fact that there is a special focus on the practical orientation in this course is reflected in the numerous visits to agricultural businesses, institutions and companies. Once they have returned to their home countries, the intention is for course graduates to work with German and international institutions for development cooperation to find possible applications for the project proposals. Support will be provided for the best participants in the practical implementation of their project work in the form of prize money from the BayWa Foundation, for example. Another subarea of continuing education is the cooperation between HSWT and the 'green technical schools'. The 'Grüne Fachschule (green technical school)' working group meets once a year to exchange expertise. In addition to that, the conferences represent a third area of continuing education. In the second half of the 'Training Agreement with Africa', a conference focusing on applied education in agriculture and related subjects will be organised at HSWT. The objective of this conference is to exchange experience in teaching with a high level of applicability and to facilitate network building.

In summary, the 'Training Agreement with Africa' provides new perspectives, both for students and for African agriculture. And, last but not least, this unique knowledge exchange promotes international economic cooperation between the countries involved.