



Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale
et de la Recherche Scientifique
Commission Nationale de la Science, la Technologie et l'Innovation

Press Release

Scientists and policy makers discuss plans to develop a national bioeconomy strategy for Burundi to boost economic growth

Tuesday, 17 October 2023, Bujumbura, Burundi. The Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, Republic of Burundi, through the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (CNSTI) together with partners – the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (*icipe*)/BioInnovate Africa, the East African Science and Technology Commission (EASTECO), and the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) Africa Centre – are holding a high-level policy dialogue on bioeconomy in Bujumbura. The policy dialogue is about the role of sustainable bioeconomy in future economic growth in Eastern Africa and Burundi, and the need for strategies to support its development.

According to experts, bioeconomy is understood as the use of scientific knowledge to add social and economic value to biological resources like plants, animals, insects and microbes among others, while ensuring a clean environment including air, water, and land. In 2022, the East African Community (EAC) passed a regional bioeconomy strategy that supports sustainable agriculture and food systems, sustainable industrialisation, renewable energy and overall health and well-being of the people in the region. Globally, more than 70 countries have developed dedicated bioeconomy strategies to spur economic growth while conserving biodiversity, lowering carbon emissions, and meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

“As for Burundi, a national bioeconomy strategy would align well with the nation’s vision of becoming an Emerging Country by 2040, and Developed Country by 2060,” says Hon. Prof. François Havyarimana, Minister of National Education and Scientific Research, Burundi.

Why bioeconomy in East Africa?

Bioeconomy is a major strategic driver for the transformation of biobased sectors for sustainable economic growth and development. A central feature of bioeconomy is that scientific research, knowledge, and innovation can be applied to diversify sources of growth in the production of food, feed, fibre and fuel, as well as to produce a wide range of agro-industrial and value-added products.



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Dr Philip Osano, Director, SEI – Africa Centre, says that the development of a bioeconomy in East Africa, although in its early stages, provides the region with the prospects of using its biological resources to create sustainable economic growth. He further says that bioeconomy will contribute to improved capability of the region's industrial and biomanufacturing sectors, new investment opportunities in research and development will be made possible, and it will support regulatory and policy advancements. “Additionally, the bioeconomy is essential for reducing climate change, coping with its effects, and preserving biodiversity,” says Dr Osano.

The East African Community considers bioeconomy as one of the ways of unlocking potential of the rural and urban economy, and creation of new jobs, while ensuring a healthy environment and food and nutrition security.

“Countries that are prioritising bioeconomy development are likely to reap its rewards early and align themselves with other countries in the world investing in the bioeconomy,” says Dr Julius Ecuru, a principal scientist at *icipe*, and Manager of the BioInnovate Africa regional programme.

The process of nationalising the regional bioeconomy strategy have already begun in several East Africa members states like Rwanda and Uganda, and regional partners like Ethiopia.

A bioeconomy strategy for Burundi

The policy dialogue constitutes an important milestone in contextualising bioeconomy to the needs of the region and to Burundi. East Africa member countries' also see it as a way to foster regional collaboration in science and innovation.

“This policy dialogue highlights the importance of national bioeconomy strategies, and shares experiences, best practices and steps required for a country like Burundi to develop its bioeconomy strategy,” says Prof. Juma Shabani, Chair, Governing Board, EASTECO.

A dedicated bioeconomy strategy for Burundi will go a long way in supporting already ongoing bioeconomy projects in the country such as the BioInnovate Africa supported rhizobia-mycorrhizae-based biofertilizer for improved food production, providing biodegradable alternatives like carrier bags from banana fibre, and improved health through nano encapsulated bromelain and artemisinin based combination therapy, as well as novel plant based compounds for controlling malaria transmitting mosquito vectors. These projects and



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many other supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) through *icipe*/BioInnovate Africa, illustrates bioeconomy in action in Eastern Africa.

Prof Tatien Masharabu, Permanent Executive Secretary for the Burundi CNSTI and co-convenor of the policy dialogue, is optimistic that a science and innovation-driven bioeconomy strategy will bring more opportunities for Burundian academics, and private sector to work together to develop competitive products and services for the country and regional markets.

Notes for Editors

The **Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, Republic of Burundi** (<https://mesrs.gov.bi/>) is the government agency responsible for overseeing higher education and scientific research in Burundi. The ministry plays a crucial role in shaping the country's education system and ensuring that it meets the needs of the population.

The **Burundi National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation** (<https://cnsti.bi/>) regulate and assure quality in the science, technology, and innovation sector and advise the Government of the Republic of Burundi in matters related thereto.

The **East Africa Science and Technology Commission** (<https://easteco.org/>) is an Institution of the East African Community (EAC). Its aim is to coordinate and facilitate the activities of the EAC partner states and national science and technology institutions to promote the development and application of science, technology and innovation in all its aspects.

BioInnovate Africa (<https://bioinnovate-africa.org/>) is an eastern Africa regional innovation-driven bioeconomy initiative supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and implemented as a Programme of *icipe* based in Nairobi, Kenya. BioInnovate Africa aims to strengthen the capacity of universities, research institutes and firms in Eastern Africa to commercialise bio-based inventions and innovative research ideas and technologies by funding 20 bio-based innovation projects. The initiative's strategy also includes developing a knowledge-based bioeconomy in eastern Africa. This is built on the premise that collaboration at the national and regional levels, and between researchers and private sector partners, is the surest way to translate scientific outputs into usable, and commercially scalable products and technologies.



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The **International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology** (<http://www.icipe.org/>) headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, is the only research institution in Africa working primarily on insects and other arthropods. *icipe* mission is to ensure better food security, health and livelihoods, by producing world-class knowledge and then developing solutions that are environmentally friendly, accessible, affordable and easy-to-use by communities. These objectives are delivered through four thematic areas — Human Health, Animal Health, Plant Health and Environmental Health, providing a platform to build the capacity and leadership of African scientists; enable collaboration with hundreds of researchers and partners across Africa and the world; as well as the effective transfer of technologies and strategies to end-users.

The **Stockholm Environment Institute** (<https://www.sei.org/>) is an international non-profit research and policy organisation that tackles environment and development challenges. The organisation connects science and decision-making to develop solutions for a sustainable future.