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Hochschule Neu-Ulm
University of Applied Sciences

ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN RWANDA THROUGH CIRCULAR AGRO-ECONOMY (RWANDA-CAE)

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Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)



Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development

**UNIVERSITY OF RWANDA
NEU-ULM UAS
SINA GERARD
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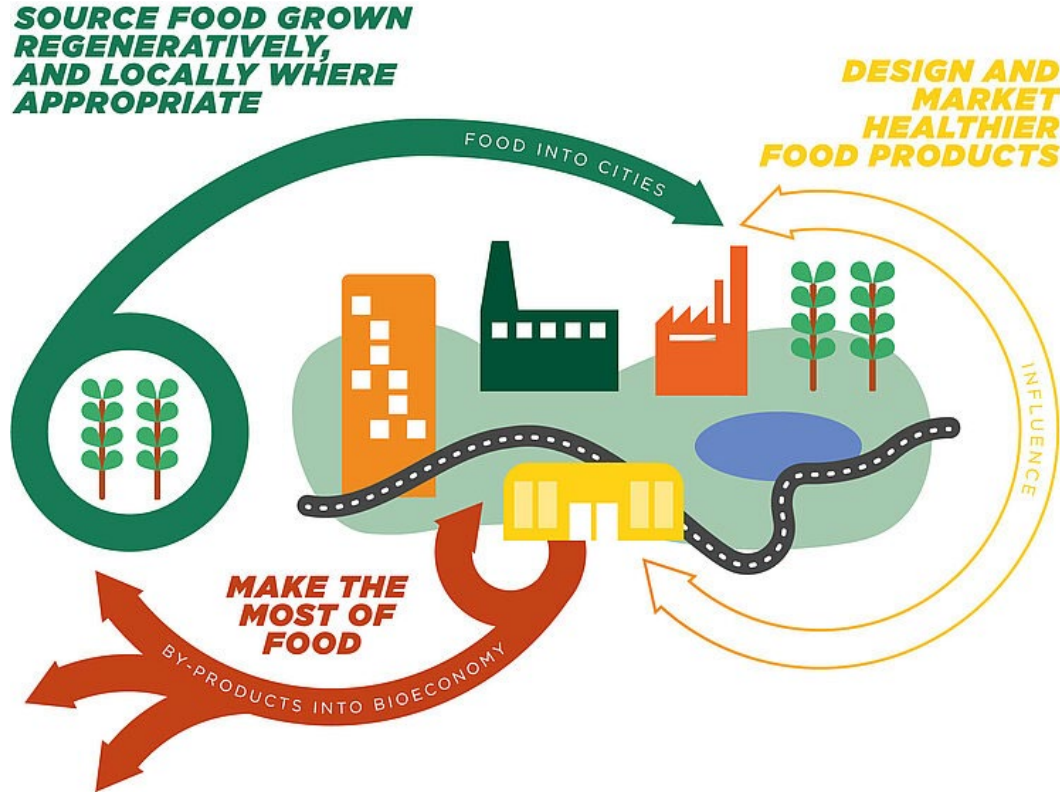
AGRICULTURE IN RWANDA

- Climate change crisis and their impacts on agriculture, food and nutrition: e.g., nearly 1/5 of population is food insecure, especially children <5yrs ([WFP 2022](#))
- In March 2023, over 40% annual basis inflation on food and non-alcoholic beverages ([NISR 2023](#))
- Policy response: transforming food systems through circular principles ([GoR 2022](#))



Agriculture in Rwanda
Photo by visitrwanda.com

CIRCULAR FOOD SYSTEMS



Circular food production (www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/explore/food-cities-the-circular-economy)

MAIN PROJECT DELIVERABLES

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FOLLOWING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AT UR

M.Sc. Circular Agro-Economy

- Interdisciplinary, practice-oriented, blended-learning based Master program
- **Content:** circular economy, agricultural economics, entrepreneurial thinking
- **Goal:** inspire circular business models
- **Project intervention:** joint development of the curriculum, training of lecturers
- **Envisioned start of first cohort:** September 2023

Certificate Courses

- Highly practice-oriented, e-learning-based certificate courses for circular agro-economy innovations
- **Target group:** professionals, practitioners, community decision makers, graduate students
- **Start:** 2022

FURTHER PROJECT OUTCOMES

- application-oriented field and market **research projects** regarding sustainable business models for the realization of agro-economy cycles in Rwanda
- expert **networks** of representatives of relevant institutions and industry players for circular economy innovations in Rwanda, East Africa and Germany
- **excursions** with HNU students to Rwanda → work as business consultants to refine Rwandan entrepreneurs' business models

Achieved milestones:

- ✓ Curriculum submitted for accreditation
- ✓ 30 lecturers trained
- ✓ 50 practitioners trained
- ✓ 1 university-industry conference in Kigali, 1 GIZ workshop upcoming
- ✓ 2 joint publications submitted, 2 in progress
- ✓ Network with 26 businesses and startups created



WHAT WORKS REALLY WELL?

- Dedicated and highly motivated partners
- Network-building with circular companies and startups – high interest in collaboration and exchange
- Policy support for circular economy and supportive regulations
- Collaboration with other actors in the ecosystem, e.g. GIZ, DAAD, relevant ministries, incubators
- Lecturers and students show interest in application-oriented teaching



CAN YOU SCALE-UP YOUR ACTIVITIES? IF SO, HOW?

- Potential for scalability is limited
- Bottlenecks:
 - Accreditation process is taking too long
 - Funding period is limited
 - The goal of having the first cohort graduate before the end of the project is in jeopardy
- Interdisciplinary projects at UR are costly because of the dispersed geography of campuses



WHAT REMAINS A CHALLENGE?

- Accreditation by HEC takes extremely long, duration of accreditation process is non-transparent; approval process within the University of Rwanda already took almost a full year after completion of the curriculum and other documents
- University of Rwanda is currently being restructured, which makes project implementation more difficult
- High turnover, especially at management levels, makes project implementation difficult
- Bureaucratic effort is very high
- No incentives for industry partners, their commitment depends on their goodwill only
- Researchers do not have experience in application-oriented research; promotion structures do not incentivize this



RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADVANCE APPLIED SCIENCE IN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

- Embed in nation-wide education and research policies
- Create incentives both for researchers and business partners
- Upskill researchers in application-oriented methods on a large scale

VISIT US ONLINE

<https://rwanda-cae.ur.ac.rw>

www.hnu.de/circular-agro-economy

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Photo by [Joel & Jasmin Førestbird](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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