



Media Statement (for the web and social media)

21 October 2020

Sustainable bioeconomy will bring new growth prospects in Eastern Africa

Nairobi, Kenya –Wednesday, 21 October 2020: The International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (*icipe*) through BioInnovate Africa Programme, together with the East African Science and Technology Commission (EASTECO) and partners, are holding the first Eastern Africa Bioeconomy Conference on 21 and 22 October 2020, with the theme ‘Bioeconomy growth prospects for Eastern Africa’.

Stakeholders from the region and around the world, including government officials, scientists, entrepreneurs, investors, and civil society actors, are converging on a virtual platform to discuss a strategy for sustainable bioeconomy development in Africa. New products and pilot commercial enterprises supported through *icipe*/BioInnovate Africa, will also be featured to showcase bio-based investment opportunities in the region.

Opportunities for economic diversification

Eastern Africa has a comparative advantage in developing a sustainable bioeconomy given its rich biological resource base. With science, value can be added to the biological resources, and waste streams generated can be turned to useful substances.

“Africa now has a chance to innovatively exploit its abundant biological resources into commercial ventures that will lead to inclusive growth and social development,” says Dr Segenet Kelemu, Director General, *icipe*. “It is one way to create new business prospects, jobs and economic diversification, especially for youth, women and farming communities who produce, or are custodians of most of the biological resources”.

A shared vision for sustainable bioeconomy

The region has come together to develop a regional strategy for a sustainable bioeconomy, consistent with efforts to achieve the SDGs 2030 and aspirations of the African Union Agenda 2063. The strategy will enable the region to have a shared vision of harnessing bioscience knowledge, and developing sustainable solutions, including capacity building of institutions and policies, which will create opportunities for all sections of society, including women and the youth. “It is time to implement a bioeconomy strategy that is innovative, and knowledge driven, improves agricultural practices, and adds value to raw materials and creates jobs,” says Prof Måns Nilsson, Executive Director, Stockholm Environment Institute.

Hon Christophe Bazivamo, Deputy Secretary General (Productive and Social Sectors), East African Community (EAC), says that a regional bioeconomy strategy opens new opportunities for research cooperation, and regional trade in value added bio-based goods and services. “Connecting farming communities to national, regional and global value chains, is one of our

top priorities in the EAC development strategy 2050". Overall, the strategy should augment the region's effort to engage more effectively in the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Collaborative partnerships

Collaborative innovation partnerships will be essential for developing and implementing the regional sustainable bioeconomy strategy. Scientists, policy makers and business leaders should work together to develop sustainable bio-based solutions that spur growth in the region. The COVID-19 pandemic challenge has underscored the need for innovation collaboration in Africa, and not least in Eastern Africa, to contribute home grown solutions for not only managing emerging public health problems, but for the long-term prosperity of the region. The first regional bioeconomy conference is the starting point for partners to engage in these matters.

Notes for the Editors:

The East Africa Science and Technology Commission (EASTEKO) 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 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.

icipe, headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, is the only research institution in Africa working primarily on insects and other arthropods. *icipe*'s 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 (SEI) 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.

The Scinnovent Centre is a policy and development think tank whose work focuses on understanding the barriers to the adoption and use of science, technology and innovation for decision-making and wealth creation.

The African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS) is a network of researchers, policymakers and the civil society that promotes the generation, dissemination, use and mastery of STI for African development, environmental sustainability and global inclusion.

Bio-Innovations Company Limited based is based in Uganda, and tackles deforestation by providing alternative heating and cooking fuel. It converts organic waste into briquettes as an alternative for institutions and factories.

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