

# THE Reporter

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## 12 mln dollars for livestock research

**S**wedish International Development Agency (SIDA) funded the five-year Bio-Innovate program, which is managed by International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) at a cost of 12 million dollars last Wednesday.

The Bio-Innovate program, which is co-located within the Biosciences Eastern and Central Africa (BeCA) Hub at ILRI's Nairobi campus, will be implemented in Ethiopia, Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. According to ILRI's press statement, the new program provides grants to bio-scientists working to improve food production and environmental management in eastern Africa.

The five-year program is funded by a 12 million dollars grant from the SIDA. The newly established Bio-resources Innovation Network for Eastern Africa Development (Bio-Innovate) Program, the first of its kind in Africa, provides competitive grants to African researchers.

"By emphasizing innovations to help drive crop production in the six partner countries, Bio-Innovate is working at the heart of one of the region's greatest challenges, that of providing enough food in the face of climate change, diversifying crops and addressing productivity constraints that are threatening the livelihoods of millions," Carlos Seré, ILRI's director general said.

In its first three-year phase, the program is supporting five research-based projects working to improve the productivity of sorghum, millet, cassava, sweet potato, potato and bean farmers; to help smallholder farmers adapt to climate change; to improve the processing of wastes in the production of sisal and coffee; and to better treat waste water generated in leather processing and slaughterhouse operations.

In its second three-year phase, beginning mid-2011, Bio-Innovate will help build agricultural commodity "value chains" in the region and a supportive policy environment for bio-resource innovations.

In sub-Saharan Africa, where agricultural production relies on rain fed smallholder farming, hunger, environmental degradation and climate change present a triple threat to individual, community and national development. In eastern Africa alone, over 100 million people depend on agriculture to meet their fundamental economic and nutritional needs.

"Bio-resources research and use is key to pro-poor economic growth," Seyoum Leta, Bio-Innovate's program manager said. "By focusing on improving the performance of crop agriculture and agro-processing, and by adding value to primary production, we can help build a more productive and sustainable regional bio-resources-based economy."

Bio-Innovate works closely with the African Union/New Partnership for Africa's Development (AU/NEPAD) and its new Planning and Coordinating Agency, as well as with the councils and commissions for science and technology in eastern Africa, to encourage adoption of advances in biosciences. The program builds on AU/NEPAD's Consolidated Plan of Action for Africa's Science and Technology and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP).

"African governments are appreciating the importance of regional collaboration," said Ibrahim Mayaki, the chief executive officer of NEPAD. "Collaborations such as this, in science and technology, will enable the continent to adapt to the rapid advances and promises of modern biosciences."

Bio-Innovate has already established partnerships with higher learning institutions and national agricultural research organizations, international agricultural research centers and private industries working both within and outside eastern Africa.

"Bio-Innovate is an important platform for pooling eastern African expertise and facilities through a regional Bio-resources Innovations Network," Claes Kjellström, Bio-Innovate SIDA representative at the Embassy of Sweden in Nairobi said. "We believe this program will enable cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary biosciences research and enhance innovations and policies that will advance agricultural development in the region."

(Compiled By Merga Yonas)