

UoN launches the Seed Enterprise Management Institute

The University of Nairobi has officially launched the Seed Enterprise Management Institute (SEMIs) at the College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences (CAVS).

SEMIs will be a center for training farmers on seed preservation, separation, treatment, packaging and management. The project has been funded by the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) at approximately USD 5 million.

Presiding over the launch, the UoN Chairman of Council, Dr. Idle Farah, noted that SEMIs fully embraces the University of Nairobi's mandate of teaching, learning, research and extension.

"The institute has so far has trained over 850 farmers from across 17 African countries," he said. "With support from our collaborators such as AGRA, SEMIS continues to train personnel in seed production, quality assurance and seed business management. The project is indeed timely and relevant to us as a country as we look for sustainable solutions to food security even in the wake of the drought situation."

He noted that agriculture is key to the Kenyan economy as it contributes 26 percent of the GDP though it continues to face numerous challenges. Key among them is inefficient seed supply, environmental degradation, unprocessed produce, poorly mechanized agriculture as farmers still rely on rainfall.

"Seed is a vital component in transformational improvement of human lives throughout history," revealed Dr. Farah. "It has the potential to address both food insecurity and poverty alleviation through crop, pasture and forage production for food and income generation."

AGRA's Chief Agricultural Transformation, Dr. Joe DeVries, noted that AGRA began as a dream to help African farmers increase their food produce and help the continent feed her population. He described SEMIS as a 'vibrant, competitive, seed company and a training facility for farmers.'

"SEMIS offers young farmers a practical learning opportunity and enables them to start their own companies," he said.

The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Peter Mbithi congratulated the lead researcher, Prof. Agnes Mwang'ombe, on the realization of the SEMIs dream, saying that the University of Nairobi has a key role to generate knowledge and sustain the momentum for sustainable development.

Other partners in the SEMIs project include Iowa State University, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT), Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS), Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) and Kenya Seed Company.