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NEMEDUSSA CONSORTIUM ADVANCING NEMATOLOGY EDUCATION IN SUB-SAHARA AFRICA

To develop the research and educational capacity in Sub-Sahara Africa in the field of nematology, or the study of roundworms, a joint Erasmus+ KA2 project was recently launched. The Erasmus+ project, Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE): Nematology Education in Sub-Sahara Africa (NEMEDUSSA), is a joint effort by a consortium of Universities from Sub-Sahara Africa and Europe.

This three-year project (2021-2023) is co-funded by the European Union (Erasmus+ KA2 CBHE) and VLIR-UOS, and is linked to the objectives of the Erasmus+ Programme. The aims are to encourage cooperation between the EU and Partner Countries and support eligible Partner Countries in addressing challenges in the management and governance of their higher education institutions.

Specifically, NEMEDUSSA aims to increase awareness of nematodes and expand educational and research capacities in higher education and other institutions in Sub-Sahara Africa in this field. Nematodes or roundworms cause significant damage and yield loss to a wide variety of crops often together with other pathogens. Unfortunately, nematodes are often overlooked or misdiagnosed, resulting in the unnecessary use of unhealthy agro-chemicals. Nematodes can also be used as bio-control agents against insect pests and/or as bio-control agents for environmental health and biodiversity.

Despite the profound adverse impact plant-parasitic nematodes have on productivity worldwide, it is striking how concealed the discipline of nematology has remained, particularly in Sub-Sahara Africa. This project aims to address the need for increased capacity and specialised training in handling these pathogens, so that plant-parasitic nematodes are managed correctly and beneficial nematodes can be implemented as biocontrol organisms.

To achieve this, the project focuses on 6 core activities:

- 1) Developing Curricula. Develop curricula in nematology on BSc and MSc level for the integration into existing educational programmes in English and French, for both lecturers and students.
- 2) Training Staff. Improve the nematological expertise of academic and technical staff to enhance teaching capacity.
- 3) Upgrading lab facilities. Increase the number of student microscopes, lab and demonstration equipment to augment hands-on training.
- 4) Nematology digital learning platform. Develop an open-access platform to share and disseminate nematological knowledge, develop curricular modules, knowledge clips, etc.
- 5) Nematology Network. Enhance cooperation between nematologists in Sub-Sahara Africa by providing networking tools, workshops on relevant topics in nematology and sharing good practices in education, promoting collaboration with a focus on young nematologists.

- 6) Creating awareness. Facilitate dissemination activities and involve a range of different stakeholders such as farmers, extension service workers, policy makers, students and private and public sector.

Ghent University (Belgium) coordinates NEMEDUSSA, in cooperation with:

- University Abomey-Calavi, Benin
- University of Parakou, Benin
- Haramaya University, Ethiopia
- Jimma University, Ethiopia
- Kenyatta University, Kenya
- Moi University, Kenya
- Ahmadu-Bello University, Nigeria
- University of Ibadan, Nigeria
- North West University, South Africa
- Stellenbosch University, South Africa
- Makerere University, Uganda
- Muni University, Uganda
- University Côte d'Azur, France

The work of this project is further supported by 36 associated partners from the private and public sectors in Sub-Saharan Africa.

For more information about the NEMEDUSSA project, please see www.nemedussa.ugent.be or contact us at nemedussa@ugent.be.