Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) Call for Abstracts

Grants for Graduate Students to Develop Policy Briefs and Working Papers on Climate-Resilient Agri-Food Systems

Background

Africa's agri-food systems are at the frontline of the climate crisis. Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, soil degradation, and biodiversity loss continue to undermine agricultural productivity, rural livelihoods, and food and nutrition security across the continent. These challenges are further compounded by rapid population growth, increasing demand for food, and the limited resilience of smallholder farmers who form the backbone of African agriculture. Addressing these interlinked challenges requires not only technological innovations but also evidence-based policies to guide governments, institutions, and development partners toward sustainable solutions.

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), in close collaboration with the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), recognizes the vital role of young researchers in shaping Africa's future. Graduate students, in particular, bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and rigorous research to the climate and agriculture discourse. Yet, much of this knowledge remains locked in academic theses and journal articles, with limited translation into policy and practice spaces where it can have the greatest impact. To bridge this gap, RUFORUM & AGRA are launching a grant opportunity for graduate students (Master and PhD Candidates & Post-Doctoral Fellows) enrolled in African universities to develop policy briefs and/or working papers on strengthening climate-resilient agri-food systems. This initiative is designed to support students not only to generate high-quality academic outputs but also to translate their findings into actionable recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders.

This effort will leverage ongoing interventions aimed at improving knowledge delivery, technology transfer, and youth employability through transformative education. The program will provide educational, skilling, and incubation opportunities, preparing young people; especially young women for the world of work. It will also enhance access to market-relevant training and practical skilling opportunities, enabling youth to gain the competencies needed by the labour market for both self-employment and wage employment. Through this call, RUFORUM & AGRA seeks to empower a new generation of African scholars to contribute directly to national, regional, and continental dialogues on climate change, resilience, and sustainable agri-food systems.

FOCUS AREAS

Abstracts that address one or more of the following themes, with a focus on but not limited to the following:

- ***Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA)*:** Innovations and adoption of technologies and practices that sustainably increase productivity and incomes, enhance resilience, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- ***Agro-Biodiversity & Crop/Livestock Resilience*:** The role of genetic diversity, indigenous knowledge, and conservation in strengthening resilience to climate shocks.
- ***Water & Land Management*:** Sustainable practices for efficient water use, soil health improvement, and land restoration under climate variability.
- ***Post-Harvest Management & Value Chains*:** Strategies to reduce food loss and waste, while strengthening value chains for improved food security and nutrition.
- ***Policy & Institutional Frameworks*:** Critical analysis of policies, governance structures, and institutions that support or hinder the development of climate resilient agri-food systems.
- ***Gender & Social Inclusion*:** Examining the differential impacts of climate change on vulnerable groups (especially women and youth) and proposing inclusive solutions.

ELIGIBILITY & SELECTION

- **Eligibility:** Open to all **currently enrolled Master & PhD students, Post Doctoral fellows** from RUFORUM member universities in the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) core countries (**Ethiopia and Malawi**).
- Importantly, at least **50% of the direct beneficiaries will be young women**, reflecting RUFORUM's commitment to gender equity and inclusive capacity development.
- **Selection:** Highly competitive, with emphasis on academic rigor, policy relevance, and scalability across Africa.
- A total of **22 graduate students** will be supported under this call.

ABSTRACTS SHOULD INCLUDE:

- **Title:** A concise and compelling title.

- **Introduction:** The problem and its relevance to climate-resilient agri-food systems.
- **Research Objectives & Questions:** Clear and focused.
- **Methodology:** Brief overview of data sources and analytical approaches.
- **Expected Outcomes and Policy Implications:** How findings will contribute to policy, practice, or knowledge, and how they will shape a strong policy brief or working paper.
- **Applicant Information:** Full name, university, degree program, and email address.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants must submit an abstract of no more than 500 words through the RUFORUM online application portal (**https://forms.gle/uxnfJ8VrqaeG39ca8**)

- Inquiries: **cgs@ruforum.org**
- RUFORUM reserves the right to make final award decisions.

IMPORTANT DATES

- **Call Opens:** July 08, 2026
- **Deadline for Abstract Submission:** July 21, 2026 (11:59 PM EAT)