New leadership learning Centre for established and emerging leaders in Africa's agriculture sector launched by AGRA, African Management Institute, and USAID's Policy LINK and financed by the German Cooperation through KfW Development Bank

The Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) has launched a unique Centre to provide hands-on implementation support for African leaders in the agriculture sector. The Centre for African Leaders in Agriculture (CALA) is a key part of a scale-up of investment to AGRA by the German Development Cooperation through KfW Development Bank.

CALA represents a deepening of AGRA's ongoing support to state capability, and is complementary to the technical assistance that AGRA has been providing to transform national and regional agriculture priorities alongside government, public and private sector partners. In addition to KwF's founding financial support and AGRA's lead role, the Centre's founding partners also include the African Management Institute (AMI) and USAID's Policy LINK.

"Africa's agriculture is full of opportunity. However, as the last years have shown, as a continent we also face many threats brought about by natural shocks, such as climate change, and the challenges of continental trade and policy coordination," said Dr. Agnes Kalibata, President of AGRA in launching the Centre. "Our experience at AGRA has taught us that achieving Africa's food security targets and achieving inclusive economic growth will require leaders who are responsive, adaptable and collaborative, while also being ready to integrate new strategies for environmentally sustainable agriculture together with a diverse set of stakeholders."

With these development objectives in focus, CALA will initially offer a 16-month Advanced Leadership Programme: Collaborative Leadership for Africa's Food Security and Sustainability designed for established and emerging sector leaders spearheading priority country-level agriculture strategies. The programme's core focus will be on supporting leaders in government, the private sector, and civil society with the practical skills to navigate, coordinate and better implement solutions to national agriculture challenges. The programme will also profile agro-ecological principles which are increasingly being recognized as contributing to sustainable farming and food production, and resilient food systems in the face of increasing climate change impacts.

AMI, one of the continent's leading providers of leadership and business

management programmes, will be the lead learning partner. The Centre’s programming will incorporate AMI’s hallmark blended learning approach, with a strong initial focus on highly engaging programming delivered virtually. This will include online learning (and in-person workshops when possible), on-the-job coaching, leadership forums, and action learning projects tied to national policy priorities.

Rebecca Harrison, CEO and co-founder of AMI said, “We focus on developing practical leadership skills through our virtual and in-person platforms, which leaders across the agriculture sector can apply on the job and within policy processes. Our learning approach, rooted in practical application rather than theory, will equip these leaders to better implement sector priorities, advance their careers and networks and become agents of change.”

Supporting AMI with these programmes will be USAID’s Policy LINK, which will lead group coaching sessions as well as contribute to the design of learning materials.

Policy LINK’s Chief of Party, Steve Smith, emphasised the importance of coaching as a core part of hands-on support for leaders in the sector. “Effective leaders marshal a range of actors to forge collaborative solutions to complex challenges — a skill that cannot be taught in the classroom alone,” Smith said. “The CALA coaching component will build on the Centre’s leadership curriculum by putting participants on a self-directed, lifelong leadership journey.”

Applications for the Centre’s first programme, the Advanced Leadership Programme are now open with an application closing date of 26 May 2021. Accepted and enrolled participants will begin the programme in August of 2021. Over the first three-years, the programme will have two cohorts with approximately 80 leaders each, bringing the total number of leaders to a minimum of 160. Initial cohorts will be composed of leaders from eight countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.