

The leading horizontal platform for cell programming, and the Rwanda Development Board (“RDB”) on Thursday announced they had entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to develop and implement new biosecurity capabilities in Rwanda.

The initial goal of the planned partnership is to support Rwanda’s public health institutions as they work to address biosecurity challenges in the region. Ginkgo, through its biosecurity and public health initiative, Concentric by Ginkgo (“Concentric”), plans to collaborate on the ground with RDB to equip these institutions with biosecurity tools and training as well as the secure data infrastructure they need to leverage automation, data analysis, bioinformatics capabilities, and other critical genomic sequencing technologies.

Concentric leverages a nationwide laboratory network to provide pathogen monitoring capabilities across thousands of sites in the U.S., including schools, airports, and other congregate settings. Concentric aims to build sustainable global biosecurity infrastructure to prepare for the next new variant or novel pathogen, and this planned partnership with RDB is a significant milestone in its international expansion as it continues to scale its biosecurity offering.

RDB, a Rwandan government institution, was established in 2008 to accelerate Rwanda’s economic development by enabling private sector growth. Ginkgo will build relationships with Rwandan public health institutions and private sector-led biotechnology initiatives in Rwanda; the RDB will contribute expertise in skills development and on-the-ground support for the partnership.

Concentric and RDB recognize the importance of international collaboration and cooperation to promote global health security as biological threats emerge. Effective pathogen monitoring and data sharing capabilities can empower government officials, community leaders, and other stakeholders to make informed public health decisions. In the long-term, these capabilities can also be leveraged to form the foundation for a sustainable regional bioeconomy. For example, in the context of this MOU, Ginkgo and RDB plan to collaborate to inform workforce development priorities in the areas of biotechnology, biomanufacturing, and bioengineering, and to explore potential opportunities for Rwanda to leverage its biodiversity as a foundation for innovation within its bioeconomy.

“The future of biosecurity is global—COVID-19 has shown us all that pathogens don’t recognize national borders. To prepare for the next biological threat, we need

the infrastructure in place to build a global weather map tracking the spread and evolution of infectious diseases,” said Matt McKnight, General Manager, Biosecurity at Ginkgo Bioworks. “We deeply appreciate Rwanda’s leadership working to define a new era of biosecurity, and we are incredibly excited to use our platform to support Rwanda’s public health institutions with critical capabilities that we believe will help them face challenges ranging from this pandemic to agricultural and travel biosecurity.”

Clare Akamanzi, Chief Executive Officer of the Rwanda Development Board, noted, “The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the need for robust public health and biotechnology infrastructure in Rwanda and around the world. We are excited about our plans to partner with Ginkgo to bring cutting-edge biosecurity capabilities to Rwanda across various sectors including health and agriculture. We believe this will stimulate our growing bioeconomy and help us learn more about our biodiversity.”

Ginkgo is building a platform to enable customers to program cells as easily as we can program computers. The company’s platform is enabling biotechnology applications across diverse markets, from food and agriculture to industrial chemicals to pharmaceuticals. Ginkgo has also actively supported a number of COVID-19 response efforts, including K-12 pooled testing, vaccine manufacturing optimization and therapeutics discovery.

The Rwanda Development Board is a government agency responsible for leading the country’s transformation into a dynamic global hub for business, investment, tourism and innovation. Its mission is to fast-track economic development in Rwanda by enabling private sector growth.