AFRICAN ECONOMIC RESEARCH CONSORTIUM

CALL FOR THEMATIC RESEARCH PROPOSALS ON IMPACT OF AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD POLICIES ON NUTRITION OUTCOMES IN AFRICA

Background

Established in 1988, African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) has grown to be a premier capacity building institution for the advancement of research and graduate training to inform economic policies in Africa. The consortium’s mandate and strategic mission is built on the basis that sustained development in Sub-Saharan Africa requires well trained, locally based professional economists. A highly integrated knowledge organization spanning research, training, and policy outreach, AERC is now a vast network of universities, policy makers, researchers, educators, and international resource persons.

The Thematic Research Programme is AERC’s longest-standing activity adopted when AERC commenced its effort to build capacity in sub-Saharan Africa. It can be described as the “learning by doing research” modality and is geared primarily towards the building of capacity of African economists and policy analysts to undertake high quality and policy-oriented economic research. Research proposals received through open calls undergo preliminary review. They are then vetted by peers during biannual research workshops, all the while being monitored by resource persons who are drawn from Africa and beyond to provide mentorship and quality control.

The Project and Its Context

Investment in agriculture is widely considered as being critically important opportunity for reducing malnutrition (see, Herforth et al. 2012; FAO 2013). At the international community level, there have been repeated calls to place a higher priority on “unleashing”, “leveraging”, “reshaping”, or “realizing” the opportunities offered by agriculture to enhance nutrition and health. The donor community has responded to this call by allocating a larger budget share to agricultural sector since the mid-2000s, reversing the steep decline of the previous decade. One of the aims of the renewed focus on agriculture is to encourage

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agricultural policies and programs to become “nutrition-sensitive” (BMGF 2012)\(^2\), or more specifically, to make “agriculture work for nutrition” (FAO 2012)\(^3\). As part of the effort in this direction, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) awarded a grant to AERC to undertake rigorous research on the impact of agricultural and food policies on nutrition outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa for informed policy development, program design and improved nutrition outcomes.

It is important to note that the majority of Africans live in rural areas and are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. In an effort to address food and nutrition security challenges in the sub-Saharan Africa, governments have developed and implemented various agricultural policies, but the efficacy of these policies has not been sufficiently addressed. To enhance these efforts, therefore, understanding the pathways and impacts of agricultural policies on nutrition is key to addressing mal- and undernutrition challenges in the continent.

This project thus seeks to establish the effect of agricultural policies on nutrition with specific reference to the following domains: (i) food prices, food security and macro-economic policy; (ii) nutritional outcomes along the agricultural value chain; (iii) food prices, including consumer subsidies and price ceilings; (iv) food security policies, including stocks and price stabilization schemes; (v) resource access and women empowerment; and (vi) agricultural extension and advisory services, finance and trade. The focus of this study is sub-Saharan Africa and excludes North Africa. Please see the announcement at www.aercafrica.org/index.php/about-aerc/announcements.

**Call for thematic research proposals**

This is a call for expression of interest to participate in an AERC thematic research project on evaluating the impact of agricultural and food policies on nutritional outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa. The main objective of the research is to investigate the impact of agricultural, food and nutrition policies on nutrition outcomes, and thus human development and health. A better understanding of agricultural policy to nutrition pathways should help improve policy development and program design for improved nutrition outcomes in SSA. The project aims to build capacity of African researchers to undertake high quality policy-oriented economics research in this specialized field and to generate evidence on the effects of agricultural policies on nutrition outcomes to inform policy in Africa.

For the purpose of this call, agriculture and food systems include all aspects of food production, distribution, processing, marketing and utilization, as well as the people, resources and institutions involved in these processes. Nutrition and health outcomes of interest include impacts on malnutrition in its broadest sense, including under-nutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and diet related overweight, obesity and other impacts of the food system on human health.

**Indicative Research Topics for Competitive Grants**

The project will consider a wide range of proposals that address the objectives outlined above, based on thematic research selection criteria. In order to give an indication of the kinds themes that the project will

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support, we present a list of indicative areas. The areas outlined below are only indicative and potential applicants are welcome to submit proposals on any topic that is consistent with the project objectives.

- Analysis of the Agriculture-Food-Nutrition Nexus
- Gender participation in agriculture and nutrition outcomes
- Impact of food price policies (including subsidies) on nutrition outcomes in selected countries
- Agricultural systems (crop and livestock) and human nutrition
- Biofortification and its impacts on nutrition
- The links between finance and trade policies and nutrition outcomes in selected sub-Saharan African countries
- Agriculture extension policies and nutrition outcomes
- Financing mechanisms for agricultural, food security and nutrition outcomes
- Access to agricultural land and nutritional outcomes at household level
- Impact of subsidies (input and/or output subsidies) on agriculture and nutrition outcomes
- Irrigation, agriculture and nutritional outcome among others

Eligibility Requirements

To qualify, the potential researchers must have at least a Masters degree in economics and related areas and interested in carrying out research in the areas of *Agricultural and Food Policies for Improved Nutritional Outcomes*. The proposal submitted must contain a clear methodology with innovative use of quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods as long as they can demonstrate potential to advance development. The proposals submitted will be processed under the AERC thematic research theme on *Agriculture, climate change and natural resource management*. Submitted AERC resource persons will review thematic research proposals, and acceptable proposals will follow the thematic research process before a research grant is awarded. Acceptable proposals will be presented at the AERC biannual research workshop. The project outputs will be published as AERC Research Paper series and in refereed journal/book volumes by reputable publishers and other outlets and disseminated widely. **Qualified women are encouraged to apply.**

Requirements

- Proposals must consist of a maximum of 15 pages setting out conceptualization of the issues to be investigated, the specific objectives and questions to be addressed, the methodology, the data to be used and availability, as well as stylized facts motivating the study and expected outcomes.
- The applicants must submit the CV for each author (including in the CV: nationality, gender, research record/publications, and full contact details).

Deadline

- The proposals must be submitted on or before **31 March 2017** to:

  AERC

  at

  procurement@aercafrica.org and copy research@aercafrica.org