Using ICTs for exchanging horticultural knowledge and information

The Centre for Rural Development /SLE in frame of HORTINLEA research project, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) through the GlobE overall initiative, seeks to improve the livelihood and nutritional situation of the rural and urban poor in East Africa by generating and exchanging knowledge to improve and increase horticultural production especially of African Indigenous Vegetables (AIVs). The Master thesis will contribute to the research unit promoting knowledge exchange and transfer of research results into policies and practice. Under the supervision of academics from East African universities and from the Centre for Rural Development /SLE - at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin applicants are expected to develop, define and implement their own Master thesis project.

The ongoing research activities focus on assessing determinants for successful knowledge exchange, particularly on (1) how ICTs are being used in East Africa to disseminate information, (2) by whom and (3) for what purpose. A recent SLE-Study shows, that many actors in the Kenyan horticultural innovation system see information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as mobile phones, SMS-based services and the internet as the “next big thing” in information dissemination and exchange, facilitating quicker and more targeted exchange between research and farmers, as well as among farmers themselves. However, these technologies need to be scrutinised carefully in terms of their pro-poor potential.
At the same time, the study highlights that an overwhelming majority of Kenyan farmers, see direct on-farm training of farmers by skilled and trusted advisors, whether public or non-governmental extension workers, as the most important way of transferring information.

The Master’s thesis is expected to contribute to the ongoing debate on the potential of ICTs to support the access to and exchange of horticultural knowledge and information for smallholder farmers with a particular focus on women and youth.

**CANDIDATES QUALIFICATIONS**

Applicants should have a background in at least one of the following fields: communication technology, economics, agriculture/horticulture or related fields. Applicants must hold a Bachelor’s degree with excellent results. Very good written and oral English and excellent MS Office skills are essential for this position. Of advantage are as well relevant publications and very good writing skills, methods/experience for/in empirical social research, excellent organisation and communication skills. Applicants should be registered as Master students and be about to start their Master’s thesis. The deadline for applying for this thesis topic is May 31st 2016. Please send your application to: Marlen Bachmann (marlen.bachmann@aqrar.hu-berlin.de)

The study should (1) identify the horticultural information needs especially of small-scale farmers, (2) analyse types of ICTs available and their extent of use by AIV farmers, (3) examine the communication channels and sources of information used by farmers, (5) determine the challenges faced by small-scale farmers when accessing ICTs and suggest possible solutions to mitigate them.

Finally, the Master’s thesis is expected to suggest mechanisms for optimising the use of ICTs in horticultural knowledge exchange and information dissemination.