Integrating traditional and academic knowledge system approaches

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. One of the main objectives lies within the combination of food system approaches generated through academic research and local knowledge systems. A great challenge for contemporary research is an integrated approach of these both systems.

Until a couple of years ago most food system approaches did not regard and thus rather suppressed local knowledge instead of integrating it. Meanwhile there are more and more integrated approaches of both academic food systems and local knowledge systems. Challenges mainly lie in systemising local knowledge, linking traditional and academic knowledge and developing inclusive innovations.
The Master thesis is supposed to contribute to the ongoing debate on integrating the two above mentioned systems. In order to do so, theories as well as lessons regarding those need to be analysed and discussed critically. To identify the most important factors and challenges of such an integrative approach, the HORTINLEA project serves as an example for a contemporary agricultural project in East Africa. The overall aim of the thesis is to develop criteria and guidelines on how to integrate contemporary food system approaches and local knowledge systems. Existing strategies should be discussed and new mechanisms should be suggested in order to better link and cross-fertilise informal traditional and academic knowledge. This is the only way for better understanding and utilising traditional knowledge, grassroots innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

**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@agrar.hu-berlin.de)

**Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through better use of Traditional Knowledge**

Activities to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity address a range of issues relevant to the achievement of the SDGs including among others sustainable consumption of biodiversity, food security and sustainable agriculture and traditional knowledge. The traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities is essential in reaching the 2030 Agenda, particularly their knowledge related to climate change, sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture (CBD, 2015).

This thesis will address one of the most prevailing topics of current development studies. The integration of contemporary food system and traditional knowledge systems can lead to sustainable and locally adapted solutions and innovations. Moreover, this can provide new opportunities for farmers to increase the conservation of indigenous crop varieties such as AIVs for better tackling their everyday food insecurity and malnutrition challenges. The acquired guidelines will contribute to ongoing horticultural research in Kenya and in East Africa.