



INITIATIVE ON  
Diversification in East  
and Southern Africa

## Concept Note for National Policy Hubs under Ukama Ustawi

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August 2022



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## Acknowledgement

This work was carried out under the CGIAR Initiative on Diversification in East and Southern Africa, which is grateful for the support of CGIAR Trust Fund contributors ([www.cgiar.org/funders](http://www.cgiar.org/funders)).

The [CGIAR Initiative on Diversification in East and Southern Africa](#) aims to help smallholders transition to sustainably intensified, diversified, and derisked agri-food systems based on maize in 12 ESA countries. Specifically, it seeks to enable 50,000 value chain actors, including farmers (at least 40% women, 40% youth), to adopt climate-smart maize based intensification and diversification practices and one million to access digital agro-advisory services. Emphasizing the role of the private sector in driving such transformation, UU targets to support at least 30 start-ups and SMEs.

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## Citation

Ires, I. 2022. *Concept note for national policy hubs under Ukama Ustawi*. Colombo, Sri Lanka: International Water Management Institute (IWMI). CGIAR Initiative on Diversification in East and Southern Africa. 4p.

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## 1. Background

Projected temperatures and precipitations in East and Southern Africa (ESA) are moving beyond the levels that maize systems can tolerate. The mean temperature change in this region is expected to exceed +2°C by 2100 and brings about new weather extremes (Pereira 2017). Projections reveal drier conditions and delays in the onset of rainfall in southern Africa, with an increased risk and frequency of severe droughts (Engelbrecht et al. 2009; Shongwe et al. 2011; Niang et al. 2014). For East Africa, a generally wetter future, with more intense rainfall during wet seasons and thereby an increased frequency of large-scale flood events and less severe droughts, reversing the historical drying trend is expected (Shongwe et al. 2011; Niang et al. 2014). As a result, scholars predict maize yield losses to reach 30 percent in southern Africa; especially South Africa and Zimbabwe will be affected (Lobell et al. 2008; Schlenker and Lobell 2010). In East Africa, the temperature increase is estimated to offset the benefits of increased rainfall, leading to similarly high yield losses, such as 25 percent in Zambia (Mulungu and Tembo 2015). An income source and staple food, the loss of maize threatens livelihoods. Adaptation measures exist but will remain insufficient long-term (Pereira 2017). From this perspective, sustainably intensified and diversified maize production to feed the population and secure livelihoods is a reasonable common interest of agricultural policies in the region.

The CGIAR Initiative on Diversification in East and Southern Africa supports ESA countries to transition their maize-mixed systems to sustainably intensified, diversified, and de-risked agri-food systems with a strong maize base. It is a three-year, multi-million project launched in 2022. Ukama Ustawi (UU) consists of five work packages (WPs), which seek to 1) diversify and intensify maize-mixed farming, 2) de-risk and digitize agriculture through agro-advisory services, 3) support and accelerate agribusinesses, 4) govern and enable shared vision in policymaking and implementation, 5) empower and engage women and the youth, and 6) scale and coordinate diverse sub-initiatives on multiple levels. In these WPs, about 150 partners work together, which include research organizations (CGIAR institutes, such as IWMI, ILRI, IFPRI, CIMMYT, CIAT, and World Fish), government agencies (ministries and policy leads designing Nationally Determined Contributions, National Adaptation Plans), donors (e.g., the World Bank, GIZ, GEF, Green Climate Fund), and the private sector (value-chain actors, including farmers, SMEs, financiers, and traders). UU is implemented in 12 countries in ESA (Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Madagascar, Rwanda, Uganda, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). In this context, national policy hubs are an activity under WP4, overarching the other five WPs and essential for their success.

## 2. National Policy Hubs: The Conceptual Framework

Transitioning agriculture and the economy toward a climate-resilient future without compromising economic growth is not a vision that governments can achieve alone. Governments, donors, civil society organizations, and the private sector must collaborate. However, findings point to various barriers to collaborative governance: low levels of trust between these stakeholders, limited credibility, lack of ownership of adaptation agendas, agenda capture by policymakers and leads, poor communication, and lack of awareness of climate-related challenges, opportunities, and threats (World Bank 2017; OECD 2019). It is evident that there is a need for multistakeholder dialogues to address knowledge gaps, foster communication and trust between stakeholders, achieve cohesion



between climate and sectoral policy priorities, and coordinate the overall climate action to benefit vulnerable populations and the economy.

Conceptually, national policy hubs, falling under the WP4, aim to improve the enabling institutional and policy environment to guide climate-resilient agricultural transition in ESA. Specific hub activities can be described as the 4Ds (diagnose, design, develop, and deploy) as detailed in the framework below (Figure 1). Accordingly, policy hubs diagnose the needs and knowledge gaps related to sustainable intensification and diversification of maize -mixed farming, de-risking through digitized agro-advisory services, agribusiness, empowerment, and multilevel scaling by aggregating research-based findings from the other WPs and partners. This step is followed by designing and developing multistakeholder dialogues to communicate these findings with stakeholders, and consequently, informing policymaking and implementation on this basis. The first dialogue takes place in Zambia in August 2022, followed by Kenya and Zimbabwe. Finally, the hub will guide governments and other partners to deploy policies and strategies and follow up with policymaking and implementation through effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

**Figure 1: The Policy Hub Conceptual Framework**



Policy hubs are driven by six principles advised by World Bank (2017): urgency, inclusion, awareness, efficiency, transparency, and accountability. One, hubs seek to trigger a sense of urgency that climate change requires a swift and well-coordinated response from stakeholders and creates momentum for the envisioned climate-resilient agricultural transition. Two, hubs deploy an inclusive approach (including affected groups, such as farmers, women, and youth, in the dialogue and decision-making) and a sustained dialogue rather than ad hoc and one-off conversation. Three, hubs inform stakeholders of the multiple challenges of climate change and the range of potential actions to address them, raising awareness. Four, for effective governance, hubs help stakeholders develop clear policy and business priorities, processes, structures, and timelines. Especially important is to consider the political economy to understand the institutional and political gridlocks and acknowledge resource conflicts that often hinder effective implementation. Five, hubs produce easily accessible and unambiguous publications, including the list of stakeholders, action plans, concrete references, and sound evidence supporting the logic and structure of decision-making to achieve transparency. Lastly,

decisions and actions agreed upon in hubs are evidence-based and data-driven, and processes are trackable, to ensure accountability.

Overall, policy hubs help ESA governments achieve climate-resilient agricultural transitions and thus impact through diverse outputs and outcomes. The expected hub outputs include, but are not limited to, the extent of agricultural needs and knowledge gaps communicated with and between stakeholders, the number and diversity of stakeholders participating in dialogues (e.g., farmers, women, and the youth); scale and scope of hub activities, the number of awareness campaigns; the number of reports and policy briefs published, and virtual training, material, guidelines provided. Outcomes are assessed by the extent to which policy hubs influence implementation. For instance, the extent to which governments mainstreamed the urgency of climate action into their economic and sectoral policies; the volume of investment catalyzed and spent; the number of agribusiness partnerships catalyzed as a direct result of hubs; the number of stakeholders that benefitted from the hub activities. Finally, hubs contribute to five UU-wide impact areas related to nutrition and food security, climate adaptation and mitigation, poverty reduction, environmental resilience, and social inclusion.

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