



PRESS RELEASE

11 January 2010

In the dragon's den – win funding to put research into use

A new approach to boost agricultural production is coming to West Africa. In 2009, the Research into Use Best Bets initiative, funded by the UK Government, awarded start-up grants worth US\$2.5 million to four business ventures in East, Central and Southern Africa. Now West African researchers and entrepreneurs have their chance to compete for cash.

The first call for West African RIU Best Bet submissions came in early December 2009. Applicants have until January 29th 2010 to submit a concept note, outlining their plan for getting a piece of agricultural research into use. In the previous round, over 100 proposals were submitted, covering the production, processing and marketing of crops, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture.

Shortlisted applications will receive financial support to develop simple business plans. Applicants will then be invited to go into the 'dragon's den', presenting their plan in person to an independent panel of experts from the African business, finance, research and development communities. The winners can expect to receive funding worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The initiative is driven by the sad fact that while agricultural research has made incredible advances in the last decade, much that has been achieved sits unused on the shelf. New and improved varieties of crops remain in research stations and appropriate technologies that could boost yields, food security and incomes have yet to reach the people who most need them – farmers.

But getting that technology from the shelf to the field can't be done by researchers alone. One key lesson of recent years is that successfully and sustainably introducing new farming technologies depends on private sector involvement. Whether developing a piece of farm machinery or a new variety of rice, bringing that technology to the millions who need it only happens when there is profit to be made. Hence RIU Best Bet applications need to come from partnerships – researchers and business people working together to present a viable business plan, that will bring a proven technology to those who need it.

For more information, the following links will direct you to the Research into Use website -
<http://bit.ly/RIUBestBetsWA>
<http://researchintouse.com/index.php?section=5&subsection=86>