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“Competition for Resources in a Changing World:  
New Drive for Rural Development”

## Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for Agricultural Education and Improved Livelihoods in Sub- Saharan Africa

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### Abstract

Globalisation, market liberalisation and worldwide food situation are threatening food security of the developing countries, which depend on millions of small farmers. Such farmers require access to information, learning and new skills to take advantage of the emerging income-generating opportunities (e.g. meat, milk, vegetables, fruits, flowers). They need relevant, useful, accurate and reliable information in a timely manner for their self-directed learning. This requires new ways of developing and delivering information. Technology-mediated open and distance education (Tech-MODE) - a combination of open and distance learning (ODL) with information and communication technologies (ICT) - has potential to satisfy such demands.

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) wishes to identify opportunities for a complementary and catalytic role to expand the scope for Tech-MODE for agricultural education and improved livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2007, COL undertook country case studies in eight Commonwealth countries from West, Central, East and Southern Africa: Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone; Cameroon; Kenya and Uganda; Tanzania and Zambia; respectively.

An inventory of local institutions, facilities and capabilities for Tech-MODE included:

- Country status of agriculture, horticulture and livelihood;
- National ICT policies and strategies on agriculture;
- Institutions, facilities, capabilities, government support, and potential available to implement Tech-MODE in collaboration with COL;
- Recommendations and suggestions to COL.

Conclusions and recommendations:

- Agriculture is the engine of development. Agriculture contributes from 17 (Nigeria) to 49 % (Sierra Leone) to GDP. Labor force in agriculture extends from 60 (Ghana) to 85 % (Zambia).
- National ICT policies either exist or are in process. They may include education in general, but rarely reach agriculture specifically. ODL is well recognised, but rarely with emphasis on agriculture.
- Collaborators for Tech-MODE are available mainly on formal educational levels. A few international partnerships are in progress.

- Recommendations for consideration by COL and interested partner organisations fall into five categories: policy, infrastructure, socio-economy, capacity building, and collaboration. COL may assist in identifying learning needs and opportunities, establishing linkages and partnerships, facilitating proof of concept studies, capacity building, training, development of Tech-MODE-based learning materials and models, monitoring, and following up.

**Keywords:** Commonwealth of learning, country studies, e-learning, Sub-Saharan Africa, Tech-MODE, distance-learning,