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Incorporating Value Chain Research into Horticultural and Agricultural Study Programmes in Developing Countries

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Abstract

At Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin two EU-projects within EuropeAid's Edulink and Asia-Link programmes are coordinated which focus on incorporating Value Chain research into horticultural and agricultural curricula at universities in partner countries in East Africa and Asia.

The project ValueLEad aims at enabling student education at two African universities in sustainable and quality-oriented fresh-food chain management (FFCM) with a focus on poverty alleviation and meeting the needs of the agri-food sector, in particular the vegetables and fruit as well as dairy sectors.

The project DOCUMAP focuses on education and training in the fields of supply chain management and postharvest handling of vegetables and fruit at three Asian universities.

These projects are based on three assumptions:

a) graduates of horticultural (and agricultural) study programmes require analytical and problem-solving skills, an interdisciplinary thinking style, team work and communication skills and — centrally — aptitude and attitude of self-directed learning in order to master the challenges of their future jobs in rapidly changing horticultural and food sectors.

b) Problem-Based Learning (PBL)-type student research projects and multiple collaboration with actors of the agri-food sector are central elements of study programmes with these competence-based learning objectives.

c) Curricula, institutions and human resources need to be simultaneously developed on different levels in order to adapt study programmes to this end.

The projects thus address lecturers at the African and Asian partner universities within various complementary project activities for development of student-centred PBL and interdisciplinary research as well as other Value-Chain related curriculum elements.

Furthermore, the cooperation between the universities offers a basis for North-South and South-South academic partnership networks for continuous development of the food value chain analysis concept and its adaptation to African and Asian realities.

The concepts of and experiences with the two projects will be described, successes and challenges analysed and conclusions for refinement of the approach presented.

Keywords: Curriculum development, problem-based learning, university-industry cooperation