

Presenting the Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the Vision of the Namibia University College of Agriculture and Natural Resource (NUCA)

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Namibia is one of the most arid countries in the world, and certainly the most arid country south of the Sahara. Annual average rainfall ranges from less than 50 mm along the coast to about 700 mm in the far northeast. Despite these constraints 70 % of the 1.7 million population is directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture.

Since independence in 1990 the main thrust of development has been the rapid development of human resource base which has been so severely retarded as a result of colonial and apartheid policies; poverty reduction through economic growth and active intervention to achieve social relief and equity. Extreme income and asset inequalities as a result of the past apartheid policies still exist. Namibia is known to have one of the most unequal income distributions in the world, with the most affluent 10 % of the society receiving 65 %, and the remaining 90 % receiving only 35 % of the national income.

Though Namibia is one of the driest countries, with 60-70% of the population depending on agriculture and agriculture related activities, agriculture thus remains as one of the most important means of supporting and sustaining human life. However, there are several constraints that affect agricultural production. Some of the constraints include: inadequate trained human resource, high incidence of extreme poverty and inequitable socio-economic welfare situation, environmental constraints related to Namibia's fragile ecosystems and degraded natural resources, lack of active extension-research linkage etc.. These constraints may adversely affect people's livelihoods, leading to vulnerability and food insecurity.

Having realized the importance of Agriculture to the economy and noting that agricultural development can only come about if there is sufficient and adequately trained human resources the government decided to establish a Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Namibia, in 1994, with the main aim of providing the much needed human resource required for the sustainable development of agriculture and natural resources in Namibia.

The Mission of the Faculty is to promote sustainable agricultural and natural resources development and management in Namibia through teaching, research and extension services to communal and commercial farming communities. This is an enormous task for a young faculty like this one. There are severe constraints hampering the implementation of the Faculty's objectives. These constraints include the inadequate human resource and lack of capacity to provide postgraduate training for the faculty and the country and absence of Namibia agriculture and natural resources data base so vital for teaching, research and policy analysis.

The University of Namibia believes very strongly that we can benefit from Japan's many years of experience. It is said that **“if you want to learn about success, listen to someone who has succeeded.”** Thus we come to Japan with a lot of hope.

A collaborative project with the kind support of the Japanese Government is being proposed with the following main objectives. These are:

- Development of human resources for Namibia;
- Provision of community services through participatory approaches, advisory services and extension services;
- Development of appropriate technologies and demonstration units;
- Establishment of a center for data collection, processing, analysis, and dissemination;
- Provision of material resources for the library, the proposed center, laboratories, and for community service;
- Mounting the Environmental Science degree option of the Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources programme, considering Namibia's very fragile ecosystem.

With these objectives, the main goal of the proposed project would be **“to improve agricultural production and resources utilization in Namibia, particularly among small scale farmers and other resource users.”**