

The Latia Resource Foundation – combining non-profit and for profit ATVET activities

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Latia Organization

The Latia Resource Centre (LRC) was originally set up as a project in 2008² and was registered as a Kenyan Social Enterprise in 2011. It was established to provide training and business support services to farmers, pastoralists and agribusinesses in Africa. In 2016, LRC registered the Latia Agripreneurship Institute (LAI) to provide apprenticeship training to the youth, and to offer appropriate technology and mentorship to farmers, pastoralists and agribusinesses with the aim to help them to produce healthy crops and livestock and to apply sustainable agriculture practices.

In 2016, Latia also formed a new for-profit subsidiary company to allow an expansion of its programs that target commercial activities. The new company, named Latia Agribusiness Solutions (LAS), started in April 2017 and took over the commercial activities that includes the running of LAI. The LRC Foundation fundraises and manages projects, with LAS as the implementing partner. The non-profit LRC and for-profit LAS have project-specific implementation agreements that focus on their common areas

The LRC Foundation

The not-for-profit LRC Foundation has the ambition to become an African Hub for the preparation, exchange and dissemination of knowledge, skills and information drawn from practice and research, and to forge linkages between stakeholders in the agricultural sector. To achieve this ambition, the LRC Foundation has identified 3 strategic goals for the coming 5 years: 1) improving access of farmers to high quality ATVET and extension services; 2) optimizing value chains to impact positively on farmer's income; and 3) promoting the adoption of climate smart agricultural solutions that contribute to increased agricultural production.

The LRC Foundation seeks to achieve these goals through research (assessments), training and training support, and facilitation of multi-stakeholder partnerships along priority value chains, testing and demonstrations of new and improved practices, consultancies and provision of advisory services.

Based on its experiences during the last 10 years, the LRC Foundation develops and promotes innovative new models of competence-based e-learning in ATVET and implementing these with agricultural training institutions, as well as provision of extension services for young African farmers. To reach higher numbers of farmers the Foundation will seek resources to strengthen its emphasis on digital learning, develop digital training modules and set up a digital information platform that includes the provision of information

¹ Latia Agripreneurship Institute and LRC Foundation, respectively.

² Originally established as "Latia Resource Centre" it was later renamed as the "LRC Foundation", while retaining its non-profit status.

on service providers and markets, and access to technical briefs and discussion fora. Digital learning will be linked with competence-based education models practiced at LAI.

The Foundation also contributes to improving the learning environment (infrastructure, training materials, equipment's, etc.) of selected ATVET Colleges (currently LAI and in the future will target both public and private ATVETs) and training farms and strengthen their institutional and management capacity to deliver relevant quality ATVET and extension services. The LRC Foundation will forge new partnerships with 3 – 5 new or existing ATVET providers in the future to develop their capacity in delivering agricultural training. Finally, the Foundation will put a special emphasis on setting up a system for the professional development of ATVET teachers and extension officers. This will be a training course for ATVET instructors and will be covering pedagogy and technical training in agriculture (horticulture producer and nursery producer) for one year. LRC will fundraise, pilot the course as a grant and LAI will take over and run it on a commercial basis.

Latia Agribusiness Solutions (LAS)

Latia Agribusiness Solutions (LAS) is a private social enterprise, registered as a middle level private institution within the private sector landscape. The vision of LAS is to become a center of excellence in offering agribusiness solutions in Africa, and its mission is to empower agribusinesses through quality training and consultancy services for sustainable economic development.

LAS is an incubation services provider, helping unlock the potential of small and medium sized farms and agribusinesses. The services are provided through a business model offering “a one stop shop”, where Agripreneurs can find all they need to make their enterprises thrive. The incubation services were developed after the implementation of the Telephone Farmer's Project where LAS developed a business model to support farmers achieve set goals as “incubatees”.

LAS also has a robust agricultural consultancy unit that provides professional agribusiness advisory and support services to value chain actors, including small-scale farmers as well as well-organized commercial agribusiness firms. Small-scale farmers mostly access the services through bottom of the pyramid projects by LRCF (development partner), while medium- and large-scale farmers pay for the services, either directly or via projects with external development partners. These services include the development of out-grower schemes (business and operating plans), the supply of skilled manpower at technical and management levels, training of farmers and provision of extension services, and assistance in certification to standards and legal requirements.

Having grown exponentially and expanded activities in all its business units, a disadvantage has been a silo effect emerging amongst its business units. We are currently working towards creating synergies among business units to increase efficiencies and avoid duplication.

Latia Agripreneurship Institute

The Latia Agripreneurship Institute (LAI) was established in 2016 as a private TVET College owned by Latia Agribusiness Solutions Limited. It is governed by the LAS Board of Directors and financed from student fees. The institute is situated in a 60-acre practical farm in Isinya Kajiado County, Kenya. Every year 300-400 graduate from the different courses offered. LAI

has classrooms, library, laboratory and a model farm where the apprentices carry out practical exercises. Latia has 8 trainers and 3 technical staff who are accredited by TVETA.

In 2017, the Latia Agripreneurship Institute was officially accredited by TVETA and The National Industrial Training Authority (NITA) to offer TVET and practical trainings in the agriculture sector. LAI now offers TVETA approved, training courses at levels 3-6 in Horticulture Production, Horticulture Nursery Management, and Agripreneurship courses at levels 3-6 (3 months, 6 months, 1- and 2-years duration, respectively for all the levels), using curriculum developed together by CDACC that suits the labour market needs. The curriculum helps to achieve our goals as a training institution of offering hand on or practical skills as per the labour market needs. The minimum entry requirement for these level 3 TVETA-approved courses is the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE).

In addition, LAI is a competency-based education and training (CBET) assessment center, approved and licensed by the TVET CDACC to assess its students. The trainees pay the TVETA assessment fee through LAI for the assessment and they receive government certificates. It is LAI that does the internal assessment while TVET CDACC does the external assessment. Other TVET institutions can bring their students for assessments. LAI receives a percentage of the assessment fee to facilitate the assessment and the rest goes to TVET CDACC.

Other short courses are designed and modelled to suit the client needs and approved by The National industrial training Authority (NITA). Its mandate is to promote the highest standards in the quality and efficiency of Industrial Training in Kenya and ensure an adequate supply of properly trained manpower at all levels in the industry. For these short, NITA-approved courses anyone who can read and write can apply. The core criteria for selection is a passion for agribusiness, and the ability and readiness to either invest in one's own farm or gain meaningful employment in the industry. NITA works on short courses such as piggery, poultry etc. while TVETA long term courses that are more rigorous are linked to the Agricultural Apprenticeship Programme.

LAI uses an apprenticeship model, a model of training where one learns mainly through work. An experienced trainer guides a trainee on their projects that are assessed at the end of their training as part of the assessments. The trainer also acts as a coach and mentor. Under this model the apprentice undergoes a programme including 30% theory and 70% practical, the practical component including training at Latia farm and also including an industrial attachment in Horticulture farms for all levels for a duration of 1- 2 months, depending on the qualification. This on-the-job training for the trainees at various commercial farms allows the trainees to experience work outside of LAS. The attachments take place in commercial farms, and in both public and the private sectors. The LAI trainers assess the student while on attachment, and they are also provided with a monitoring tool to be guided by the mentors while in attachment. All apprentices attend such an attachments program which helps them to have on-the-job training before employment placement or being mentored to go into self-employment. As a CBET model, the graduate profile is a farm manager, a farm technician or operator with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude to run a profitable farm enterprise or successfully operate a specific role in an agribusiness company.

LAI collaboration with other organizations

LAI has benefitted from a range of support from external agencies. These include:

- Netherlands Nuffic support under the NICHE programme (2014-2018) from Maastricht School of Management, Wageningen University Research from the Netherlands, and the Dairy Training Institute in Kenya (NICHE), and support from the OKP programme (2019-2021) to enable Latia to develop horticultural training with Bukura Agricultural College;
- Netherlands Embassy programmes, under the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Incubation Project (2016 to 2018), in collaboration with Maastricht School of Management, under which 67 commercial farmers were reached directly, and over 100 indirectly;
- The Netherlands supported HortIMPACT project (2017 to 2018) under which LAI trained over 600 farmers across the country on greenhouse farming technology as an aspect of conservation agriculture;
- BMZ with Welthungerhilfe (2019-2023) to enable training of 300 youth under the BMZ Global program 'Skill Up' project;
- Koppert Biological Systems is the world leader in the development and supply of biological crop protection solutions. Koppert leads the way in the development and provision of an integrated system of specialist knowledge and natural, safe solutions that improves crop health, resilience and production.
- Koppert's presence in the ecosystem greatly supports Latia's ambition of improving availability of healthy and affordable food in the market.
- KCB Foundation, in the implementation of the Young to Young African Works project in 2019-2020, under which 74 farm managers have been trained to in greenhouse management, and a pilot farm management ICT system has been developed for use in hydroponic greenhouses.
- Faraja Trust and GIZ programs, under which CBET training materials have been developed, trainers trained, and training programmes implemented for producers and value chain actors in Western Kenya.

Advantages of LAI as private ATVET

LAI places emphasis on soft skills, and it is mandatory that students are exposed to agripreneurship, life skills, and career guidance to address the skills gaps faced by young people seeking to engage in agriculture. Collaboration with farmers and the private sector helps LAS and LAI to arrange trainee internships for this practical experience. We also offer opportunities for graduates from different universities and colleges in Kenya to gain hands on/competence-based practical skills in crop and animal production.

Engagement with the private sector also helps LAI understand the labour market demand, and hence tailor our training to meet the need of the sector. We work with communities, conduct farmer field days and farmer field schools on crop and animal production. At LAI, farmers have access to high quality training on various value chains through our National Industrial Training Authority (NITA) courses on quality certification, poultry production, pig farming, dairy farming, modern greenhouse technology, etc. Over the years, we have trained over 5,000 commercial farms, equipped over 500 farm managers and conducted over 200 incubation programs to farms.

It is easier as a private ATVET to work with other partners as there is less bureaucracy and decisions are made faster. We are more adaptive to the current labour market needs as we have to meet our client's needs and ensure our graduates can compete in the labour markets. As a for-profit ATVET, it also helps us to easily engage with other for-profit enterprises and as well adjust our fees to meet our operational costs to avoid losses. Having both NITA and TVETA courses assists in navigating labour market needs. TVETA CDACC curricula cannot be changed at the institutional level and any new changes are adopted in NITA courses which ensures we are up to date with what the market needs. The accreditation process with TVETA is a long process. LAI leverages this through support from development partners (LRC) by developing new updated short courses addressing current market needs.