

NUST BRIEF

Advancing Namibia's agricultural trade policy

The Faculty of Natural Resources and Spatial Sciences (FNRSS) officially launched a two-year training course under its Agricultural Trade Policy Institute (ATPI), titled Agricultural Trade and Policy Training and Exchange Programme for Professionals. The course is funded by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit's (GIZ) through their Agricultural Policy Development in Namibia (ECAP).

"The purpose of this initiative is for the knowledge enhancement of policy champions to advance the current agricultural sector's trade and policy mechanisms in Namibia," Salomo Mbai, the Director of ATPI, said. Additionally, the training will aid to the socio-economic growth of Namibia through the betterment of the agricultural sector by improving the balance of trade and employment creation.

The course was designed after a detailed stakeholder survey that took place last year and targeted various role players in the agribusiness value chain. "The training targets various government representatives from different ministries, the Farmers Union, banks, private sector representatives, agricultural control boards, and other local institutions and international organisations,"

the Project Manager of ECAP, Vehaka Tjimune elaborated.

The training consists of a total of 14 modules covering various topics such as *Foundations of International Trade Policy, Trade Agreements, Trade-in Agriculture, International Marketing, Introduction to International Trade, and Modern Tools in International Trade Analysis*, to name a few. Through close collaboration with various international institutions, the training courses will be offered by the Trade Law Centre, the University of North West and Diagnostics, the University of Stellenbosch, the University of Hohenheim, and the University of Bonn.

For more information, contact Salomo Mbai at smbai@nust.na



From left to right: Maria Immanuel, Technical Advisor at Agricultural Trade Forum; Lara Beisiegel, Advisor at GIZ-ECAP; Prof Gerhard Erasmus, Founder of Trade Law Centre (TRALAC); Salomo Mbai, Director of ATPI; Dr Thinah Moyo, NUST Senior Lecturer in FNRSS; Trudi Hartzberg, Executive Director of TRALAC; Vehaka Tjimune, Project Manager at GIZ-ECAP.



Departure from Marienfluss, Kunene, via helicopter.



The view from the highest point of Serra Cafema.

NUST biodiversity researchers reach for the skies

NUST led an eight-day expedition to three mountain tops in the Kaokoveld area, through the European Union (EU) funded SCIONA project. The SCIONA project, established in 2018, aims to assess biodiversity in the Kaokoveld, as it is regarded as a hotspot where new species are continuously found.

The focus of the research was to assess the biodiversity on the three mountain-tops via helicopter, since the area, located in northern Namibia and southern Angola, is not reachable by any other means.

The team that was part of this expedition, consisted of experts in the field of botany, avifauna, herpetology, forestry, and mammals.

Prof Morgan Hauptfleisch, an Associate Professor, and Dr Vera De Cauwer, a Senior Lecturer, from the Faculty of Natural Resources and Spatial Sciences represented NUST. The team was dropped off by air at the Otjihipa mountains of Namibia Serra Tchamalinde and Serra Cafema in Angola.

"The survey was an incredible success. We found an interesting and pristine dolomite cave on the Otjihipa mountains. The species and a variety of plants records exceeded all our expectations. The data we collected will keep us busy for many years," Dr De Cauwer

said.

In addition, the team also found a previously unknown girdled lizard on both the Otjihipa and Serra Cafema mountains; a fruit-bearing Marula trees growing at a height of 1 600 metres in the Otjihipa mountains; and strategically placed camera traps recorded a caracal at the Tchamalinde mountains. "Many species that were considered endemic to Namibia, were found on the Angolan mountains," Dr De Cauwer elaborated. Despite logistical complexities affecting the organisation of the expedition, the excursion was a major success.

"We would like to give special thanks to the assistance of the SCIONA Project Coordinator, Ansie Bosman; our Dean, Prof Rolf Becker; our partners, the Institute of Higher Educational Sciences of Huíla; the Angolan Principal Investigator, Prof Fernanda Lages; and Namibia's Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism," Dr De Cauwer said.

Presentation of P3ICL project at Parliament

In a bid to gain public support and further recommendations for the Protecting, Preserving and Promoting Indigenous Knowledge and Culture (P3ICL) initiative, project leaders were afforded the opportunity to present their findings in Parliament recently, as the project is due to come to an end.

"The Parliamentarians were very impressed with our work and promised to provide us their full support to further the project," Prof Sarala Krishnamurthy from the Faculty of Human Sciences (FHS), said.

During their three years of research, the team found that three of Namibia's indigenous languages faced a serious threat of endangerment.

"Due to modernisation, we tend to chase after European languages and neglect our own, thus the overall objective of the P3ICL project is to protect, promote and preserve

the culture of Namibian indigenous groups such as the Ovadhimba, !Kung and Sifwe," Prof Krishnamurthy elaborated.

The P3ICL team collected stories, folk tales, legends and proverbs. The data will then be placed in a repository at the NUST Library for scholars to access. In addition, the team is busy compiling publications pertaining to the project.

The European Union (EU) awarded the project to NUST's FHS Department of Communication in 2018.



Prof Sarala Krishnamurthy

Funded by the European Union

Media ethics in a digitalised world

World Press Freedom day acts as a reminder to government to respect press freedom. Various NUST academics made their voices heard on the topic of Media Ethics in a Digital Age.

Opinion piece by Dr Clayton Peel
THE SIDELINES

The uptake of reporting and storytelling by readers – including uploading first-on-the-scene video footage of events – is a by-product of postmodern technologies being easily accessible to users outside the field of professional newsgatherers. Concurrently, these emerging technologies have been faulted for increasing the likelihood of distorted information, of publishing the previously unpublishable (mutilated bodies of crash victims, etc.) and other digital malpractices that have given weight to data security fears.

platforms. He encouraged media managers and entrepreneurs to experiment with various revenue generation models such as memberships, subscriptions, pay walls, donations and so forth.

He also observed that media consumption patterns have changed. Most young media consumers are opting to consume content online, while traditional media companies are still packaging their content in analogue formats. This mismatch has complicated media consumption patterns and trends in Namibia. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced media organisations to 'leapfrog' the analogue era by embracing innovative digital products like live streams, e-papers, WhatsApp friendly media products and podcasts.

His public lecture also emphasised the idea that quality journalism and investigative reporting will not die since they are essential



From left to right: Gwen Lister, Chairperson of the Namibia Media Trust; Mathias Haufiku, News Editor of the Namibian Sun; Dr Clayton Peel, NUST Senior Lecturer, Department of Communication; and Tirivangani Masawi, freelance journalist.

measures and controls of online activities of journalists and citizens including use of censorship which two forms are preventive and punitive censorships. These countries include Cameroon, Benin Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, South Africa, Morocco, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Rwanda and Nigeria.”

The researchers noted that these control measures point to resurgence of authoritarianism “manifesting in the unfettered control and monitoring of online communication of journalists, individuals, groups, mass media and social media platforms by various governments in Africa.” They expressed concerns that “state-oriented technology surveillance and censorship negate democratic freedoms and values” and noted that Africa, her media and her people, are inching towards totalitarian control of freedom of expression, especially with draconian acts, laws and proclamations by her governments.

Opinion piece by Dr Phillip Santos
YOUTH OPPORTUNITY FORUM

While this solemn occasion of World Press Freedom Day was going on, the European Union also ran a number of activities in commemoration of Europe Day.

NUST hosted the Youth Opportunity Forum, themed Youth Resilience, Innovation and Networking during COVID-19.

NUST Senior Lecturer of the Department of Communication, Dr Phillip Santos, presented on the topic “The Will to Commune”, focusing on how youth drew on digital solutions to negotiate the social atomisation brought about by COVID-19 induced restrictions.

During his presentation, Dr Santos argued that before one can concern oneself with young people as innovators, it is imperative to see them as human beings who need to be socio-psychologically healthy before they can assume any responsibilities as technological



Prof Admire Mare, whilst moderating a session during the Africa Forum. He was joined by Mr Gilbert Sendungwa and Dr Delta Ndou.

We used to belong to a profession that created content which was taken as a matter of record. You would take it as a firm truth that Yaoundé is the capital city of Cameroon because you read so in a newspaper. And, in the event that any information was inaccurate, it would be corrected as soon as the error was pointed out. But now, the digital media has given us a space that is contested. Owners of online platforms no longer feel compelled to correct misinterpretations and falsehoods. Believe them if you want, or go somewhere else, is the attitude.

In light of World Press Freedom Day, Prof Admire Mare, Deputy Head of the Department of Communication, delivered a public lecture titled ‘Taking stock of the impact of digitisation on the Namibian Media Landscape’. He argued that the media landscape in Namibia has been affected by the on-going economic recession, technological disruption and the COVID-19 pandemic. These interrelated crises have complicated the financial sustainability of media organisations in Namibia and beyond. The Covid-19 pandemic has escalated the crisis in journalism as newsrooms are surviving on shoestring budgets, salary and staff rationalisation, falling sales revenue and decreasing circulation figures.

Prof Mare made a case for recalibrated media business models that go beyond an overreliance on the placement of advertisements on their traditional media

for democratic practices. In addition, Prof Mare stated that technological disruptions will continue to affect journalism in its various manifestations, but journalism will find ways to adapt and reconfigure itself.

Opinion piece by Dr Chudey Pride
NUST ACADEMICS PRESENT PAPERS

Dr Chudey Pride, a Senior Lecturer of NUST in the Department of Communication, and his co-author, Abdulganiyu Omotosho Issa from the University of Lagos, Akoka, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria, presented their paper titled “Exploring the impact of state-oriented communication technology surveillance and censorship on Journalists’ works, safety, and democratic freedoms in Africa” in the Academic Conference of the World Press Freedom Day on 29 April 2021.

Their research explored the growing incidents of surveillance technologies and censorship of the press, the impact and constraints on journalistic freedom, and journalism and democratic freedoms in Africa

Their paper, presented by Dr Pride, observed that digital communication technologies and platforms have brought significant challenges of censorship and surveillance against journalists in many parts of Africa, with a wide array of interventions and measures to shape the activity of journalists. The research identified ten countries across Africa’s cardinal points that “have entrenched



Dr Phillip Santos

During the same event, Prof Admire Mare and Dr Phillip Santos presented a paper, which examined the risks faced by Southern African journalists during COVID-19 and the ways in which news organisations in the region had responded to these risks.

They argued that a complex cocktail of safety threats faced by journalists in their line of duty, by extension, threatens the very fabric of democratic societies and, therefore, must be understood and addressed in a profound way.

innovators.

He outlined some of the ways in which young people had nativised socio-technological spaces to reclaim the experience of community, which the COVID-19 had effectively emasculated. For instance, young people connect and socialise through gaming communities, interact through platforms such as club houses and online workshops, participate in digital activism in pursuit of social justice, share digital experiential diaries and participate in live music shows.