



THE IREN TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATIONS PLATFORM 2020 (ITIP 2020)

Press Release

Forum: The IREN Technologies and Innovations Platform 2020 (ITIP 2020)

Date 3rd and 4th December, 2020

Venue Golf Hotel, Kakamega

Innovators drawn from 14 Lake region counties in Kenya, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) operators, corporates, media and cultural ambassadors will on the 3rd and 4th of December 2020 converge for the IREN Technologies and Innovations Platform 2020 (ITIP 2020) organized by The Inter Region Economic Network (IREN) in conjunction with The Friedrich Naumann Foundation.

The forum will see youthful innovators from Kenya's Lake Region Economic Bloc trained, showcase and pitch their smart solutions aimed at mitigating challenges across agricultural value chains. A roundtable that will involve business, cultural ambassadors and TVET will also be held.

The objectives of The IREN Technologies and Innovations Platform 2020 (ITIP 2020) include

- To identify smart and sustainable solutions that can improve commercialization and diversification in the agribusiness sector
- To offer youth a platform to showcase smart and sustainable agribusiness solutions to challenges in agricultural value chains
- To optimize agri-processes by promoting the best mix of innovation and technology to business processes along the agribusiness value chain

This year's in-person and virtual forum will see participants feature smart solutions that focus on:

I. Finance: Technology and smart solutions that address the challenge of cash flow among smallholder farmers in the Lake Region Economic Bloc. This category will feature a number of solutions. An **egg processor** that saves farmers the time and money spent on breaking eggs hence enabling them to relocate labour into other sectors of production. A **solar powered hatchery** that uses light/energy and made from affordable and readily available materials to ensure low cost will also be featured. An **egg shell grinder** that is portable, easy to manipulate and able to manufacture fertilizer from eggshells will be showcased. This category will also feature a **digitized grain dehydrator** (Brafik Dehydrator), a programmable dehydrator that dries cereals hence reducing post-harvest loss. A **smart greenhouse** equipped with temperature, humidity and water sensors will be showcased. Draxa Biofuel, a **renewable biofuel machine** that runs irrigation pumps will also be showcased. Biofuel production from Dracaena perennial plant will

significantly increase the amount and efficiency of Biofuel while at the same time reducing the cost of production in most industries.

II. Security: Technology and Smart solutions that address the challenge of petty theft that curtails productivity in crop and animal husbandry. Under this category, a **solar powered GPS tracker for cattle** that acts as a watchdog of cattle movement while grazing will be featured. An **anti-burglary sensor**, that alerts farm owners via mobile phone when there is an intrusion in progress or a trespass in the farm store will also be showcased.

III. Labor Enhancement: Technology and smart solutions that address the challenge of use of rudimentary (back-breaking processes) in production and value addition processes. This category shall feature **solar powered chaff cutters** that can be integrated on internet for easy real time monitoring and control, hence reducing the cost of labor force. A self-powered irrigation water pump that is cost efficient will be showcased.

IV. Markets: Technology and Smart solutions that connect major market centers in the Lake Region Economic Bloc to facilitate an efficient market system. This category shall showcase the **Smartkilimo**, an online platform accessible via SMS (ussd code) on which farmers register and can be linked to agricultural information centers, finance institutions, farm input providers etc. **PHALIMA DigiFarm**, a web-based application that optimizes agricultural value chains to enable farmers to save on expenses and access markets will also be showcased.

Participating innovators will be taken through a pitching training and thereafter pitch their smart solutions to potential partners and financiers on a competitive basis in person and virtually.

“Finding innovative solutions to development challenges is paramount to FNF’s mission. We are proud to be partners in this initiative. We welcome more partners to join the initiative and expand innovative solutions in the counties,” said Veni Swai, Senior Programme Officer for Friedrich Naumann Foundation, East Africa.

“We are delighted to host these technology innovators. Their agency is key to helping the Lake Region Economic Bloc to develop homegrown solutions that compliment county and national government development efforts,” said James Shikwati, Chief Executive Officer, IREN.

About Inter Region Economic Network (IREN)

IREN is a leading independent African Think tank that promotes ideas and strategies geared towards causing prosperity in Africa through free enterprise and sound public policy. IREN has created screening and training platforms (for Start-ups and Small and Medium Sized Enterprises across the East African region) and managed over 19 business competitions for the last 15 years. Participating innovators have won both local and international business and innovation awards. www.irenkenya.com

About The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom

The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom is the foundation for liberal politics in the Federal Republic of Germany. It aims to promote the goal of making the principle of freedom valid for the dignity of all people and in all areas of society, both in Germany and abroad. In East Africa, the Foundation supports development of think tank that networks liberal thinkers, come up with shared concepts for development and progress. www.africa.fnst.org

