



REVIVER
REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE FOR VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION EU+AFRICA

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CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE IMPLEMENTATION ACT

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REVIVER PROJECT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This implementation act provides comprehensive documentation of the establishment, operationalization, and initial activities of two Centers of Excellence (CoE) created through the REVIVER project to serve as regional hubs for regenerative agriculture promotion and education. The European Center of Excellence, hosted by Pučko otvoreno učilište AMC Nova Gradiška (POU AMC) in Nova Gradiška, Croatia, and the Sub-Saharan African Center of Excellence, hosted by African Agribusiness Academy (APEX) in Arusha, Tanzania, represent strategic investments in institutional mechanisms ensuring project sustainability and continued impact beyond the 24-month funding period.

The establishment of these Centers of Excellence followed rigorous planning and consultation processes spanning from start till the last months of project implementation. The process involved identification of suitable host institutions based on clear selection criteria, extensive consultation with project partners and local stakeholders to ensure Centers would meet genuine needs and receive adequate support, development of governance structures providing oversight and strategic direction, mobilization of resources including facilities, equipment, personnel, and operational funding, and formal inauguration events introducing Centers to broader stakeholder communities and establishing legitimacy.

Both Centers of Excellence became operational during the final quarter of the project period and have already begun delivering services to their respective communities. Combined, the Centers have established partnerships with 57 organizations across their respective regions, organized 2 major inauguration events,, developed resource libraries containing specialized materials on regenerative agriculture, and established sustainable funding mechanisms ensuring continued operation for minimum of three years beyond project completion.

This implementation act documents the complete establishment process, operational frameworks, initial activities and achievements, partnership networks supporting each Center, and strategies ensuring long-term sustainability. The document serves multiple purposes including accountability to the European Education and Culture Executive Agency for project deliverable completion, transparency to project stakeholders and broader regenerative agriculture community about Center structures and services, knowledge transfer to other organizations potentially establishing similar centers, and baseline documentation enabling future evaluation of Center impact and effectiveness.

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 Centers of Excellence Concept and Rationale

The concept of Centers of Excellence as implemented in the REVIVER project draws from successful models across various sectors where designated institutions receive enhanced support and recognition enabling them to achieve higher levels of performance, innovation, and impact than would be possible through dispersed efforts. Centers of Excellence serve as focal points concentrating expertise, resources, and activities in specific domains, thereby creating economies of scale, facilitating knowledge exchange, and providing visible institutional homes for emerging fields or practices.

In the context of regenerative agriculture education and promotion, the establishment of Centers of Excellence addresses several critical needs identified through project research and stakeholder consultation. Regenerative agriculture remains relatively unknown in many European and Sub-Saharan African contexts despite growing recognition of its importance for addressing soil degradation, climate change, and agricultural sustainability. The scattered nature of regenerative agriculture knowledge and practice, with individual farmers, researchers, and organizations working in isolation without systematic connection or knowledge exchange mechanisms, limits impact and slows adoption. Vocational education and training institutions often lack specialized facilities, demonstration sites, and technical expertise necessary for high-quality regenerative agriculture education, constraining their ability to offer relevant training even when interest exists. Farmers seeking to transition from conventional to regenerative practices face significant knowledge gaps and technical challenges requiring ongoing technical assistance and support extending beyond one-time training events. Policy makers and agricultural development agencies lack accessible sources of evidence-based information and technical expertise on regenerative agriculture to inform policy development and program design.

The Centers of Excellence established through REVIVER address these needs by providing institutional hubs offering multiple functions simultaneously. They serve as training centers delivering curriculum developed through the project to VET providers, young farmers, and agricultural stakeholders through regular courses, workshops, and field days. They function as demonstration sites showcasing regenerative practices in operation, enabling farmers and students to observe techniques and outcomes firsthand rather than relying solely on classroom instruction. They provide technical assistance through advisory services supporting farmers through transition challenges with personalized guidance addressing specific contexts and questions. They act as knowledge repositories maintaining libraries of resources including research publications, training materials, case studies, and practitioner guides accessible to diverse users. They facilitate networking by convening stakeholders for exchange, collaboration, and community building around regenerative agriculture themes. They conduct applied research addressing locally relevant questions and generating evidence appropriate for regional conditions. They engage in policy dialogue by providing technical expertise informing agricultural and education policy development at local, national, and regional levels.

The decision to establish two Centers of Excellence, one in Europe and one in Sub-Saharan Africa, reflects the project's commitment to balanced partnership and mutual learning. Rather than establishing a single European center providing services to African stakeholders in asymmetric relationship, the two-center model recognizes distinct regional contexts, needs, and capacities while creating opportunities for inter-regional exchange and collaboration. The European and African Centers can share experiences, innovations, and challenges, engaging in mutual learning that enriches both while respecting contextual differences requiring adapted approaches.

1.2 Location Selection Process and Criteria

The selection of host institutions and locations for the two Centers of Excellence followed systematic process balancing multiple considerations. The project partnership engaged in extensive consultation, examining potential options and ultimately reaching consensus on selections offering strongest prospects for successful establishment and sustainable operation.

Selection criteria guiding the process included several key dimensions. Institutional capacity encompassed the host organization's demonstrated experience in agricultural education and training, availability of physical infrastructure including facilities for Center activities, financial stability and resource mobilization capacity indicating ability to sustain operations beyond project period, and strong management systems and governance structures providing foundation for Center administration. Geographic accessibility considered location enabling reasonable access for target audiences including proximity to farming communities, transportation connections facilitating travel from broader region, and positioning in area with regenerative agriculture potential and interest.

Partnership networks reflected host organization's existing relationships and collaborations with relevant stakeholders including VET institutions, farmer organizations, government agricultural services, research institutions, and civil society organizations. These existing networks provide pathways for Center outreach, partnership development, and impact. Alignment with regenerative agriculture encompassed host organization's mission and values being compatible with regenerative agriculture principles, prior engagement with sustainable agriculture or related themes demonstrating genuine interest rather than opportunistic participation, and organizational culture emphasizing innovation, learning, and collaboration necessary for effective Center operation. Commitment to sustainability required host organization's willingness to provide long-term institutional home for Center with dedicated resources beyond project funding, leadership support for Center establishment and development at highest organizational levels, and integration into organizational strategic plans ensuring permanence rather than peripheral status.

The European Center of Excellence location selection process examined several potential options across partner countries. Pučko otvoreno učilište AMC Nova Gradiška in Nova Gradiška, Croatia, emerged as optimal choice based on comprehensive assessment against selection criteria. The institution brings substantial strengths including over twenty-two years of experience providing vocational education and training in agriculture and related sectors, training facilities including classrooms, and accommodation for residential programs accommodating diverse event formats, strong relationships with Croatian Ministry of Agriculture, Croatian Agency for Vocational Education and Training, and regional farmer associations providing institutional connections, demonstrated commitment through participation as REVIVER associated partner contributing in-kind resources and expertise, and strategic location in Nova Gradiška providing access to both urban and rural populations in central Croatia while offering transportation connections to other regions.

The formal agreement establishing POU AMC Nova Gradiška as European Center of Excellence host was finalized at November 2025., with institutional leadership providing written commitment allocating space, staff time, and operational resources for Center establishment and ongoing operation. The institution's Board of Governors formally approved Center establishment as permanent institutional program integrated into organizational structure, signaling high-level commitment and sustainability.

The Sub-Saharan African Center of Excellence location selection similarly examined options across partner countries including Ghana, Kenya, and Tanzania. African Agribusiness Academy (APEX) in Arusha, Tanzania, was selected based on its exceptional qualifications against selection criteria. APEX brings distinctive strengths including extensive network of over 700 agricultural small and medium enterprises across six African countries providing immediate reach and partnership base, proven track record delivering business development services, training, and technical assistance to agricultural value chain actors, established relationships with government agricultural ministries, research institutions, and international development agencies, innovative digital platform facilitating information sharing and network coordination among members, strategic location in **Arusha** providing access to Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda farming communities given proximity to borders, and explicit organizational commitment to agroecology and sustainable agriculture already embedded in mission and programs.

The formal agreement with APEX was finalized in October 2025. with organizational leadership providing written commitment dedicating staff capacity, office space, and partnership networks to Center establishment and operation. APEX's Board of Directors formally approved Center establishment, allocating permanent organizational resources and integrating Center into institutional strategic plan.

Both selected host institutions demonstrated not only capacity to host Centers but genuine enthusiasm and commitment to regenerative agriculture education as strategic priority. This authentic buy-in substantially increases likelihood of sustainable operation, as Centers are not externally imposed structures but initiatives aligned with host organizations' core missions and interests. The selection process balanced pragmatic assessment of capacity with attention to organizational values and commitment, recognizing that technical capacity without genuine investment rarely produces lasting impact.

1.3 Establishment Process and Timeline

The establishment of both Centers of Excellence followed parallel processes adapted to each regional context while maintaining consistent overall approach. The establishment process spanned approximately six months from initial planning through formal inauguration at October 2025,, with continued development and refinement extending through project completion at November 2025,, and beyond.

Activities focused on strategic planning and governance development. Project partners conducted strategic planning workshops, engaging institutional leadership, staff who would be involved in Center operations, and local stakeholders including potential partners and beneficiaries. These workshops articulated Center vision and mission statements aligned with both REVIVER project objectives and host institution's goals, identified priority services and activities based on stakeholder needs and institutional capacities, established governance structures including advisory boards or steering committees providing oversight, and developed initial operational plans outlining staffing, resource requirements, and implementation timelines. Simultaneously, project partners worked with host institutions to draft formal partnership agreements codifying commitments, responsibilities, and resource allocations. These agreements underwent legal review and institutional approval processes.

Activities resource mobilization and infrastructure preparation. Host institutions conducted facility assessments identifying space allocation for Center activities including offices, training rooms, demonstration sites, and storage. Equipment procurement addressed essential items not already available including training materials and supplies, audio-visual equipment for presentations, soil testing equipment for demonstration and training, computers and internet connectivity for digital learning activities, and furniture and fixtures creating comfortable learning environments. Staff recruitment and designation processes identified personnel who would dedicate time to Center activities, sometimes through hiring new positions but often through reallocation of existing staff time or designation of staff members with relevant expertise to take on Center responsibilities in addition to other duties.

Host institutions reached out systematically to potential partner organizations that could support Center success through various contributions. Umbrella organizations established through Work Package 4 activities were formalized as Center partners, with representatives joining advisory boards or steering committees. Research institutions were approached regarding possibilities for collaborative research, student internships, and faculty involvement in training delivery.

Farmer organizations were consulted to ensure Center services aligned with farmer needs and to establish pathways for farmer participation in activities. Private sector actors including agricultural input suppliers, certification bodies, and food processors were invited to explore partnerships potentially providing sponsorship, technical expertise, or market connections.

Center staff participated in intensive training of trainers sessions ensuring familiarity with REVIVER curriculum, VET Provider Education Guide, and effective facilitation techniques for regenerative agriculture education. Training materials were prepared including participant handouts, presentation slides, practical demonstration plans, and assessment tools. Pilot activities with small groups tested training delivery, identified areas for improvement, and built staff confidence before larger-scale public programs. Pilot participants provided feedback through evaluation questionnaires informing refinements to training approaches.

Formal inauguration of both Centers of Excellence through major public events introducing Centers to broader stakeholder communities and establishing legitimacy and visibility. The events themselves combined ceremonial elements recognizing achievements and contributions with substantive programming demonstrating Center purposes and capabilities.

Centers conducted initial activities implementing service offerings to early adopter participants. Staff reflected on experiences, identifying what worked well and what required adjustment, incorporating lessons into operational procedures and training approaches. Advisory boards or steering committees held initial meetings providing guidance and accountability. Sustainability planning addressed financial resource mobilization beyond project funding, partnership cultivation and management, quality assurance mechanisms, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks enabling documentation of Center impact and continuous improvement.



2. EUROPEAN CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

2.1 Host Institution Profile and Facilities

The European Center of Excellence is hosted by Pučko otvoreno učilište AMC Nova Gradiška (POU AMC), a well-established adult education institution located in Nova Gradiška, Croatia. Founded in 2003, POU AMC has over two decades of experience providing vocational education and training in agriculture, rural development, food processing, environmental protection, and related sectors. The institution serves Brod-Posavina County and surrounding regions, maintaining strong relationships with local communities, agricultural producers, government agencies, and educational institutions throughout Croatia.

POU AMC's mission emphasizes accessible, high-quality adult education enabling individuals to develop competencies for employment, entrepreneurship, and active citizenship. The institution's values align closely with regenerative agriculture principles, including commitment to environmental sustainability, respect for traditional knowledge while embracing innovation, support for small-scale agricultural producers, and belief in education as tool for rural development and community empowerment. This mission and values alignment provided strong foundation for hosting the European Center of Excellence, as regenerative agriculture education naturally extends rather than contradicts institutional priorities.

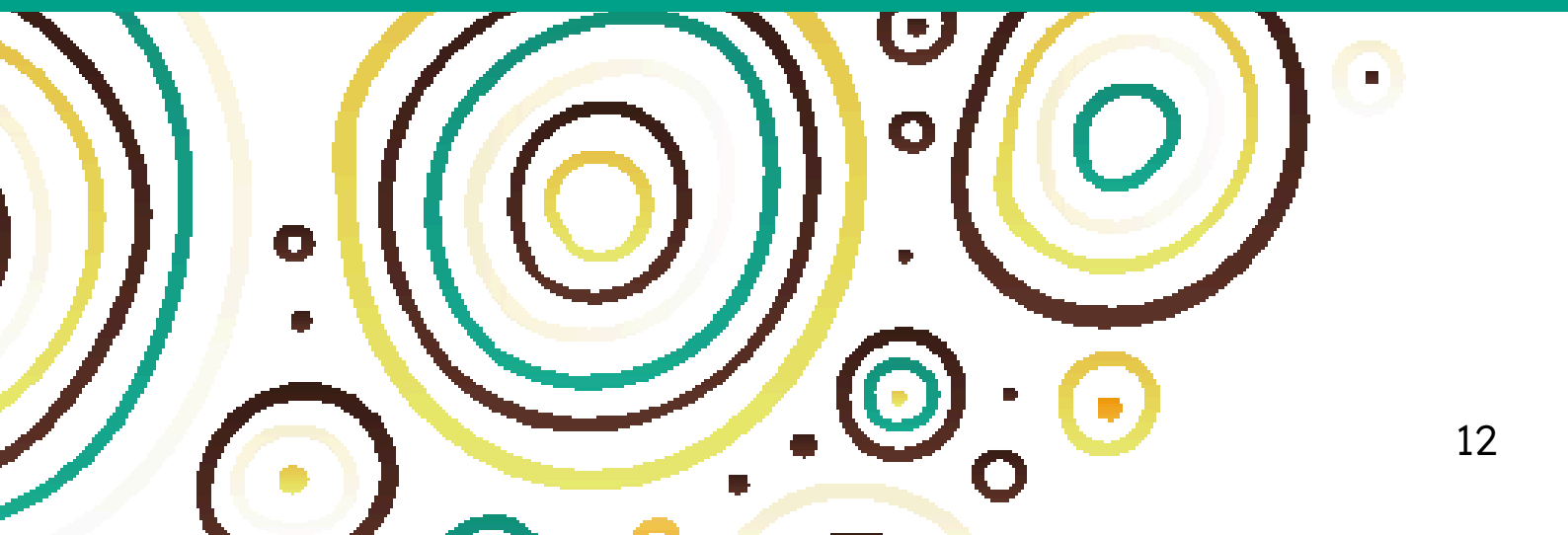
The institution possesses substantial physical infrastructure supporting diverse educational activities. The main campus in Nova Gradiška encompasses several buildings providing comprehensive facilities. Administrative offices house institutional management, program coordination, and support services staff. Four training rooms of varying sizes accommodate groups from 10 to 40 participants, equipped with modern audio-visual systems, comfortable seating, natural lighting, and climate control ensuring conducive learning environments. A specialized computer laboratory containing 18 workstations with high-speed internet enables digital literacy training and access to online learning resources including the REVIVER e-learning platform.



Rather than owning dedicated agricultural land, POU AMC has strategically established a network of partnerships with family farms (obiteljska poljoprivredna gospodarstva - OPG) throughout the region. This collaborative model offers several advantages over institutional farm ownership, including authentic representation of actual farming conditions and challenges faced by family farmers rather than idealized demonstration settings, diverse production systems across multiple farms showcasing regenerative practices in various contexts including field crops, horticulture, orchards, livestock, and mixed systems, distributed geographic coverage enabling demonstrations accessible to participants from different areas without requiring travel to single distant location, reduced institutional costs by avoiding land acquisition, equipment investment, and ongoing farm management expenses, and genuine farmer leadership with OPG farmers themselves serving as educators and role models rather than institution presenting practices in abstraction.

The demonstration farm network currently comprises 15 partner OPG farms across Brod-Posavina County and neighboring areas, each selected based on specific criteria including existing implementation or willingness to implement regenerative agriculture practices, adequate farm size and infrastructure to accommodate training groups safely and comfortably, farmer interest in hosting demonstrations and sharing knowledge with peers, geographic accessibility with reasonable transportation connections, and diversity of production systems ensuring network collectively represents regional agricultural diversity.

POU AMC provides support to partner farms including technical assistance and guidance on regenerative practice implementation from Center staff, inputs and materials such as cover crop seeds, compost, or equipment for specific demonstrations where needed, compensation for hosting training groups calculated based on group size and duration, professional development opportunities including priority access to advanced training and connections to research institutions, and publicity and recognition through website features, media coverage, and acknowledgment in Center materials potentially enhancing farm reputation and market positioning.



2.2 Governance Structure and Management

The European Center of Excellence governance structure balances institutional accountability with stakeholder participation, ensuring host institution retains ultimate responsibility and decision-making authority while benefiting from external input, expertise, and oversight. The governance model includes several interconnected elements providing strategic direction, operational management, and quality assurance.

The Center Director position provides day-to-day leadership and operational management. Ms. Slavica Štefanac, a senior staff member at POU AMC with extensive experience in agricultural education and demonstrated passion for sustainable agriculture, was appointed Center Director. Her responsibilities encompass overall strategic planning and priority setting within parameters established by advisory board, program development designing specific training courses, technical assistance services, and other Center offerings, partnership management cultivating and maintaining relationships with collaborating organizations, resource mobilization pursuing funding opportunities and managing Center budget, staff supervision providing guidance and support to staff members contributing to Center activities, quality assurance monitoring program delivery and participant satisfaction ensuring continuous improvement, and external representation serving as primary Center spokesperson to media, government officials, and other external audiences.

The Advisory Board provides strategic guidance and accountability while connecting Center to broader stakeholder community. The board was established with initial membership including five individuals representing diverse perspectives and expertise. Board membership includes representative from Pannonia Consulting as REVIVER project coordinator ensuring continuity with project vision and facilitating ongoing international network connections, representative from POU AMC institutional leadership ensuring alignment with host institution's strategic priorities and resource commitments, representative from regional farmer association ensuring farmer voice and perspectives inform Center priorities and approaches, representative from environmental NGO active in sustainable agriculture advocacy contributing civil society and ecological perspectives and representative from neighboring agricultural school providing peer institutional perspective.



2.3 Services and Activities

The European Center of Excellence offers multiple interconnected services addressing diverse stakeholder needs while maintaining coherent focus on regenerative agriculture education, demonstration, and support. Services launched during initial operational period through Month 24 with plans for expansion and refinement based on demand and learning.

Regular training courses represent core Center service, delivering curriculum developed through REVIVER project to VET providers, young farmers, and agricultural stakeholders. The course catalog includes several standard offerings scheduled regularly. The VET Provider Training intensive five-day residential course prepares educators to teach regenerative agriculture to their students, covering curriculum content, pedagogical approaches from the VET Provider Education Guide, and practical techniques demonstrated on the farm. The course has been delivered in initial operating period reaching 17 participants across Croatia and neighboring countries

All training courses will employ participatory pedagogical approaches emphasizing active learning, practical application, and peer exchange rather than lecture-based knowledge transfer. Typical training sessions will balance presentation of core concepts, small group discussions enabling participants to explore ideas and share experiences, practical demonstrations and hands-on activities on the farm where participants can try techniques, case study analyses examining real farm transitions with successes and challenges, and planning or reflection exercises helping participants apply learning to their contexts. Assessment approaches will include pre and post knowledge assessments measuring learning gains, participant evaluation questionnaires gathering feedback on content, delivery, and logistics, follow-up surveys at three and six months assessing practice adoption and continued impact, and certificate of completion for participants meeting attendance and assessment requirements.



Knowledge repository and resource center functions make Center a hub for regenerative agriculture information accessible to diverse users. The digital resource library accessible through Center website includes REVIVER curriculum and VET Provider Guide in Croatian translation, research reports and case studies, training presentations and handouts, video recordings of demonstrations and farmer testimonials, farm planning templates and tools, and links to external resources like research institutions, farmer networks, and online learning platforms. Resource access is free for all users promoting wide dissemination of knowledge. Center staff provide reference services helping users identify relevant resources for specific questions or interests.

2.4 Partnerships and Regional Network

The European Center of Excellence is embedded in extensive partnership network providing essential support, expertise, and reach substantially multiplying Center impact beyond what host institution could achieve independently. Partnerships span multiple sectors and fulfill various functions including governance through advisory board participation, technical expertise in specialized areas, access to target audiences like farmer organizations connecting Center to agricultural producers, financial support providing funding or in-kind contributions, research collaboration generating evidence and innovation, and policy dialogue informing agricultural and education policy development.

The Center's partnership network includes 27 organizations across Croatia and neighboring countries organized into several categories. Croatian umbrella organization members formally established through REVIVER project activities comprise nine organizations including five adult education institutions (POU AMC Nova Gradiška, POU LIBAR Slavonski Brod, Učilište Dabro Vukovar, POU Poetika Osijek, Učilište Potencijal, POU Novska), one NGO (Udruga Studio B working with young farmers), and one local government unit (Municipality of Vrbje).

Regional partner organizations from neighboring European countries extend Center reach beyond national borders, creating opportunities for international exchange and collaboration.

Partners include Outside Media and Knowledge from Germany contributing communications expertise and migrant farmer network connections, Learning Library from Estonia providing digital learning support and e-learning platform technical assistance, Fairgrow from Estonia connecting to regenerative farming community and offering case study site, Youth Power Austria bringing youth engagement and green entrepreneurship perspectives, LINK DMT from Italy contributing e-learning development capabilities and social entrepreneurship focus, Outreach Hannover from Germany providing inclusion and non-formal education expertise, AMUSE from Serbia connecting Western Balkans networks, Building the Balkans from Kosovo extending reach to conflict-affected communities, Poenta Association from Serbia bridging arts, culture, and environmental awareness, and Centre for Non-Formal Education and Lifelong Learning from Serbia contributing educational design and youth empowerment approaches.

These regional partners participate in knowledge exchange through virtual and in-person meetings, contribute guest lectures and specialized workshops bringing diverse perspectives, facilitate cross-border learning exchanges for farmers and VET providers, collaborate on joint funding proposals extending and deepening work, and provide technical assistance in specialized areas like digital tool development or inclusive pedagogy. Research and academic partners strengthen Center's evidence base and credibility while providing opportunities for students and faculty engagement. University of Zagreb Faculty of Agriculture is primary academic partner, contributing specialized lectures, supervising student research projects using Center as field site, and collaborating on applied research examining regenerative practices under Croatian conditions.

Government and public sector partners provide legitimacy, policy connections, and potential support. Partnerships include local government units in Brod-Posavina County and surrounding counties supporting Center through publicity, facility use, and event co-sponsorship, agricultural extension service providing complementary farmer advisory services and referrals to Center programs,

Private sector partners bring market perspective and potentially create economic incentives for regenerative agriculture adoption. Organic food processors and retailers interested in sourcing regeneratively grown products provide market connections for farmers, agricultural input suppliers exploring lower-input business models appropriate for regenerative systems contribute technical knowledge about tools and materials, agricultural banks and credit unions interested in financing sustainable agriculture provide information sessions on funding options, and agricultural insurance companies exploring regenerative agriculture implications for risk assessment contribute expertise on risk management.



Civil society partners extend Center reach to diverse communities and perspectives. Farmer organizations including association of family farms, women farmer networks, and young farmer groups ensure diverse farmer voices, environmental organizations working on soil protection, water quality, and biodiversity conservation see regenerative agriculture as important solution, rural development organizations supporting rural livelihood improvement recognize regenerative agriculture's potential, consumer organizations interested in food quality and safety appreciate regenerative agriculture's health dimensions, and slow food movement promoting traditional foodways and sustainable production embraces regenerative agriculture principles.

This multi-sectoral partnership network provides the European Center of Excellence with resources, expertise, legitimacy, reach, and resilience substantially exceeding what single institution could muster independently. Partnership cultivation and management require ongoing attention, but investment proves worthwhile through multiplied impact and shared ownership creating broad base of support for Center sustainability and success.

2.5 Initial Activities and Achievements

Following formal establishment in November 2025, the European Center of Excellence is positioned to conduct extensive activities that will establish its operational track record and demonstrate value to stakeholders. These planned activities are designed to provide learning that will inform ongoing refinement while building momentum to support continued and expanded operations beyond the project completion.

The inauguration event held on November 25, 2025, in Nova Gradiška marked the formal launch and generated significant visibility and stakeholder engagement.



The inauguration program balanced ceremonial elements with substantive content including welcome and opening remarks from POU AMC Manager and REVIVER project coordinator establishing context and significance, panel discussion on regenerative agriculture for Croatian farming with three farmers, agricultural advisor, and researcher sharing diverse perspectives, poster exhibition displaying REVIVER project results and regenerative agriculture information, and networking reception enabling relationship building and informal conversations.

In addition to activities directly related to the project, POU AMC has introduced two new formal education programs, approved by the competent Ministry of Education, which will largely use the materials of the REVIVER project. These are the programs called the Education Program for Acquiring Micro-Qualifications in Family Farm Management, which is intended for people without experience in agriculture, and the Education Program for Acquiring Micro-Qualifications in Sustainable Farming and Branding in Organic Agriculture, intended for people who already have prior knowledge and previously acquired qualifications in the field of agriculture. POU AMC has included the Education Program for Acquiring Micro-Qualifications in Family Farm Management as an education provider in the Croatian Employment Service's education voucher system, and made its attendance free of charge for both the unemployed and employed.



3. SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

3.1 Host Institution Profile and Facilities

The Sub-Saharan African Center of Excellence is hosted by Africa Agribusiness Academy (APEX), a dynamic agricultural network organization headquartered in Arusha, Tanzania. Established in 2010, APEX represents innovative approach to agricultural development through membership-based model connecting small and medium agricultural enterprises across multiple countries while providing business development services, training, market linkages, and advocacy. The organization's evolution from initial focus in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda to current presence across six African countries including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Malawi demonstrates adaptability and growth capacity.

APEX's mission emphasizes empowering agricultural value chain actors to build profitable and sustainable enterprises through learning, networking, and enhanced management capacity. The organization's theory of change recognizes that agricultural transformation requires not just production improvements but also business acumen, market connections, access to finance and information, and enabling policy environments. APEX addresses these multiple dimensions through integrated approach combining training and capacity building, facilitation of business relationships, knowledge sharing and peer learning, policy advocacy, and applied research and innovation.

The organization's membership comprises over 700 agricultural SMEs representing diverse value chains including horticulture, grains, dairy, poultry, aquaculture, fruits, and agro-processing. Members range from individual entrepreneurs with small operations to established companies with substantial scale, creating heterogeneous community with diverse experiences and needs. This membership diversity strengthens APEX by bringing multiple perspectives while creating mentorship opportunities where established members support newer or smaller enterprises. The organization is structured with country chapters in each of six nations, each legally registered with own governance while bound together by joint Charter and coordinated by regional secretariat in Arusha.



APEX maintains both physical and virtual infrastructure supporting programming. The main office in Arusha houses administrative staff, meeting space, and information resource center. The training center facility accommodates up to 20 participants for workshops and courses, equipped with presentation technology, breakout space, and catering facilities. Rather than owning dedicated demonstration farm, APEX partners with member farms serving as demonstration and training sites. This distributed model appropriately adapts to smallholder realities in East Africa where most farmers work dispersed plots rather than consolidated farms, and enables showcasing of diverse production systems across different agroecological zones.

Digital infrastructure represents particularly important asset given geography spanning multiple countries. The APEX digital platform launched in 2019 facilitates information sharing among members, business matchmaking, and virtual learning. The platform includes discussion forums where members pose questions and share experiences, a business directory listing member enterprises with services and products, market information with prices, demand opportunities, and supplier contacts, a resource library with training materials, research reports, and technical guides, and an events calendar advertising training opportunities, field days, and business networking events. Platform access via mobile phones enables participation from remote locations, democratizing information access beyond those who can travel to in-person gatherings.

3.2 Governance Structure and Management

The Sub-Saharan African Center of Excellence governance structure reflects APEX's multi-country federated model while ensuring effective leadership and accountability. The governance framework balances regional coordination with country-level implementation, recognizing that regenerative agriculture education and promotion require attention to national contexts while benefiting from cross-country exchange and economies of scale.

The Center Coordinator position provides overall leadership and regional coordination. Ms. Grace Mhina, APEX Tanzania Country Coordinator with extensive experience in agricultural value chains and demonstrated commitment to agroecology and sustainable agriculture, was appointed Center Coordinator.. Her background includes Master's degree in Agribusiness from Florida A&M University [MOUI] and nearly ten years of coordinating projects supporting agricultural producers and agribusinesses in Tanzania, qualifying her eminently for Center leadership.

Her responsibilities encompass strategic planning and priority setting for Center activities, coordination across three primary implementation countries of Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda, partnership development at regional and national levels, resource mobilization and budget management, quality assurance for training and technical assistance services, monitoring and evaluation of Center impact, and external representation to government agencies, donor organizations, and other stakeholders.

The Steering Committee provides strategic guidance and accountability while connecting Center to diverse stakeholders. The committee includes seven members representing key constituencies. Membership includes APEX regional leadership ensuring alignment with organizational strategy, three country coordinators from Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda providing national perspectives, two farmer representatives selected by members ensuring producer voice, representative from REVIVER project partnership ensuring continuity with project vision, and one independent experts with specialized knowledge in agroecology and agricultural education.

The Steering Committee meets quarterly for half-day sessions using virtual meeting technology enabling participation without extensive travel. Meeting functions include reviewing Center activities and progress toward objectives, providing strategic advice on priorities and approaches, troubleshooting challenges with collective problem-solving, facilitating connections to networks and resources, reviewing financial sustainability strategies, and ensuring alignment with broader regenerative agriculture and agroecology movements. Committee members serve voluntarily contributing time and expertise as service to African agricultural transformation agenda and sustainable food systems development.

The Operations Team consists of APEX staff working on Center activities combined with capacity from country chapters. The core team includes the Center Coordinator providing overall leadership, three country focal points in Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda coordinating activities in respective countries, four training facilitators with agricultural and adult education expertise delivering curriculum and technical assistance, two business advisors supporting agricultural enterprise development dimensions, one digital platform manager maintaining virtual learning and networking functionality, one communications specialist managing visibility and knowledge sharing, and one administrative coordinator handling logistics and documentation.

This staffing totals approximately 6 full-time equivalent positions distributed across multiple personnel, most of whom allocate portions of their time to Center activities while maintaining other APEX responsibilities. This integration with organizational structure ensures efficiency while creating synergies between Center work and APEX's broader programming.

3.3 Services and Activities

The Sub-Saharan African Center of Excellence will offer services tailored to East African smallholder farming contexts while maintaining alignment with overall REVIVER vision and curriculum. Services will be launched during the initial operating period from November 2025 onward, with progressive expansion across implementation countries.

Training courses will deliver regenerative agriculture education adapted for African smallholder contexts. The VET Provider Training designed specifically for African agricultural educators will run courses combining REVIVER curriculum with African case studies and adaptation guidance. Smallholder Farmer Training specifically designed for resource-constrained contexts will emphasize low-cost regenerative practices. Curriculum will address cover crop selection using locally available species, composting using farm and household wastes, minimal tillage approaches for hand cultivation, integrated pest management using botanical preparations, farm-level water conservation techniques, and mixed farming integration of crops and small livestock.

Mobile Training Units extend reach to remote farming communities. APEX developed mobile training capacity enabling outreach to villages distant from training centers, eliminating travel barriers for resource-poor farmers.

Business development services address economic viability dimensions essential for practice adoption. Services include regenerative agriculture business planning helping farmers project costs, revenues, and profitability trajectories, market linkages connecting regenerative producers to buyers willing to pay premiums or provide stable markets, finance access facilitation assisting farmers in accessing credit for transition investments, and certification guidance for farmers interested in organic or other sustainability certifications. Integration of business support with technical training addresses both "how to" and "why to" questions, strengthening adoption prospects.

Digital learning infrastructure extends education beyond in-person training. The REVIVER e-learning platform was localized for African contexts including optimization for low-bandwidth access, mobile-responsive design for smartphone access, offline capability enabling content download for offline viewing, and Swahili language interface and content. Remote learning support includes WhatsApp groups for each training cohort enabling ongoing exchange, SMS reminders and tips sent to participants' mobile phones, and virtual mentoring connecting farmers with experts for questions.

3.4 Partnerships and Regional Network



The Sub-Saharan African Center of Excellence is embedded in extensive partnership network leveraging APEX's established relationships while cultivating new connections around regenerative agriculture. The network spans three primary implementation countries while maintaining connections to other APEX countries and regional networks.

The East African umbrella organization network includes 30 organizations formalized through REVIVER activities including national agricultural research organizations in three countries connecting to research systems, agricultural university partners, VET institutions including agricultural training institutes in each country, six farmer associations and unions representing smallholder interests, four environmental NGOs working on agroecology and conservation agriculture, three international development NGOs implementing agricultural programming, two microfinance institutions providing rural credit, and two agricultural input cooperatives supplying seeds and organic inputs. These umbrella partners meet twice annually rotating among countries, coordinating activities and providing collective guidance.

Regional partner organizations extend Center reach internationally. Partners include other REVIVER consortium members like Pannonia Consulting, Outside Media, Learning Library, Kua Zone, and University of Education Winneba ensuring ongoing collaboration. These regional partners contribute through knowledge exchange, joint events, technical expertise in specialized areas, funding opportunities, and amplifying Center visibility.

This extensive partnership ecosystem provides resources, expertise, legitimacy, reach, and sustainability substantially amplifying Center impact and embedding it in broader institutional landscape supporting long-term success.



3.5 Initial Activities and Achievements

The Sub-Saharan African Center of Excellence was formally inaugurated on October 15, 2025, in Arusha, Tanzania, during an international conference attended by guests from partner organizations in Germany, Croatia, and Estonia. The inauguration event marked the official establishment of the Center, positioning it for post-project operations. The program balanced ceremony with substance including welcome and context-setting from APEX leadership, keynote address on agricultural transformation and regenerative agriculture potentials, panel featuring farmers, researchers, and NGO practitioners, guided tours to nearby member farms demonstrating practices, and exhibition showcasing REVIVER resources and regenerative agriculture information.

Additionally, the Center received strong commitment from its member organizations, NGOs, and SMEs, who outlined how they plan to actively engage with and contribute to the Center's work. Many members expressed interest in piloting the regenerative agriculture calculator and the Center's curriculum within their own training programs and demonstration plots. By testing these tools in real farming environments, members will generate practical evidence and user feedback that will be fed back into the Center to strengthen and refine its offerings. Organizations also committed to sharing data, field observations, and farmer experiences derived from these pilots, ensuring a continuous flow of information that keeps the Center active, current, and grounded in real production systems. NGOs and SME partners additionally emphasized that their existing demo plots will be integrated into the Center's network, expanding the Center's reach and enabling farmers to learn from diverse field conditions. This collaborative model not only reinforces shared ownership, but also transforms the Center into a living, evolving platform for innovation, learning, and adaptation ensuring its long-term relevance and sustainability.

Resource development accomplishments included production of training materials adapted for African contexts in Swahili and English, videos featuring African farmers practicing regenerative agriculture, and photographic library documenting African farming systems and practices.

These initial achievements demonstrate successful Sub-Saharan African Center establishment and strong stakeholder response. The participation numbers, diversity, feedback, and early adoption indicators validate Center value proposition and sustainability prospects while surfacing insights informing ongoing refinement and expansion.





4. SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES AND CONTINUATION PLANS

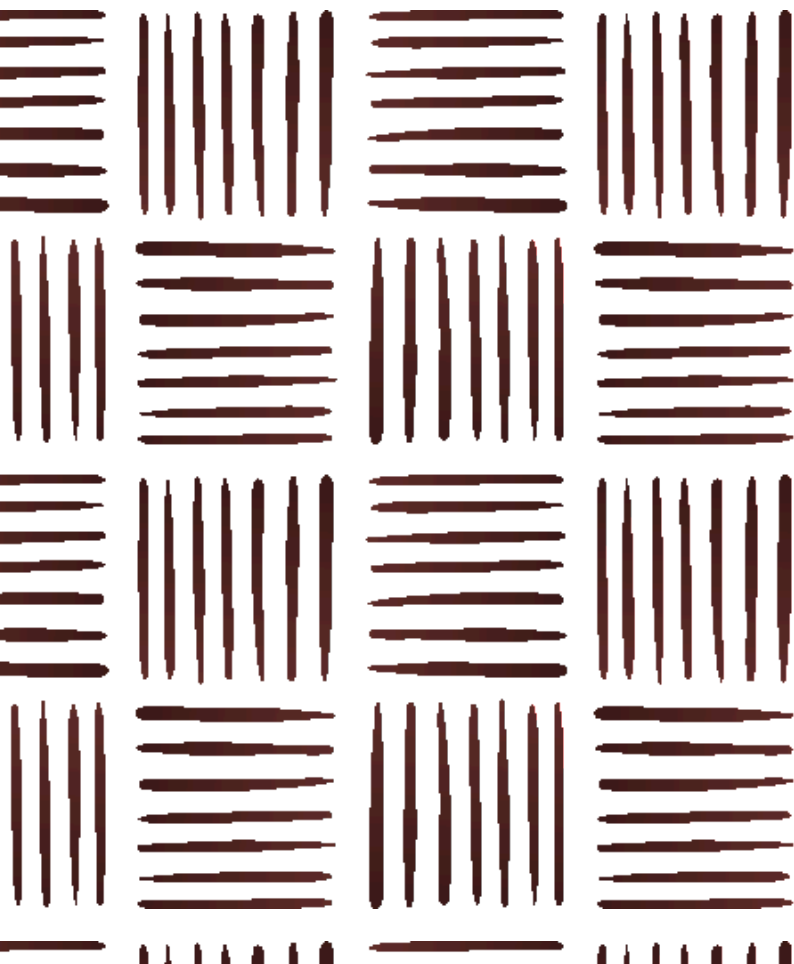
4.1 Financial Sustainability Mechanisms

The long-term financial sustainability of the project is primarily secured through the establishment and operationalisation of the Centres of Excellence (CoEs), which are designed to function as permanent institutional hubs for regenerative agriculture training, innovation, and cross-regional collaboration. As described in the Sustainability Strategy, each CoE is integrated into the hosting organisation's long-term planning and is supported with institutional staff time, organisational resources, and strategic fundraising efforts beyond the life of the project, including the development of new national, regional, and international project proposals that will embed and financially reinforce CoE activities.

CoEs will diversify their income streams by combining low-cost operational needs with opportunities to attract national funding, small grants from development agencies, partnerships with agricultural stakeholders, and participation in new Erasmus+, Horizon or regional projects. Their mandate includes hosting training courses, demonstration activities, and community events, creating opportunities for cost-sharing and resource pooling with local partners. The CoEs also inherit the project's full suite of digital and educational outputs such as the curriculum, toolkit, and RE-AGRI Calculator which allows them to deliver training programmes without significant investment in new materials. This model ensures that sustainability is not dependent on external funding alone, but anchored in the CoEs' long-term institutional commitments and their capacity to mobilise resources as part of their core operations.

4.2 Institutional Integration and Permanence

The Centres of Excellence are the central mechanism for ensuring long-term institutional sustainability. They function as the permanent custodians of the REVIVER curriculum, the e-learning platform, and all capacity-building practices introduced during the project. According to the strategy, CoEs will provide regular training and support services, continue to develop local knowledge bases, and maintain demonstration spaces where regenerative agriculture practices can be shown to students, trainers, and farmers. Their institutional anchoring guarantees permanence. Each CoE is embedded within a partner organisation whose internal strategy explicitly incorporates continued activity beyond the project's end. For example, European and African partners have committed internal staff time and organisational alignment to ensure predictable engagement and continuity. In Tanzania, the hosting organisation is integrating the CoE into its departmental structure, while in Europe, partners have aligned CoE activities with their long-term regional education and outreach strategies.



By serving as recognised hubs for regenerative agriculture training, the CoEs also reinforce institutional uptake among VET providers. They will deliver annual “train-the-trainer” sessions, support adoption of the curriculum in other institutions, and act as advisory centres for organisations interested in integrating sustainable agriculture practices into their teaching. Through this role, the CoEs ensure that institutional engagement continues organically and grows over time.

4.3 Network Sustainability and Growth

The sustainability of REVIVER's network relies fundamentally on the leadership and convening power of the Centres of Excellence. Each CoE is positioned as a national and regional hub, responsible for maintaining and expanding the partnerships forged during the project. As described in the Sustainability Strategy, CoEs will be the focal points for the umbrella organisations established in each country, coordinating annual meetings, knowledge-sharing events, and collaborative initiatives that bring together VET providers, farmer groups, NGOs, youth organisations, and policymakers. The CoEs also inherit responsibility for cross-continental collaboration. The European and African CoEs will continue to maintain inter-regional links through webinars, exchange visits, co-hosted training programmes, and joint proposal development. This ensures that the project's Europe–Africa collaboration does not end with the project, but evolves into a stable international network driven by the hubs that have the mandate and capacity to support long-term engagement.

Moreover, CoEs are expected to act as innovation brokers identifying new opportunities, encouraging institutions to adopt the curriculum, supporting farmers and educators, and catalysing follow-up initiatives. Their annual activity reports, training programmes, and network events will serve as key indicators of network vitality and growth.



5. MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING

5.1 Monitoring Framework and Indicators

Both Centers of Excellence established monitoring frameworks enabling systematic tracking of activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts. The frameworks balance comprehensiveness with feasibility, recognizing that monitoring systems must be sustainable within staff capacity and budget constraints rather than requiring dedicated monitoring personnel or complex data collection procedures.

The monitoring frameworks track indicators across multiple levels. Activity indicators document services delivered including number of training courses conducted disaggregated by type and location, number of demonstration days, field days, and other events organized, number of technical advisory interactions provided through various modalities, number of farm visits conducted, and number of publications, resources, and materials produced. Output indicators measure immediate results including number of participants in training disaggregated by gender, age, farmer/VET provider status, number of visitors to demonstration sites and events, number of farms receiving advisory services, number of resources accessed through libraries and digital platforms, and number of partnerships and collaborations formalized.

Outcome indicators assess changes in knowledge, attitudes, practices, and conditions including average knowledge gains from pre to post-training assessments, participant satisfaction ratings from evaluation questionnaires, proportion of trained participants adopting regenerative practices measured through follow-up surveys, changes in soil health indicators where baseline and follow-up measurements possible, economic outcomes for farmers adopting practices where data available, and network growth measured by umbrella organization membership and participation.

Impact indicators examine longer-term systemic changes including area under regenerative agriculture management in regions served, policy changes or programs influenced by Center advocacy, research publications and academic engagement generated, VET curriculum integration in institutions beyond host organization, and sustainable agriculture discourse and awareness in broader community.




Data collection methods appropriate for each indicator include training and event records capturing participation and activity documentation, pre and post-training knowledge assessments administered to participants, participant evaluation questionnaires completed at conclusion of activities, follow-up surveys administered at three and six months post-training through phone interviews or digital surveys, farm monitoring data collected through periodic visits or farmer self-reporting, and secondary data from partner organizations, research publications, and media coverage tracking visibility and influence.

The monitoring frameworks guide quarterly internal reviews where Center staff examine data, discuss trends and patterns, identify successes and challenges, and adjust approaches based on learning. Annual reports synthesize findings for external audiences including advisory boards, funding agencies, and broader stakeholder communities. The emphasis on learning and adaptation rather than merely accountability reflects belief that monitoring serves development purposes beyond compliance requirements.

5.2 Evaluation Plans and Learning Agenda

Beyond ongoing monitoring, both Centers plan more comprehensive evaluations examining impact and effectiveness at key intervals. Mid-term evaluation planned at 18 months post-inauguration will examine implementation fidelity assessing whether Centers are operating as intended, service uptake and participation patterns identifying which offerings attract strongest demand and why, participant outcomes examining knowledge gains, practice adoption, and satisfaction, partnership functionality assessing collaboration effectiveness, and sustainability progress reviewing financial resource mobilization and institutional integration.

Long-term evaluation planned at three years post-inauguration will examine sustained practice adoption and outcomes tracking whether initial adopters continue practices and expand implementation, diffusion patterns examining how regenerative agriculture spreads beyond direct participants through farmer-to-farmer influence, institutional impacts including VET curriculum integration and policy influence, economic and environmental outcomes measuring productivity, profitability, soil health, and biodiversity changes where feasible, and sustainability viability assessing whether Centers achieved financial and operational sustainability.



The learning agenda extends beyond evaluation to include action research on priority questions identified by Centers and stakeholders. Research questions under exploration include optimal sequencing of practice adoption for different farm types identifying which practices farmers should prioritize implementing first based on contexts, support needs during regenerative transition characterizing challenges farmers face and effective technical assistance approaches, business models for regenerative agriculture examining economic performance and market strategies, VET pedagogy for regenerative agriculture assessing most effective teaching approaches for diverse learner populations, and scaling pathways understanding how successful farm-level adoption can scale to landscape-level transformation.

Research activities combine systematic data collection with participatory approaches involving farmers, VET providers, and other stakeholders as co-researchers rather than merely research subjects. Findings are shared through practitioner-oriented publications, conference presentations, and incorporation into training content, ensuring research serves practical purposes and contributes to community of practice development.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

6.1 Achievements and Significance

The successful establishment and initial operation of two Centers of Excellence in Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa represent significant REVIVER project achievements with implications extending well beyond the formal project period. The Centers provide permanent institutional homes for regenerative agriculture education and promotion, substantially increasing likelihood that project investments yield lasting returns through continued service delivery reaching new cohorts of VET providers and farmers annually. The combination of European and African Centers enables ongoing inter-regional exchange and learning, maintaining collaborative relationships established during the project while facilitating knowledge flows benefiting both regions.

The Centers' integration within established institutions rather than creation as standalone entities increases sustainability by leveraging existing infrastructure, staff capacity, administrative systems, and stakeholder relationships while reducing overhead costs. The substantial participation during initial operations validates value propositions, with strong demand for training, advisory services, and networking opportunities indicating Centers address genuine needs rather than supply-driven services lacking authentic demand. The multi-sectoral partnership networks surrounding each Center create resilience and shared ownership, reducing vulnerability to single institution or individual champions and distributing responsibility across stakeholder communities.

The Centers establish precedents and models potentially replicable in other countries and regions. The implementation processes documented in this act provide guidance for organizations considering similar initiatives, while the operational experiences generate lessons informing improved approaches. The Centers contribute to broader regenerative agriculture and agroecology movements by adding institutional infrastructure supporting these approaches, connecting previously isolated practitioners into networks, and raising visibility through high-quality services and effective communication.

6.2 Challenges and Lessons Learned

Implementation experiences surfaced challenges requiring ongoing attention. Financial sustainability remains paramount concern, as Centers must transition from project funding to diversified sustainable revenue sources. Initial resource mobilization achieved three-year operational funding commitments, but longer-term sustainability requires continued effort securing government support, donor funding, and earned revenue through fee-based services balanced with accessibility for resource-poor farmers. Demand management presents challenge given strong interest exceeding current capacity in both Centers. Expansion requires additional staff and resources, but scaling must be paced appropriately maintaining quality rather than overextending capacity. Partnership coordination across numerous organizations requires substantial staff time for communication, meeting facilitation, and relationship cultivation. Streamlining coordination mechanisms improves efficiency without sacrificing participation.

Technical capacity development remains ongoing need as regenerative agriculture knowledge evolves and new questions emerge. Centers must invest in staff learning through literature review, farmer experience documentation, and connections to research institutions remaining at cutting edge of practices and thinking. Monitoring and evaluation systems require continued refinement balancing comprehensiveness with feasibility, ensuring data collection remains manageable within staff capacity while generating sufficient information for accountability and learning. Cultural and contextual adaptation proves particularly important in African Center serving diverse ethnic groups and agroecological zones. Services require ongoing adaptation ensuring relevance across heterogeneous constituencies.

Key lessons learned include importance of strong host institution commitment demonstrated through resource allocation and strategic integration rather than merely allowing Center existence. Advisory boards and steering committees provide valuable guidance when meetings are well-facilitated with clear agendas and decision-making processes, but risk becoming pro forma if poorly managed. Practical demonstration remains highly effective pedagogy for agricultural education, with farm observation and farmer testimonials often more persuasive than classroom presentations. Business development and market linkages prove as critical as technical training for regenerative agriculture adoption, as farmers require confidence in economic viability to justify transition risks and investments. Digital learning tools effectively extend reach when designed appropriately for contexts including bandwidth limitations and device capabilities, but cannot fully substitute for in-person interaction and relationship building.

6.3 Future Development Plans

Both Centers have ambitious development plans for coming years building on initial foundations. Immediate priorities for months immediately following project completion include consolidating initial operations through systematization of processes, documentation of standard operating procedures, and staff training ensuring consistency and quality, completing mobilization of three-year operational funding through confirmed commitments from institutional budgets, government grants, and other sources, expanding training offerings to meet demand through additional course offerings and increased frequency while maintaining quality, and deepening partnerships through regular engagement, collaborative activities, and mutually beneficial exchange strengthening relationships.

Medium-term priorities for years two and three include geographic expansion extending services to additional regions and countries building on initial base, advanced training developing specialized courses for farmers and VET providers who completed introductory training and want deeper knowledge, research program expansion conducting systematic studies addressing priority questions and documenting outcomes, policy engagement initiatives increasing advocacy and technical support for regenerative agriculture integration in agricultural and education policies, and network development strengthening umbrella organizations and farmer networks supporting adoption through peer influence.

Long-term vision includes comprehensive regenerative agriculture education integrated into national VET systems as standard rather than niche content, vibrant networks of regenerative agriculture practitioners engaged in continuous learning and mutual support across regions and countries, measurable landscape-level changes including increased area under regenerative management and improvements in soil health, water quality, and biodiversity at ecosystem scales, robust evidence base documenting regenerative agriculture outcomes under diverse African and European conditions informing practice and policy, and influential voice in agricultural development discourse contributing regenerative agriculture perspectives to mainstream conversations often dominated by industrial paradigms.

The Centers' continued development depends on sustained commitment from host institutions, ongoing support from partnership networks, adequate financial resources from diverse sources, and conducive policy environments recognizing regenerative agriculture importance. While challenges will inevitably arise, the strong foundations established through REVIVER project implementation position both Centers for long-term success and meaningful impact on agricultural sustainability in their respective regions and beyond.

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