BiomassNet is the first Pan-African expert network on food and non-food biomass. It aims at supporting African countries in achieving food security and developing sustainable bioeconomies through the exchange of knowledge and expertise among experts from science, policy and practice. Many African countries still struggle to attain food security, while facing new demands for biomass as a source of income, energy and industrial raw materials.

**Linking stakeholders**

BiomassNet invites experts from all disciplines and sectors who address the issues of food security and bioeconomy in Africa to participate. In particular, the network links up scientists and experts from governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development agencies, and the private sector. Broad cooperation and exchange of knowledge and expertise among all sectors is necessary to strengthen the emerging African bioeconomies at local, national and international levels.

**Supporting sustainable development**

BiomassNet aims at promoting more efficient and sustainable biomass production, processing and trading to enhance food security and support the emerging bioeconomies in Africa. In particular, BiomassNet encourages the use of the Value Web Approach (Box 1) to enhance system thinking and innovations in dealing with food and non-food biomass.

**Establishing long-term partnerships**

BiomassNet facilitates long-term partnerships through international networking events, the interactive online platform biomassnet.org, and the moderated online discussion group “BiomassNet” (see reverse side). From 2018 onwards, BiomassNet and its activities will be hosted by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA).

**Box 1: The Value Web Approach**

Biomass-based value webs are complex systems of interlinked value chains in which food and non-food biomass is produced, processed, traded and consumed. The value web approach enables identification of synergies and trade-offs between the value chains of individual crops, especially when incorporating coupled uses of biomass. The approach also provides a conceptual framework for incorporating the expertise of a wide range of experts from different disciplines and sectors.
BiomassNet Features

International networking events

The inauguration and first networking events of BiomassNet took place in Bonn, Germany, on July 12, 2017 and at the FARA headquarters in Accra, Ghana on December 7, 2017.

Online platform: biomassnet.org

The platform enables online communication and knowledge exchange and provides a wealth of information related to biomass issues in Africa. It supports the creation of personal profiles that allow members to display their expertise in different fields and sectors, get in touch with other members and publish information to a publicly accessible toolbox. The BiomassNet platform highlights eight major thematic areas that are maintained by theme coordinators: Production and Storage, Equipment and Technology, Markets and Trade, Institutions and Policies, Environment and Conservation, Bioenergy, Health and Nutrition, and Education and Capacity Development. The website is starting out with a focus on several biomass sources such as: Roots and Tubers, Cereals and Legumes, Bamboo, Trees and Grasses, Fruits and Nuts, Vegetables and Mushrooms, and Livestock.

BiomassNet Dgroup

The BiomassNet discussion group (Dgroup), a tool developed by the Dgroups Foundation, enables moderated email discussions that promote direct knowledge exchange and engagement among a large number of biomass experts. The Dgroup is accessible through the BiomassNet online platform. Currently, the BiomassNet Dgroup has over 500 members from 50 countries, including 31 African countries. The BiomassNet Dgroup allows members to tap into the knowledge base of a growing network and to share their experiences with other members, to find new partners for cooperation, to get information on funding opportunities and vacancies or to discuss the latest developments regarding biomass value webs.

Start page of BiomassNet: Creating a profile allows members to publish articles, share events, present projects, and to connect to other biomass experts.

Map of international BiomassNet Dgroup members (green circles): More than 500 biomass experts already joined the BiomassNet Dgroup.