

Special Initiative “Decent Work for a Just Transition”

Strengthening the pharmaceutical and biotechnological sector in Rwanda

Rwanda’s potential for biomanufacturing

As one of several organisations, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH is implementing the Special Initiative “Decent Work for a Just Transition” of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Under the brand Invest for Jobs, the Special Initiative – among other activities – supports the Government of Rwanda in building a conducive ecosystem for the pharmaceutical and biotechnological sector. By promoting skills development, investment, strategic partnerships, and holistic supply chains, the Special Initiative supports **Rwanda’s ambition to become a regional hub for pharmaceutical production, including vaccines.**

70 to 90 per cent of pharmaceuticals consumed on the African continent are imported and less than one per cent of the vaccines administered are locally produced. Rwanda largely depends on international supply chains, as its pharmaceutical and biotechnological sector is still nascent. While the pharmaceutical market on the African continent is rapidly growing and has the potential to generate significant economic value, Rwanda is strategically well positioned to provide a platform for production and distribution into the region.



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Rwanda is also actively seeking to become a **digital champion in Africa and is at the forefront of innovation – a great potential for highly automated processes** and scaling up pharmaceutical production.

With its National Strategy for Transformation (2024-2029), Rwanda is pursuing the ambitious goal of accelerating private sector-led economic growth and creating more than 250.000 decent jobs per year across various sectors, including biotechnology and pharmaceuticals.

Building and sustainaining a conducive ecosystem

The production of pharmaceuticals and biotechnology is a complex process and requires a strong public and private ecosystem throughout the entire value chain. A strong regulatory body and framework capable to perform market release procedures is a key enabler to the competitiveness of the sector. Various other resources and processes are needed to enable the manufacturing of high-quality medical products, ranging from raw material and active ingredient supply, technology, validation and auditing, to service, maintenance, logistics and warehousing. Above all, **skilled personnel are essential for smooth operation and quality assurance.** Invest for Jobs supports the Government of Rwanda in their endeavour to develop the pharmaceutical and biotechnological sector and strengthen synergies through cross-sectoral collaboration. Together, they strive to promote growth and innovation in the industries to create good jobs in Rwanda.

Promoting businesses and boosting innovation

Invest for Jobs supports companies seeking to invest in Rwanda’s pharmaceutical and biotechnological sector. The Special Initiative created a **peer network with industry, educational institutions, and development partners.** Invest for Jobs conducted an assessment on segments of the pharmaceutical and biotechnological industry **to identify market potentials and investment barriers in Rwanda.** The report guides Invest for Jobs and its partners to address issues related to regulation, human resource capacity development, raw material and active ingredient supply, and infrastructure.

Implemented by



The Special Initiative **assists entrepreneurs to accelerate their innovative ideas into business solutions**. Together with the Rwandan Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), the University of Rwanda and UVU Bio, the Special Initiative launched the **Rwanda Bioeconomy Hub** located at the University of Kigali. It accommodates a shared laboratory space for research as well as dedicated training labs. The Hub is currently running two separate programmes to support the biotech sector in Rwanda: a skills building programme for students and an acceleration programme for biotech start-ups.

The **skills building programme** includes lab-based trainings targeting life science students and recent graduates. In addition, the programme will be extended to interested private sector partners to offer tailor made on-the-job trainings. The **acceleration programme** is designed to provide entrepreneurs and early-stage companies with the resources and support they need to develop and commercialise new biotech products and services. It offers a range of services, including mentorship, small scale funding, lab and office space including equipment and networking opportunities.

Strengthening networks and attracting investments

Invest for Jobs provides companies with **networking, matchmaking, advisory and financial support to scale up investments** and thus create jobs in the pharmaceutical and biotechnological sector.



Together with Rwandan partners, the Special Initiative facilitates strategic partnerships and networking among and with the private sector. This includes the annual **East Africa Pharma and Biotech Conference**, which is hosted by the Rwandan Biomedical Centre (RBC) and Africa CDC, and, among others, aims to attract the

(international) private sector. In September 2024, the conference brought together over 170 participants, including industry leaders, government officials, researchers, and innovators.

Developing skills to meet industry needs

Pharmaceutical companies rely on a highly specialised and fit-for-purpose workforce with the right skill set to develop, produce, and distribute their products. At the same time, the public sector requires the right talent to ensure regulation, licencing, and oversight of these companies. In Rwanda, such specialised skills are still scarce. Invest for Jobs supports MINEDUC as well as public and private educational institutions and companies in creating and updating training plans and curricula for higher education. Ultimately, Invest for Jobs seeks **to train suitable candidates for current and future investments in the sector**. Qualification measures for professionals are being offered to better align their skills with the requirements of the pharmaceutical industry and open new employment perspectives.

Together with the Centre for Distance Learning in Higher Education (zfh), Invest for Jobs launched a **Certificate Study Programme for Biomedical Expertise**. The objective is to foster advanced biomedical expertise through the introduction of a blended-learning programme focusing on both biomedical knowledge (e.g. molecular biology, biotechnology) and soft skills (e.g. intercultural competences, management). The programme is delivered by a consortium of Rwandan (University of Rwanda, INES Ruhengeri – Institute of Applied Sciences) and European (e.g. University of Koblenz, University of Parma) institutes of higher education and in cooperation with private sector partners (e.g. BioNTech, Akagera Medicines).

Please get in touch!

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