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UNU Rector Announces Appointment of Dr. Karl Harmsen as Director of UNU-INRA

United Nations University Rector Hans van Ginkel has announced the appointment of Prof. Dr. Karl Harmsen as Director of the United Nations University Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (UNU-INRA). Based in Accra, Ghana, UNU-INRA works with African universities and research institutions to generate knowledge and train people to develop, adapt, and disseminate technologies that advance food security and promote the conservation and efficient use of the continent's natural resources.

Prior to taking over as Director of UNU-INRA, Dr. Harmsen served (2002–2005) as Director of the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific (CSSTEAP), affiliated to the United Nations (through the Office for Outer Space Affairs) in Dehradun, India. Prior to that, he was Professor of Environmental Systems Analysis (2001–2002) and Rector (1997–2000) at the International Institute for Geo-information Science and Earth Observation (ITC), Enschede, The Netherlands. His previous career experience included working with the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) as Executive Director of the West and Central African Programs in Niamey, Niger (1994–1996), as Director of the ICRISAT Resource Management Program in Hyderabad, India (1992–1994), and before that he was Director of the Institute for Soil Fertility, Haren, The Netherlands (1986–1992).

Dr. Harmsen holds Ph.D. and M.Sc. degrees from the Agricultural University, Wageningen, The Netherlands. His professional activities have included serving as Advisor on the Governing Council of Andhra Pradesh Geographical Society (since 2003), as President of the Dutch Soil Science Society (2001–2002), and as Editor of the journals *Geo-spatial Today* (2002–2003), *Asian Journal of Geo-informatics* (2000–present), *International Journal of Applied Earth Observation and Geo-information* (1999–2001), *Pedologie* (1987–92), and *Nutrient Cycling in Agro-Ecosystems* (1979–present).

“Identifying the need for training and research in support of sustainable development in Africa must be a bottom-up process,” says Dr. Harmsen. “By working at the local level, with those most affected, real-life problems will come up, relevant to sustainable development of African countries. I strongly support this kind of bottom-up, upscaling approach.”

He adds that “one type of problem often encountered is a lack of well-trained personnel: in government agencies, NGOs, farmers’ organizations, and elsewhere. This is the sort of training need that UNU-INRA can assist with — either by directly addressing a particular training need, or by playing a facilitating, role in close collaboration with other partners.”

United Nations University comprises UNU Centre in Tokyo and a worldwide network of 12 Research and Training Centres and Programmes (RTC/Ps). UNU-INRA, the only UNU RTC/P based in Africa, began operating in April 1990. In addition to its headquarters in Accra, UNU-INRA maintains an Operating Unit on Mineral Resources at the School of Mines, University of Zambia, an Operating Unit on Application of Computer Technology to the Management of Natural Resources at the University of Yaounde 1, Cameroon, an Operating Unit on Socio-economic Aspects of Natural Resources Management at the University of Cocody, Côte d'Ivoire and an Operating Unit on coastal and marine resources at the University of Namibia's Marine and Coastal Resources Research Centre at Henties Bay.

More information about UNU-INRA is available online at <http://www.inra.unu.edu/>.