

TAAT poised to lead agricultural revolution in Africa

Scientists, representatives of development agencies, agricultural experts, representatives from national agricultural research and extension systems (NARES), [Youth Agripreneurs](#), and entrepreneurs from the private sector and beyond the African continent, assembled in [IITA](#), Ibadan, Nigeria, 7–11 August, to review and hammer out the implementation details of the proposed African Development Bank ([AfDB](#))-funded Technologies for Agricultural Transformation ([TAAT](#)) program.

The TAAT appraisal workshop, organized by IITA and AfDB was led by Dr Jonas Chianu, Principal Agricultural Economist and a team of AfDB other bank officials. The purpose of the meeting was to appraise and finalize work on the TAAT program framework document for the AfDB Board's consideration.

In his opening remarks, Dr Chianu expressed his satisfaction at the number of stakeholders who responded to the invitation to this important meeting. He said that although the meeting was convened at very short notice, it was to help gather ideas on various modalities of the program implementation. Hence, he urged participants to be diligent and hardworking in initiating ideas and suggestions for all areas of the TAAT program which would be coalesced into two documents for the Bank's consideration and approval. These are the Project Appraisal document and the Implementation document, which he said would "contain information that enables the implementers to know what they have promised to do and how they have promised to do it."



IITA DG Sanginga, IITA DDG (P4D) Dashiell, AfDB Economist Chianu, and FARA Economist Makinde.

Continued on page 2



Director General Nteranya Sanginga welcoming participants.

In his address to the audience, the IITA Director General, Dr [Nteranya Sanginga](#) said he was delighted to see an array of eminent scholars and scientists from development agencies assemble together in one place for the TAAT appraisal workshop. He spoke on three parameters which informed the philosophy behind the program: reducing the high import food bill, creating jobs for the teeming unemployed youth, and raising agricultural productivity in the continent. Dr Sanginga said he looked forward to partners, such as the International Food Policy Research Institute ([IFPRI](#)), working on policies that would attract and enable African governments to embrace and adopt local content in agriculture. He also emphasized the critical role of the private sector partnering with other institutions, when he said: "For example, [Dangote](#) is planning to invest US\$6 billion in rice production in Nigeria,

but he gets seeds from China. This is the time when the seed system in the continent should play an important role in providing a source of seed supply to such big ventures in Africa."

Dr Kehinde Makinde, head of the Agricultural Green Revolution in Africa ([AGRA](#)) delegation, remarked that TAAT is a great opportunity for AGRA to work with several others to deliver on the program's overall goals. "AGRA has prioritized partnerships as a way of delivering impact in the rural areas and will be working with governments as well."

The execution of the TAAT program will be done through partnerships with many developmental partners such as IFPRI, the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa ([FARA](#)), and AGRA. In an interview, Dr Chianu said partnership is key because the amount of work in TAAT is enormous. Without partnership, we cannot go far; as we all know "two heads are better than one."

He also asserted the Bank's confidence in achieving its goal for TAAT. "It is not really about AfDB, it is about AfDB and its partners like the World Bank and AGRA, and working with the national systems and the private sector".

As a partner FARA has an enormous role to play as the capacity development enabler. Dr Irene Annor-Frempong, Director for Research and Innovation at FARA, spoke on FARA's role in a brief interview. She said her organization would adopt an innovative approach of holistic capacity development "where we are not just concerned about training an individual but training individuals and linking them to an enabling environment. Those individuals are supposed to operate to ensure that training is sustainable. The other approach is the innovation platform approach. The essence is to ensure that the development of a commodity is linked to the market for the benefit of the end user so that socioeconomic impact is achieved."



Chyrs Akem (above); Bussie Maziya-Dixon discussing with participant.

Giving a clear picture of the role of the youth in TAAT, Dr Haly Louise Djoussou-Lorng, AfDB Country Manager, Mali, said they will play a key promotional role by going into the value chain and implementing activities. So the youth program is an enabler under TAAT.

TAAT is set to execute a bold plan to achieve rapid agricultural transformation across Africa through raising agricultural productivity along eight priority intervention areas (PIAs) and over 18 agricultural commodity value chains. The first phase of the program will begin with ten Tier 1 countries chosen based on readiness and opportunity indicators, among others, with nine commodities also chosen based on potential for an early impact.



Paul Woomer (above); Kwesi Attah-Krah



DG Sanginga in group discussion.

Stakeholders discuss strategies for cocoa rebirth in Nigeria

Strategies to improve cocoa production in the country dominated discussions at a recent conference in IITA held 8-9 August, where stakeholders explored measures to address challenges encountered and possible ways of reviving cocoa to ensure sustainability in Nigeria.

The 2-day conference with the theme “USAID Nigeria Expanded Trade and Transport (NEXTT) - cocoa close-out meeting and strategic thinking”, deliberated on what had been done in the last 3 years, drew a roadmap for the next 5 years or more, and also appealed to USAID to continue to support the project amid challenges. In attendance were participants from IITA, Olam, Starlink, Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria (CRIN), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Dawn Commissions, and farmers.

Nigeria used to be the second highest producer of cocoa; the crop continues to be the topmost agricultural contributor to the country’s GDP. According to the International Cocoa and Confectionary Organization, Nigeria has dropped to the 7th position, a major concern among stakeholders involved in cocoa production. Cocoa production is highly labor intensive, and smallholder cocoa farmers face many challenges including severe crop loss due to diseases, aging trees, outdated farming techniques, and limited organizational and research support.

In his opening remarks, Mr Aderemi Osijo, from the USAID Nigeria NEXTT project, applauded all the participants and urged them to seize this opportunity to share research experiences, identify research needs, and ultimately develop national, regional, and global alliances that will help to unleash the potential of the crop.

Mr Adekunle Oladipo, Director of Tree Crops in the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Abuja, said: “Even though Côte d’Ivoire is the number 1 exporter of cocoa in the world, I believe that after this conference we will come out with more strategies that will help us recover lost ground and bounce back on our feet.”

Dr [Ranjana Bhattacharjee](#), IITA Molecular Geneticist, urged participants to “... Get down to action to bring out a white paper with recommendations, which can be submitted to different stakeholders, public or private institutions, donors, and farmers to make sure we come together as a team to reclaim Nigeria’s lost cocoa glory.” She added, “I wish we can take a decision to sensitize the youth and farmers because whatever we see today is a product of what has happened in the past. We need to forge ahead for the benefit of all and the generations to come.”

Speaking on the need to move Nigeria’s cocoa industry forward, Dr [Kenton Dashiell](#), IITA Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery said: “We need to have the right variety and the right genome for our contribution to be indispensable and irreplaceable in the economy.”

In response, Bhattacharjee noted: “The use of the right and high quality planting materials in the right environment plus market demand must be linked and developed to increase Nigeria’s cocoa yield and boost the country’s economic growth...”

Dr Olayiwola Olubamiwa, acting Executive Director of CRIN, also noted the government’s role in structuring the right linkages for all players in the cocoa system



Dr Ken Dashiell (left) speaking to Shanni Srivastava of UPL, an agrochemical company.

as vital to revitalizing the country’s cocoa producing glory days.

While highlighting the need to structure the right ties, Dr [Lava Kumar](#), Virologist and Head of IITA’s Germplasm Health Unit, reminded participants on the urgency to adopt innovations such as the online seed tracker developed by IITA and urged them to seize the opportunity to facilitate a lasting solution by creating users that would support their operations through real-time data access in cocoa.

Cocoa is a small (about 4-8 m tall) perennial tree crop that primarily comes from the tropical regions of Southeast Asia, Latin America, and West Africa. It is essential to the livelihoods of 40-50 million people worldwide, including over 5 million smallholder cocoa farmers who grow this valuable crop. In West Africa about 6 million hectares are planted with cocoa, contributing about 70% to the total world production.



Participants at the NEXTT Cocoa Close-out Meeting and Strategic Thinking held in IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria.

IITA trains media on aflatoxin and its biocontrol solution aflasafe

IITA recently trained 15 journalists from Tanzania on aflatoxin, its impact on health and trade, and ongoing efforts by IITA in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MALF) to control this deadly chemical produced by certain types of fungi. The training was conducted at the IITA-East Africa hub office in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, by the team working on the problem from both IITA and MALF.

Welcoming the media to the one-day training session, the East Africa Hub Director, Victor Manyong, said it was important to build the capacity of the media to accurately report complex, technical issues such as aflatoxin.

He noted that aflatoxin was a major threat to food security and the health of the farming communities in sub-Saharan Africa yet awareness levels were still very low.

Aflatoxin is produced by the fungus *Aspergillus flavus* that resides in decayed matter in soil and attacks crops in the field. Maize and groundnut, important staple crops in the country, are most susceptible to contamination by aflatoxin. Chronic exposure to aflatoxin leads to liver diseases, stunting in children, and reduced immunity. Acute exposure can lead to instant death. Aflatoxin also affects animals when they consume contaminated feed.

The training covered aflatoxin—what it is and its effects, and ongoing control efforts including the use of [Aflasafe™](#), a biocontrol technology. It also included a participatory session on how to communicate effectively on aflasafe and a tour of the lab facilities where aflatoxin is tested and Aflasafe™ produced.

George Mahuku, IITA's Senior Plant Pathology and Aflasafe project leader in East, Southern, and Central Africa who led the training, noted that aflatoxin was a pre- and postharvest problem. He said that some of the factors that contribute to aflatoxin contamination of food and feed are poor agronomic practices and poor drying and storage during and after harvest.

The use of Aflasafe™ eliminates the toxin-producing strains, thus reducing aflatoxin contamination.

Beatrice Pallangyo from MALF said the efficacy trial by IITA and the Ministry had proven that the technology was safe, effective, and easy to use. Efforts to get the product registered in the country were at an advanced stage.

She noted that one of the challenges in controlling aflatoxin was the low levels of awareness, hence the importance of working with the media.

The journalists appreciated the exercise, noting that it was important for scientific institutions to open their doors to journalists to give them a thorough briefing on their research efforts as IITA had done.

"Before this training, I had little knowledge about aflatoxin. Now I have learned a lot and I will share the knowledge with others," said Alex Malika, a media professional from RAS media, Dodoma.

"I now understand the issue very well. It will be easy for me to communicate the message to my family and the audience in general," said Hawa Kahemele from Nyemo FM Dodoma.



Jacob Njegela, Research Associate at IITA, explains how aflasafe was developed and manufactured in the lab at IITA East Africa hub.

Kebbi State Governor seeks collaboration with IITA

The Executive Governor of Kebbi State, Alhaji Abubakar Atiku Bagudu, and his team visited IITA on 8 August to seek collaboration on moving their agricultural development agenda forward.

The visit, a follow-up on the inauguration of a N10 billion (about US\$31,500,000) WACOT Rice Processing Mill in Argungu, Kebbi State, by the acting President, Prof Yemi Osinbajo, came at the heels of IITA's Golden Jubilee held 2 weeks ago. While commending IITA for being the world's leading research center in transforming

African agriculture, Governor Bagudu said, "We need your support. The rice processing mill has been launched in Kebbi State and it has the capacity to produce 400 tons of rice per day. We want to partner with you in achieving and reclaiming our lost glory, and ask you to provide us with seed of improved varieties to help us boost the production of rice."

IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the bold step taken by the Executive Governor in seeking a



DG Nteranya Sanginga (left) and Kebbi Governor Alhaji Abubakar Atiku Bagudu.

lasting solution in IITA. "We must find a way of solving the challenges faced by the farmers in Kebbi and with the level of your commitment we will proffer solutions to the emerging problem," he said.

During the tour of the Institute's facilities including, the [aflasafe™](#) (a biocontrol product for controlling aflatoxins) production plant, [NoduMax](#), a soybean inoculum fertilizer facility, and rice fields, Governor Bagudu said, "...We are seeing astonishing research happening at IITA, and I hope it will be extended to my state." As a result of the strong collaboration emphasized by Governor Bagudu, DG Sanginga promised that he would soon send an IITA team to Kebbi State to look into the matter and strategize ways of assisting them to significantly increase crop production and productivity.

Francis Nwilene, the Head of AfricaRice in Nigeria assured the Governor that he would also send a team to Kebbi State to assist with rice production.

Kebbi State is endowed with a large expanse of arable land suitable for the production of rice, wheat, maize, sorghum, and groundnut.



Kebbi Governor Bagudu visiting the Business Incubation Platform in IITA.

NSPRI visits IITA to discuss postharvest solutions

The Executive Director of the Nigerian Stored Products Research Institute (NSPRI), Professor [Olufemi Peters](#) and his team, visited IITA on 9 August to seek collaboration on all aspects of postharvest handling of agricultural products.

IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#), accompanied by senior management, welcomed the Director, saying: "We are indeed glad to have you in our midst; I am looking forward to a productive collaboration."

Prof Peters expressed delight over the fact that NSPRI, a leading research institute that provides agricultural postharvest solutions in Nigeria and the West African subregion, and IITA, the leading international institute that transforms Africa's agriculture through research, can work together. "I have heard and seen the impact of your ground-breaking research and technology advancement and I believe, together, we will attain greater heights."

As a result of the strong interest indicated by the NSPRI delegation, both parties agreed on collaborative terms through a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

While conducting the visitors around the [IITA Business Incubation Platform \(BIP\)](#) facilities, which include the [aflasafe™](#) (a biocontrol product for controlling aflatoxins) production plant, [NoduMax](#), a soybean inoculum fertilizer, and GoSeed for the production and marketing of quality breeder and foundation seeds/planting materials, Prof Peters said "I commend the management for a good job. I am convinced that this collaboration will put

smiles on our faces; we can learn from our experiences." He added that he was amazed at the impact of IITA's research.

On that note, Dr [Kenton Dashiell](#), IITA Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery, pledged to visit NSPRI with his team as soon as possible to see their facilities and further assured them of a productive and fruitful collaboration.



Dr Bussie Maziya-Dixon (in orange) with the NSPRI delegation visiting the aflasafe plant in IITA, Ibadan.

Got a story to share? Please email it with photos and captions every Wednesday to Katherine Lopez (k.lopez@cgiar.org), Jeffrey T. Oliver (j.oliver@cgiar.org), Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org), or David Ngome (d.ngome@cgiar.org).