

Special bulletin: IITA's 50th anniversary

## Three presidents, high-level officials, key partners, and IITA family celebrate IITA's 50th anniversary

On 24 July, IITA marked its 50th year of founding with a huge celebration at its headquarters in Ibadan, attended by high-level government officials that included three presidents or heads of state, research collaborators, partners, alumni, and staff.

More than 750 individuals took part in the jubilation that was marked by a program featuring messages from the dignitaries, a cake-cutting ceremony, commissioning of a youth training

center, laying of foundation stones for a new tissue culture facility at the Business Incubation Platform, book launching, exhibitions, and presentations of plaques.



Key dignitaries (L-R): Former President Olusegun Obasanjo, former Head of State Gen. Yakubu Gowon, and Vice President and Acting President Yemi Osinbajo



Dr Kwesi Atta-Krah, Chair, IITA50 committee, leading the celebration program on 24 July, the Institute's anniversary date.

## A snapshot of the 50th anniversary celebration



Top - Down, counter clockwise: BOT Chair Bruce Coulman delivering his message at the opening program; Staff and guests milling in front of the conference center; VIPs, staff, and guests listening attentively to the keynote speakers; Staff and residents in their IITA50 ankara; and Mrs Charlotte Sanganga at the registration table.



*Alumni, staff, and visitors during the main celebration program.*



*Bricklaying ceremony for the new tissue culture lab at the Business Incubation Platform.*



*Agripreneurs with the gifts of appreciation for important visitors.*

# Dignitaries pay tribute to IITA at Golden Jubilee celebration

Political and business leaders, donors, scientists, and other eminent personalities joined the IITA community in celebrating the Golden Jubilee at IITA headquarters in Ibadan. The Acting President of Nigeria, Professor Yemi Osinbajo was represented by HE Chief Audu Innocent Ogbeh, the Hon. Minister Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.



In a speech read on his behalf by HE Chief Ogbeh, the Acting President Prof Osinbajo appreciated the role IITA plays in helping Nigeria deal with new challenges in agriculture. HE called on IITA to intensify its research and communicate this research for universal application to help feed the ballooning population.

*"Your research efforts have to spread far and wide for us to produce crops that are resistant to diseases," HE stated.*

Former Military head of state HE General Yakubu Gowon, former President HE Chief General Olusegun Obasanjo, former Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Augustin Matata Ponyo, and the Olubadan of Ibadan land, Oba Saliu Adetunji, led political leaders from parliaments to states at the celebration.



*Yakubu Gowon*

The celebration was also attended by 2017 World Food Laureate and AfDB President Dr Akin Adesina, Entrepreneur and Philanthropist Tony Elumelu, Director generals from sister CGIAR centers, representatives of donor organizations, and IITA alumni.



*Obaladan of Ibadan.*



*Tony Elumelu.*



*Moses Alake Adeyemo and Akin Adesina.*



*Former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo chairing the main celebration program.*

# Gen. Yakubu Gowon leads dignitaries in celebrating IITA's 50th anniversary commemoration

Fifty years after signing the Presidential Decree to establish IITA, HE General Yakubu Gowon was back at IITA Ibadan to celebrate IITA's Golden Jubilee. General Gowon lauded the Institute for the contributions it has made to agriculture in Nigeria and Africa through research, delivery, and breaking new frontiers.

Gen. Gowon paid tribute to the former Governor of Oyo State, the late Gen. Adeyinka Adebayo, with whom he worked hard to make sure land was available for Nigeria to host IITA at Ibadan.

"In 50 years, IITA has matched and surpassed our vision of developing a productive farm system in research and development aimed at improvement and preservation of tropical food crops," Gen. Gowon said in his speech.

IITA was established in 1967 as an agricultural research center under the auspices of the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations. General Gowon was then the military head of state at the time. On his own admission, he fought for Nigeria to seize the opportunity to host a research institute of IITA's stature.

Today, Gen. Gowon said, IITA plays a significant role in shaping Nigeria's agricultural development agenda as it did in its formative years and this is reflected across the continent.

Gen. Gowon congratulated IITA on the celebration of its Golden Jubilee and urged the organization to promote youth-led agricultural enterprises.



Above: Gen. Yakubu Gowon giving staff the thumbs up sign.



Pres. Olusegun Obasanjo shakes hands with (from left) Moses Alake Adeyemo, and (right) Gowon. DG Sanginga welcoming Sen. Adamu.



MARD Min. Chief Audu Ogbah (left) and AfDB Pres. Akin Adesina (right).



Gowon giving his speech during the main anniversary program.

# Agripreneur Building named after AfDB President

The President of the African Development Bank, Dr Akinwumi Adesina, has announced that Africa's premier financial institution would be investing \$24 billion dollars to help boost the agricultural sector over the next 10 years across Africa.

Adesina made this announcement at the commissioning of the Akinwumi A. Adesina Building named after him on 24 July, at the Business Incubation Platform in IITA.

The commissioning of the Agripreneurs building was part of IITA's 50th anniversary celebration.

Speaking further on the investment, Adesina said that the funds, which is 400% more than what the bank invested in the past will focus on agricultural value chains, agro-industrial development and investment in the young generation of farmers.

He said the bank's decision to invest in the youth came at a time when Africa needs the younger generation to venture into the agricultural sector to create commercial farmers who would embrace agriculture as a business and help feed Africa.

"I firmly believe that the future millionaires and the billionaires of Africa will come from the agriculture sector and I will tell you why. Africa today as you heard was spending \$35 billion a year in importing food. That is \$35 billion it should be keeping on the continent; that's \$35 billion these young people should be making money from in terms of creating wealth," he stated.

In view of this, Adesina said the bank invested \$800 million in 2016 in the ENABLE Youth program and will be extending the benefit of the program to 15 more African countries this year to give young people the opportunity of tapping into the resources provided by the bank. The program aims at creating jobs for unemployed graduates in agriculture.



Dr Akinwumi Adesina (above) cutting the ribbon at the commissioning of the youth training building flanked by (from left) DG and Mrs Sanginga, Gen. Gowon, Pres. Obasanjo, and Mrs Adesina; and (below) addressing the audience.



Dignitaries led by (from left) DG Sanginga, Gen. Yakubu Gowon, Dr Akinwumi Adesina, and former Pres. Olusegun Obasanjo at the commissioning of the Agripreneur Building.



Dr and Mrs Adesina being welcomed to IITA with a bouquet of flowers.

“When the program was designed, it was supposed to provide jobs for 37,000 young people in Nigeria, 1,000 per state. When you think about it, that means each of them can employ 5 people each and that is 185,000 jobs. We must change our approach to helping young people. We don’t need youth empowerment programs. What we need is youth investment programs and if one of these young people get \$15,000 to grow their businesses, that would be \$1.8 billion in terms of financing,” he said.

He, however, called on the private sector to emulate IITA by prioritizing investment in the youth and creating platforms that will help create jobs for them in Africa.

“IITA under the leadership of Dr Sanginga took up this youth-in-agribusiness initiative, developed and nurtured it, and groomed these Agripreneurs. Throughout my time as a Minister, I visited these Agripreneurs and some people at that time wondered what IITA, a research institute was doing in training young people in agriculture. In my view, IITA saw the future. They saw the need to change the labor composition of the agricultural

sector with younger commercial farmers and agribusinesses, and I think that is worthy of emulation.” he added.

Also speaking at the event, the former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and IITA’s goodwill ambassador, HE Olusegun Obasanjo said the IITA Youth Agripreneur (IYA) model should be replicated in other parts of Nigeria and Africa at large.

Abisola Adedigba, who also delivered a speech on behalf of Agripreneurs, stated that the IYA journey into “agripreneurship” was a challenging one but was worth it. She said some of her colleagues have been able to establish independent profitable agribusiness enterprises after their incubation program in IITA.

She expressed optimism about the future of African agriculture as many youth Agripreneurs are poised to ensure that they create jobs through agribusiness.

The ceremony witnessed presentation of gifts, testimonies from Agripreneurs, and a debate on the topic “Agribusiness start-up for youth, loan vs grant.”



Top: Abisola Adedigba speaking on behalf of the Agripreneurs. Bottom: Former Pres. Olusegun Obasanjo.



The audience cheer for Agripreneurs (right) debating on the topic “Agribusiness start-up for youth: Loan vs. grant.”



Dr Akin Adesina receiving a token of appreciation from the Agripreneurs during the commissioning ceremony of the A Adesina Agripreneur Building.

# Burundi President gives award to former IFAD President Kanayo Nwanze

During the 7th alumni reunion, which was held in conjunction with the 50th anniversary celebration, Burundi's Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, Dr Deo-Guide Rurema, presented an award of Recognition of Friendship to Dr Kanayo Nwanze, former president of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) at IITA, 25 July, for his contribution and assistance to Burundi.



HE Rurema presented the award to Nwanze on behalf of the President of the Republic of Burundi, His Excellency Pierre Nkurunziza. The award is a unique award presented to those that have assisted the country in tremendous ways.

The award read "I, Pierre Nkurunziza, the President of Burundi, with the Chancellor of the National Borders, presents to you, Dr Kanayo Nwanze this award as an Exceptional Commandant in recognition of your assistance to Burundi, on this day, 25 July 2017."

After presenting the award to Nwanze, HE Rurema remarked "I want to use this medium to sincerely thank the Director General of IITA, Dr Nteranya Sanginga, who

is doing well in empowering and impacting positively on the lives of youth and Africa at large. I do not doubt that in years to come, there would be more great surprises like

this. I thank IITA again, because like I said yesterday, the fact that I am Minister Agriculture and Livestock today is because IITA 'educated' me."



Dr Kanayo Nwanze shows his award while DG Sanginga, Min. Rurema and Mrs Nwanze look on.

## Burundi Minister of Agriculture visits IITA Benin

His Excellency, Déo-Guide Rurema, Burundi Minister of Agriculture, accompanied by Emmanuel Njukwe from IITA Central African Hub and Rousseau Djouaka of IITA Benin visited the IITA biodiversity center in Cotonou, Benin Republic after attending the IITA50 celebration.

On arrival at Benin, the delegation drove straight to Porto Novo where the Director of the nongovernmental organization

SONGHAI gave a guided a tour of SONGHAI installations and facilities.

The following day, 27 July, started with a visit to the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences (FSA) at the University of Abomey-Calavi where Minister Rurema had obtained his PhD. He was welcomed by Prof Ahohuendo Bonaventure, Vice Dean of the Faculty, who made a presentation followed by a tour of key departments of the Faculty. The next

port of call was IITA-Benin station. After a short welcome by the acting Country Representative, Muaka Toko, the Minister was taken on a tour of the biodiversity center by Georg Goergen, the Molecular Laboratory by Rousseau Djouaka, and the laboratory for rearing of natural enemies of pests by senior staff and students. The visit was concluded with a reception and debriefing during which potential fields of collaboration were deliberated upon.

In his concluding remarks, the Minister thanked IITA Benin for the warm welcome and announced that he would initiate a mutual and fruitful collaboration with IITA Benin.

Later that day, Minister Rurema, together with IITA staff Njukwe, Djouaka, Toko, and André Hessouh, paid a courtesy visit to his counterpart Dr Koudande Delphin, Benin Minister of Agriculture, Animal and Fisheries, to explore possibilities of collaboration between Benin and Burundi through their respective ministries.



The Minister (right) being welcomed by IITA staff Georg Goergen, Muaka Toko, Rousseau Djouaka, and Emmanuel Njukwe during the tour of the biodiversity center.



## My work with IITA continues - Adesina

African Development Bank President Dr Akin Adesina paid tribute to IITA as a premiere organization working towards transforming agriculture in Africa to make the continent food secure.



Pres. Akin Adesina with Mrs Adesina being welcomed to IITA (left), and being interviewed by the media (right).



Speaking at the IITA Golden Jubilee celebration, Adesina recalled his personal history with IITA on a journey that he says “has contributed immensely to research and development of solutions for Africa’s most pressing needs”.

“At the African Development Bank, we have decided to work with this amazing

institution, to drive Africa’s agricultural transformation. The Bank will be investing \$24 billion over the next 10 years to help turn agriculture into a business across Africa,” Adesina said in his speech.

Adesina started work at IITA in the 1990s as an economic and social scientist, a role that would later propel

him to national limelight as the Federal Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development in Nigeria and later as the President of AfDB.

He lauded the leadership of Dr Nteranya Sanginga, IITA Director General, for building progressive initiatives that would promote sustainability in agriculture, especially youth enterprises.



Pres. Akin Adesina leads dignitaries in touring the Agripreneur building.



Pres. Akin Adesina addressing guests and visitors at the opening program.

## Celebrating with trees

Planting trees to celebrate important events is a tradition at IITA. Usually one person plants a single tree but to celebrate IITA50, the Forest Unit scaled up and organized the planting of 50 trees – twice!

The first 50 were planted on 26 July, Alumni Day, as part of the IITA50 anniversary program. In advance of the event, the Facilities Management Services (Building and Grounds, B&G) assisted the Forest Unit to prepare planting holes along the length of Equatorial Crescent.

At 2 pm on that day, tree planters and onlookers were addressed first by Kwesi Atta-Krah, IITA50 Committee Chair, who welcomed alumni especially, and then by Deni Bown, Head of the Forest Unit. She first acknowledged the presence of Alec Butler, Head of the Physical Plant Services (PPS) in the early days of IITA, who was responsible for planting the fine avenues of trees along the residential roads. Then she explained that this event was to replant Equatorial Crescent with African nutmeg/*Lākòsìn* (*Monodora tenuifolia*) to celebrate the gathering of alumni on this important occasion. African nutmeg, a small tree found in the IITA forest, was chosen because it bears beautiful golden-yellow flowers followed by orange-like fruits, making it the perfect tree to celebrate a Golden Jubilee. Being a native tree, the African nutmeg is good for biodiversity



*Cutting the ribbon to inaugurate the Golden Jubilee Crescent, formerly Equatorial Crescent: DG Sanginga, Kwesi Atta-Krah, Mrs Sanginga, Bruce Coulman, and Alec Butler.*

and for people. The seeds are ground as a spice and used for medicinal purposes.

But why replant Equatorial Crescent? The reason is that the lovely pink cassias—planted by PPS almost 50 years ago—have sadly reached the end of their days. Few are still standing and valiant efforts by B&G to replant with *ylang-ylang* have not succeeded as it does not do well here. So while leaving what's left of pink cassias and *ylang-ylang*, space has been made for a new avenue of African nutmegs.

Before the plantathon started, the Director General cut the tape to change the name of the road from Equatorial Crescent to Golden Jubilee Crescent. He then planted the first tree to applause and great enthusiasm by those who carried on planting the other 49 or watched while others did all the hard work!

The following week, on 4 August, the Forest Unit planted another 50 trees. On this occasion each tree was different, forming a Golden Jubilee Grove in the new Tree Heritage Park. As well as commemorating this milestone in IITA's history, Golden Jubilee Grove acknowledges some of Nigeria's most useful and interesting trees, such as bitter kola/*Orogbo*, star apple/*Agbalumó*, African breadfruit/*Afon*, and locust bean/*Igbá*.

The plan for Golden Jubilee Grove over the next 50 years is to maintain it as a visitor attraction and resource for researchers. Each tree will have a sign with a barcode so that detailed information can be accessed by phone.



*L-R: Sanginga, Merckx, and Coulman.*



*Alec Butler, former Head of PPS, planting a tree with some IITA staff.*



*Alumnus Ayo Abifarin planting an African nutmeg with a little help from IITA colleagues.*

# Alumni agree to formalize association to better support IITA

IITA alumni, who are current and past staff and students of the Institute, have agreed to and taken the first steps towards strengthening and formalizing their association to better support the Institute by constituting an interim committee.

The alumni nominated to form this interim committee were Steve Lawani, former Director of Communication and Library Services, as Chair, and Eugene Terry, former plant pathologist and later Director of International Cooperation, as Vice Chair. Other members were Binta Sall, Ayoka Lawani, Leslie Everett, Kanayo Nwanze, Gabriel Okwor, Ade Aderogba, and Jo Mulongoy. Ken Dashiell, Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery, and Kwesi Atta-Krah, Director, Systems and Site Integration, were selected as IITA Management focal points.

The alumni decided this at their seventh reunion which took place at IITA-Ibadan, Nigeria, and was part of the IITA 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. The week-long celebrations included a three-day program for the alumni.

"IITA has been very good to us. We therefore need to be good to IITA. We need to formalize the association this year, which is also a special year for IITA as it marks its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary," said Prof Malachy Akoroda from the University of Ibadan, and an alumnus.

His sentiments were echoed by many alumni who noted that while this was the seventh meeting of the association, no steps had been taken towards its formalization.

The alumni pointed out that the association, if better organized, can play a critical role in supporting IITA, particularly in its advocacy and fundraising efforts as many other alumni associations do.

They therefore agreed that they needed to have an office at IITA with a few staff/volunteers to run the association and to reach out to many more alumni. The cost of running the office will be met through alumni contributions.

The interim committee was tasked to develop a concept for the IITA Alumni Association that will define its goals and principal objectives and to focus on urgent action over the next 5-year period for the association. These include proposing a governance structure for the association and a mechanism for advocacy and resource mobilization, through avenues such as traditional and nontraditional potential donors, the establishment of alumni-initiated fund raising for specific IITA projects, and the establishment of an Endowment Fund for IITA.



Lawani Binta Sall Aderogba Abifarin Akoroda

At the beginning of their meeting, the alumni had listened to remarks by IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga. Sanginga welcomed them to IITA's campus in Ibadan and to the Institute's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He also urged them to support IITA. They had also watched and listened to a song and dance performance by students of the IITA International School, and then went on a tour around the IITA facilities, including labs, BIP, and the campus.

They visited various facilities including the Youth Agripreneurs and the Business Incubation Platform. This allowed some

who were visiting the campus again for the first time in years, to familiarize themselves with new developments at IITA.

The alumni also shared their experiences and fond memories of when they were working or studying at the Institute and their current positions/activities. The other two days' activities included tree planting and a field visit to neighboring attractions.

The alumni agreed to hold the reunion meetings every two years and that the next venue will be at the IITA-East Africa hub in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.



Alumni being given a grand tour of IITA facilities and new initiatives at IITA.

# Goodwill messages and nostalgia at IITA50 celebrations

## HE General Yakubu Gowon

Former Head of State, Nigeria



I have a very close relationship with this Institute coupled with memories of how I managed to formally commission it in December of 1969. During that time the late Governor Gen. Adebayo had to do a lot of the work to get the land and the compensation for the communities who were originally settled

on the land on which IITA is currently located. The negotiations had to be done carefully, but also in a timely fashion because otherwise we would have missed the opportunity to have the Institute located here in Ibadan. Other locations that were being considered were countries like Kenya. Thank God all went well and we were able to have the institution established in Nigeria.

The impact IITA has had, certainly for Nigeria has been immense! But really this great work spreads to other African countries too. The research that IITA has done over the years has been very good and its outputs have been adopted widely throughout the continent. Congratulations to IITA for 50 years of success. I am also glad to have lived 50 years with the institution!

## Sen. Abdullahi Adamu

Chair, Senate Committee on Agriculture



We are happy and privileged that IITA has been here for the past 50 years. As a senate committee, we are committed to support (through appropriate legislation) the work that institutions like IITA are doing in Nigeria to ensure that the agriculture sector is strengthened. IITA has done well in delivering its mandate. Since becoming the Chair of the Agricultural Committee, I have had the privilege to visit this institution at least five times and it is from these visits and interactions with the staff at the institute that I got to appreciate IITA's work.

## Dr Yemi Akinbami

Executive Director, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa

I commend the Government of Nigeria for the unflinching support to IITA and agricultural transformation. I commend the different donors and development partners that support the IITA Dream. The vision as we can see today is a dream come true. Welcome to the Future. Truly a child is borne by one woman but it will take the community to raise the child. This is what we celebrate today.

It is unthinkable that we can win the battle against food and nutrition insecurity without science...Dr Kanayo Nwanze, said that "Agriculture is too important to be outsourced." This is what we had done for 50 years and our agricultural goals and expectations will quickly become a frustrating mirage if we do not give due attention to science and technology... FARA looks forward to a stronger symbiotic catalysis into the future. Long live IITA! Long live Nigeria! Long live the food and nutrition secure Africa!

## Dr Jimmy Smith

Director General, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)



My relationship with IITA dates back to the 1990s when I was a young scientist with the International Livestock Centre for Africa (ILCA), a predecessor of ILRI and I was based in this campus here in Ibadan So I feel pretty much at home coming back to IITA. ILRI and IITA have always had a close relationship as crops and livestock are closely integrated in Africa. We work very well together on a range of issues, particularly how to raise the productivity of farmers in Africa and how you improve livelihoods through agricultural activities One of the things you must do in Africa to tackle food insecurity and reduce poverty is to increase the productivity of farmers. IITA and ILRI have always hosted each other in Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, and here in Ibadan. It is said that life begins at 40, but in this case, we'd say life begins at 50 and we look forward to continuing working with IITA effectively in future. From ILRI we wish the Chair of the Board, the Director General, and all the IITA staff the very best wishes for the future.



Photo credits: Olusegun Adebayo, Jeffrey Oliver, Ezekiel Onasanya, Jonathan Odhong, David Ngome, and Simon Job Senou.

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