

## DG pushes for early mobilization of young people in agriculture

During his trip to IITA-Kalambo on 31 August, DG Nteranya Sanginga visited the Centre de Recherche en Sciences Naturelles de Lwiro (CRSN/LWIRO), one of IITA's national research partners based in Bukavu, to meet with CRSN/LWIRO Director General Prof. Jean Marie Mushagalusa. Dr Sanginga was accompanied by Noel Mulinganya, the coordinator of the IITA-

Kalambo Youth Agripreneurs (IKYA) and the leader of New Day Africa, a youth group that is involved in promoting agriculture as a sustainable means of livelihood at the secondary school level. New Day Africa was one of the youth groups that won prizes at the competition organized by IITA during its 50th anniversary celebration in Bukavu.

During the visit, the DG inspected IKYA's fish ponds donated by CRSN/LWIRO and had interesting discussions with CRSN/LWIRO, IKYA, and New Day Africa on their activities.

Building on the memorandum of understanding between IITA and



DG Sanginga visiting youth enterprises in Bukavu with Agripreneurs.

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## IYA Kinshasa participates in second edition of International Agricultural Fair of Kinshasa

The IITA Kinshasa Youth Agripreneurs (IYAKIN) participated in the second edition of the International Agricultural Fair of Kinshasa (FAIKIN), 18-27 August. The 10-day forum brought together small- and medium-scale farmers and processors, scientists, agro-industrial companies, and financial and technical agencies. The main theme of this edition was "Innovate, Do and Invest in Agribusiness".

FAIKIN is an annual event organized by the Provincial Ministry of Agriculture, Kinshasa and aims to achieve "food security, revitalize the agriculture sector, reduce poverty and malnutrition, and create jobs".



Exhibition stand of IITA, HarvestPlus, and Youth Agripreneurs.

IYAKIN participated in this fair to expose visitors and participants to the potential of cassava processing and cassava-based products, and to learn more on agribusiness from the youth in DR Congo. A conference on youth self-employment was organized as a side event daily. IYAKIN was invited to present its experience on agribusiness as an efficient means of youth self-employment and the creation of decent jobs. The conference provided an opportunity for various agriculture

professionals to meet and discuss their different experiences and points of common interest.

Agriculture can boost DRC's economic growth because the country has about 80 million hectares of arable land that can be used to produce food.

Unfortunately, only 8 million hectares are actually used for agriculture and the country imports most of its food. FAIKIN also aims to expose business persons to the various opportunities that are offered in the agricultural sector of DRC.



Thierry Palata talks about IYAKIN's experience in agribusiness.



Guests and visitors looking at the various products produced by IYAKIN on display during the exhibition.

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CRSN/LWIRO, the two DGs identified areas of collaboration to stimulate youth employment as well as reduce rural poverty in South Kivu.

“Getting pupils at primary and high schools to have the right mindset about agriculture at an early stage is critical to the drive of successful promotion of youth agripreneurship as well as building the future cadre of agricultural researchers,” Sanginga remarked.

Prof Mushagalusa, the DG for CRSN/LWIRO, thanked IITA for its interest in collaborating with his research center and agreed to provide IITA with farmland for evaluating improved crop varieties and promotion of youth and women's involvement in agri-enterprises. The Institute would also assist in disseminating agricultural technologies developed by IITA.

Sanginga, on his part, appreciated the gesture from his counterpart and

assured CRSN/LWIRO that IITA will make maximum use of this opportunity to address agricultural challenges in the region, explore opportunities for a youth incubation center at CRSN/LWIRO and jointly pursue collaborative initiatives with the University of Kyoto (a key LWIRO partner).

The two DGs agreed to support New Day Africa in their efforts to promote agriculture in high schools.

## Announcements

- **International Workshop on Measures to Control the Spread of Maize Lethal Necrosis in Africa**, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, 25–28 September
- **Modeling under Climate Change Scenarios Hands-on Training**, Abomey-Calavi, Benin, 16-20 October
- **Basic Bioinformatics Workshop**, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, 23–25 October
- **R4D Week**, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, 20–24 November
- **Board Meeting**, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, 20–24 November
- **Science Conference on Food and Nutrition Security: Foresight and Futures**, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, 24-25 November
- **Open Day**, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, 25 November

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



## CDO steps up staff training

The week was a beehive of activity at IITA, Ibadan, with several training programs going on simultaneously. These training sessions covered both external training, including participants from outside IITA, and internal training for staff development.

### Hands-on Basic Molecular Biology Techniques



Melaku Gedil of Biosciences Center facilitating the discussion.

The Hands-on Basic Molecular Biology Techniques Training was an external training organized by the Capacity Development Office (CDO) and the Biosciences Center of IITA. This training took place in the Bioscience Lab. The five-day training, 11-15 September, was attended by 11 participants comprising two in-house and nine external trainees from Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria.

The training was a blend of theoretical and practical sessions, aimed at ensuring that participants can carry out basic molecular techniques and learn how to use some of the equipment and reagents needed in a molecular biology lab. The training covered sample collection, DNA collection, DNA quantification, polymerase chain

reaction (PCR) result interpretation, and electrophoresis. The trainees were also taught lab safety consciousness.

The training was facilitated by Melaku Gedil, Ranjana Bhattacharjee, Adetutu Udofia, and Victoria Iwu, from the Biosciences Center. According to Bhattacharjee, this is the first time the Biosciences Center and the CDO have come together to organize this in-house Molecular Biology training.

The participants expressed satisfaction for all they had learnt. Joy Agbenewei, a lab scientist in Delta State University, said *“Before the training I didn’t have any knowledge on basic molecular biology, but with the training, I have learned so much that I can go back and teach others.”* She

is also hoping to come back to IITA to learn more. Another participant, Chieck Omar Traore, a Research Engineer at the Institut de l'Environnement et de Recherches Agricoles (INERA) in Burkina Faso, said that all he knew about Molecular Biology was what he had read in books; the training had exposed him to the practical aspect which he feels he is now very knowledgeable about.

The participants were given a tour of the Genetic Resources Center (GRC), Business Incubation Platform (BIP), Aflasafe, and IITA Youth Agripreneurs.

### Advanced Microsoft PowerPoint

Nine staff of IITA, Ibadan, gathered at the Musa room for a two-day training exercise 11-12 September, on Advanced Microsoft PowerPoint. The training was facilitated by Gerald Umeze, a specialist in Monitoring and Evaluation at HarvestPlus.

The training aimed at building the capacity of IITA staff to develop and carry out topnotch presentations at seminars using PowerPoint and while giving reports.

The training covered both the technical and basic aspects of using PowerPoint (PPT). At the beginning of the training, the participants were asked to make PPT presentations to determine their level of understanding and proficiency of using PPT. At the end of their presentation, the facilitator gave



Learning how to make good presentations using PowerPoint is a basic skill in the workplace today.

participants feedback and showed them how to make better PPT presentations.

The participants expressed gratitude to IITA for the training, especially since most of them said they could not make very good PPT presentations before the training.

### Small-Scale Mechanization

The training on Small-Scale Mechanization ran 13-15 September. The training was organized by the Agripreneurs specifically for staff of the Genetic Resources Center (GRC).

The training, which involved 18 participants, aimed to sensitize and teach field staff how to use machines in weed management. The training comprised the application of herbicides and use of mechanized equipment. It also involved some practical demonstrations of what had been taught.

Professional trainers from the Cassava Weeds Management Project of IITA, Agriserve, and Agripreneurs pioneered the activity. Trainers from the postharvest mechanization unit came to discuss about different equipment and machines. The Equipment Fabrication Unit was also there to show the different equipment that can be used to control weeds in the farm.

Participants were very happy because before the training they only knew how to use hoes and cutlasses to clear weeds. This was very slow and resulted in drudgery, but they said that with the training, they would now be able to control weeds faster and more efficiently.



Course participants in a group exercise.

### Effective Business Communication Skills

Sixteen staff from different units of IITA-Ibadan participated in a three-day Business Communication Skills training, 13-15 September, at the Musa room.

The training was facilitated by Zillion Impact Solutions Limited, a training and consultancy company in Ibadan. It was aimed at improving staff capacity in the area of business communication, public speaking, and event planning.

The training started with individual presentations by the participants. Each of them was given 3 minutes to make a presentation on any topic of their choice. This was a form of assessment by the facilitators to know the level of

competence of the participants in public speaking.

In an interview, the facilitators said that most of the participants were “glossophobic”, meaning they fear public speaking, and also didn’t know much on public speaking. Ola Adams, the CEO of Zillion Impact Solutions Limited, said: “...It is not enough to teach everything about public speaking within this short period of time, but for three days we have raised the bar a little bit in terms of competence and capacity building.”

The participants asserted that the training was invaluable. They have overcome their fear of public speaking, hence, they are more confident that they can now make better presentations. At the end of the training, each participant was handed a certificate of participation.



Participants at the small-scale mechanization training.



# Youth agribusiness in Uganda: The importance of engaging youth in agricultural enterprises

Maya Turolla, a PhD candidate at the University of Bologna and Radboud University in Nijmegen, collaborated with IITA in Uganda to study how the drive to engage youth in agriculture is materializing in terms of development projects and the role these projects play in the lives of these youth. Maya spent 6 months, from January till July 2017, interviewing development stakeholders working with youth in agriculture, as well as youth engaged in agriculture throughout four subregions in Uganda. She presented her initial impressions and reflections from her time in the field to stakeholders promoting youth engagement in agriculture, at a meeting organized at the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kampala.

The latest statistics in Uganda show that 78% of the population is under 30 years, and 83% of the youth are unemployed. Based on these statistics, the youth are seen as one of the most vulnerable demographic groups of society. At the same time, they are also seen as a threat to society, as the risk of civil conflict is highest where a high proportion of the population is young. This puts Uganda in a precarious situation where a large part of the population is both young and unemployed, so justifying the comparatively new development focus on youth.

Agriculture is one of the focal sectors in the effort to employ Ugandan youth, and it has led to several development programs, both public (government funded, the Youth Livelihoods Program) and a plethora of donor-funded projects. Through interviews with stakeholders at the national level, two different approaches to engaging youth in agriculture were identified. These were the private sector driven and the public approaches. The private sector-driven approach focuses on implementation through private sector companies, where youth are selected from private and public networks, and are provided with capacity building through training, market linkages, and agri-inputs. The public approach, which is run through government agencies, potentially targets all Ugandan youth interested in agribusiness. As part of the research, Maya added a control group, where young men and women in agribusiness who were not part of any development project were interviewed.

Maya's presentation on her preliminary findings sparked interesting reflections and discussions between the stakeholders present. One of the key points discussed was on how to define youth as the age bracket of this share of the population is problematic. It excludes farmers looking to benefit from the projects as much as the numbers of young



Maya fielding questions during the event at the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kampala. Photo by Onno Giller, IITA.

people changing every day and the large differences within the broad age bracket of 15 to 35 years. Youth as a concept is more fluid and culturally bound, as indicated by one interviewed agripreneur who said: **"I am not a youth, as I have been circumcised"**. A critique of the development projects is that they did not address the different needs of the wide range of youth that the age bracket encompasses, as well as the regional differences in Uganda. The key reflection moving forward is that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to engaging youth in agriculture.

The research also looked into how gender aspects were being addressed. Gender was in most cases addressed by looking at how many women were engaged in terms of numbers. Yet in development programs for youth in agribusiness, no specific attention was paid to gender differences (roles, tasks, capacities, etc.) within the youth groups targeted. This has led to cases of divorce, partners leaving, and household violence and most women have had to give money earned to their husbands. The key discussion points were on whether or not the social revolution (women's empowerment) was happening before the cultural revolution (acceptance of equal gender role in society) had happened, and if this was the case, then is it only single women that can engage

in agribusiness? The main reflection on this issue in the presentation is that only focusing on women is not enough, as the men's role in the household also needs to be addressed.

The discussion at the event echoes findings that to engage youth in agriculture, the projects should focus on highlighting agriculture as a business venture, moving away from subsistence agriculture.

Dr Okeke Sebastian, Principal Country Programme Officer at AfDB in Uganda, encouraged youth **"Not to look at agriculture as their parents and grandparents look at it, but rather as a business"**. Modernization of agriculture is a key aspect in making agriculture a great opportunity for making money and increasing opportunities in the job market. This is all done from the perspective that the main problem facing the youth is unemployment, and that agriculture is a key area to address the issue.

The final remark on this was that there is a need to look into youth engagement in agriculture to see if it is really about changing mindsets; that agriculture is not a punishment or are youth just reflecting reality that agriculture is not a profitable business to go into?



Two youth involved in agribusiness in Kamu, Bulambuli District, on the slopes of Mt. Elgon. Photo by Maya Turolla.