

Tanzania Ministry of Agriculture lauds ACAI activities

[African Cassava Agronomy Initiative](#)

(ACAI) will play a key role in addressing problems facing cassava farming in Tanzania to help the country meet the growing demand for cassava. This is according to the Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Engr. Martin Mtigunwe.

In a statement read on his behalf by Assistant Director for Research and Development in the Ministry, Dr Geoffrey Kajiru, the PS said ACAI technology and innovations will fit into the country's long-term plans for cassava farmers.

"For (Tanzania) to commercialize the cassava crop, we must achieve a collective yield above 2.5 million tons. We are expecting ACAI recommendations to contribute towards this goal," said Mtigunwe.

He said Tanzania had just entered a short-term trade agreement with China



Madam Karima Babangida, (second left) from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nigeria, and Dr Geoffrey Kajiru from the Ministry of Agriculture Tanzania, with the ACAI management team during the annual review meeting in Mwanza, Tanzania.

to supply cassava to the Asian nation. This, he pointed out, adds to the already growing demand for cassava in Tanzania. ACAI is developing decision support tools that will help farmers improve their yield per hectare and maintain a regular supply of high quality roots to the cassava processing industry.

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DG Sanginga commends development in Abuja Station

IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) has commended the development strides in IITA Abuja Station. "I am happy with the new look of Abuja Station," Sanginga said while being conducted around some of the new structures within the station by the Station Head, [Gbassey Tarawali](#).

Singinga, who was on a visit to Abuja to attend the Commissioning of the Nigeria Country Department Complex of the [African Development Bank](#), inspected the offices in the newly built ATASP-1 Youth Training Center, the interlocked road from the gate to the guesthouse, the newly constructed maize warehouse, and



DG Sanginga (with raised arms) and staff at the Abuja Station on one of the newly constructed roads.



DG Sanginga at the IYA grain warehouse in Abuja.

the warehouse stocked with bags of sorghum maintained by the [IITA Youth Agripreneurs](#) in Abuja.

Other facilities inspected were the ongoing construction of the Tissue

Culture Laboratory, the ATASP-1 processing center, the staff canteen, and other facilities.

Before he left Abuja station, the DG expressed satisfaction with the

recent growth, and encouraged the management and staff to do much more especially in the area of fundraising for sustainability given the strategic position of Abuja Station.

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The Permanent Secretary was the chief guest at the ACAI annual review meeting and planning meeting in Mwanza Tanzania.

Tanzania and Nigeria are the tier one countries where ACAI is modeling and developing the tools that will then be scaled to other countries in

sub-Saharan Africa. The Ministries of Agriculture in both countries are closely involved in the ACAI activity through their respective research institutions.



Farmer visits peer's farm to view ACAI trials at Kismwene Village in Butiama, Mwanza Tanzania.

In Tanzania, ACAI is working with Agricultural Research Institute (ARI) in running cassava trials and other research activities. In Nigeria, ACAI works with the [National Root Crops Research Institute](#) (NRCRI) and the [Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta](#) (FUNAAB).

The PS lauded [IITA's](#) contribution towards cassava research and improvement in Tanzania pointing out the introduction of disease-resistant and -tolerant cassava varieties through different projects that have revived cassava farming in regions affected by cassava diseases in Tanzania.

AgBiome officials seek collaboration, sign MoU with IITA

[Drs Vadim Beilinson](#) and [Lee Simmons](#), representatives from [AgBiome Inc.](#) of North Carolina, USA, paid a courtesy visit to [IITA](#) on 18–19 January to seek opportunities for collaboration. The delegation was received by Director R4D, IITA West Africa, [Robert Asiedu](#), YIFSWA project lead [Norbert Maroya](#), and AfricaYam project lead [David De Koeper](#). Asiedu gave an overview of IITA's activities and achievements over the past 50 years and highlighted the importance of partnership with organizations that seek to improve agriculture "in all its ramifications."

The visit was arranged to establish collaboration with IITA principally in sample collection to discover new and potentially beneficial microorganisms that would control nematodes in yam for medium and smallholder farmers, and also to benefit from IITA's expertise in developing AgBiome to be the world's leading agricultural biotech company.

Simmons stated: "To have on-the-ground expertise and knowledge required for production systems, locating the best places for sampling and, more importantly, the dissemination of that information to get back to producers and end-users, cannot be achieved without collaborating with an established organization like IITA." In addition, Beilinson pointed out that since yam is a major food crop, "its massive losses are known and the control measures are limited, so we see this collaboration as tremendous in transforming yam production, and by extension, other food crops with similar difficulties, by making products that will help farmers combat many of the most important unsolved problems in agriculture, including insects, nematodes, and diseases."

After a tour of IITA, which included the yam breeding fields and storage facilities, the yam aeroponics system



Dr Lee Simmons of Agbiome making a presentation.



AgBiome representatives with some IITA staff led by Dr Robert Asiedu, middle (in blue long-sleeved shirt).

and vine nursery, and the nematology laboratory, Simmons commented: "This is extraordinarily impressive. There is no doubt we have come to the right place for the partnership."

AgBiome is a private biotechnology company and uses new knowledge of the plant-associated microbiome to create innovative products for agriculture.

Got a story to share?

Please email it with photos and captions every Wednesday to iita-news@cgiar.org or Katherine Lopez (k.lopez@cgiar.org) and Uzoma Agha (u.gha@cgiar.org) for headquarters and Western Africa, Jeffrey T. Oliver (j.oliver@cgiar.org) for Southern Africa, Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org) for Eastern Africa, and David Ngome (d.ngome@cgiar.org) for Central Africa.

Entrepreneurship on cassava food production in Cameroon: IITA researchers meet with PIDMA representatives

IITA's Country Representative in Cameroon, [Rachid Hanna](#), hosted researchers and partners from the Project for the Investment and Development of Agricultural Markets (PIDMA) on 13 December 2017 in IITA Yaoundé offices to discuss and review new and better partnership opportunities that could be established to help boost cassava food production.

[Fotso Apollin](#) from IITA Cameroon, who is also the PIDMA focal point, made a brief presentation on the seven different cassava genotypes developed so far in the Institute. He emphasized the quality of cassava varieties, adding that it could be measured in terms of resistance to pests and diseases and the nutrient content. Singling out the biofortified pro-vitamin A yellow cassava, he emphasized the importance of carotenoid content, although the carotenoid content on cassava varieties depend on the variety. Some African countries such as Cameroon, DR Congo, Malawi, Nigeria, and Tanzania have adopted its production not only because of its acceptable taste but also because it can be used for multipurpose production of foods.

Albert Ndjee, Chief Executive Officer of [Neilly's Foods Limited](#), a potential partner from the United States, gave a presentation about the activities and capacity of his company and how they can partner in the cassava value



Participants met at the IITA Board Room in Cameroon.

chain within PIDMA. Neilly's Foods specializes in large-scale distribution of food products.

Ndjee said the company has plans to evaluate and carry out ingredient analysis on local cassava varieties to obtain food products based on the varieties' characteristics for productivity, cooking, and nutritional value.

To reassure the business partners, a small workshop was organized in which

they had the opportunity to see, taste, and evaluate the different parameters highlighted for the different cassava varieties, especially their cooking quality, taste and "mealiness." At the end of the workshop the entrepreneurs expressed satisfaction with ongoing research on cassava at IITA, which so far has not only gained it an outstanding position in the market but has also helped in attracting foreign entrepreneurs.

IITA organized field day and graduation ceremony for farmers in Cameroon

[IITA](#), which coordinates the Green Innovation Centre for Agriculture and Food Sector (PROSICA), organized a field day and graduation ceremony in Ngomedzap in the Nyong and So'o division last December 2017. During the ceremony, farming equipment like boots, cutlasses, wheelbarrows, and overalls were handed to some 12 farmers of the Ngomedzap SOCOPROCAON cooperative, who had successfully undergone training in

modern techniques of cocoa cultivation in the locality, within the framework of the Farmers Field school (FFS). The farmers were trained to help train other farmers propagate good cocoa farming practices.

Participants included the Divisional Officer and the Mayor of Ngomedzap, representatives from MINADER, GIZ, IITA, and farmers from the region. Farmers who went through the training

were given the opportunity to share their experiences, lessons learnt, and challenges faced while at the FFS.

Some of the farmers have quickly adopted new techniques and had gone ahead to clear old cocoa plantations to create new farms that align with the intercropping, spacing, and practical application of other practices taught in the training. Intercropping is the most popular among cocoa farmers from

the training because they can get food from the field as the cocoa continues to mature.

PROSICA has been carrying out similar training activities across Cameroon working with farmers' groups and cooperatives. Some of the groups that have benefited from PROSICA training include MAUCUP, a Union of cooperatives in Muyuka, and CONAFCOOP cooperative in Konye—all based in the Southwest Region of Cameroon; and Cacao + cooperative in Ayos and SOCOPROCAON Cooperative in Ngomedzap situated in Central Cameroon.



A farmer receiving a certificate during the graduation after a series of farmers field school training by PROSICA in Cameroon.

Announcement: PhD scholarships at icipe, Kenya

The [International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology](#) (icipe), Kenya, in partnership with the [German Academic Exchange Service](#) (DAAD) In-Country/In-Region Scholarships Programme and African university partners, invites applications from suitably qualified candidates for PhD scholarships in the African Regional Postgraduate Programme in Insect Sciences (ARPPIS) on or before 4 February 2018.

The three-year doctoral training in insects and related sciences for

development, will include research, training, developing research partnerships, writing scientific papers and grant proposals, and attending scientific meetings and international conferences.

The primary objective of ARPPIS is to prepare young researchers from Africa to compete in an internationally competitive research environment within national, regional, and international research programs.

DAAD is the German national agency for the support of

international academic cooperation, and offers programs and funding for students, faculty, researchers, and others in higher education. They also represent the German higher education system abroad, promoting Germany as an academic and research destination, and help build links between institutions around the world.

For further information contact: Ms Vivian Atieno, Capacity Building Officer, Capacity Building and Institutional Development Programme, icipe, vatieno@icipe.org, tel: +254 20 863 2272.

Events

- TAAT inauguration and planning workshop, 22–24 January, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria
- CIALCA Open Data Kit training workshop, 23–25 January, Nairobi, Kenya
- ACAI Strategic meeting, 29 January – 2 February, Nairobi, Kenya
- CLiP Annual review and Planning meeting, 29–31 January, Bukavu, DRC
- CIALCA project launch, February, Kigali, Rwanda
- Nairobi Innovation Week, 5–9 March, The Great Court, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya
- International Women's Day, 8 March
- BASICS annual review and planning meeting, 14–16 March, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria
- 2018 Annual Review and Work Planning Meeting, Cassava Weed Management Project, 19 – 20 March, Conference Center, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria
- IITA Board Meeting, 24–26 April, [Center for Development Research of Bonn University](#) (ZEF), Bonn, Germany
- Special event on "African agricultural transformation: The IITA Agripreneur Approach to Job Creation", 26 April, ZEF, Bonn, Germany
- 7th International Food Legume Research Conference, 6–8 May, Palais des Congrès, Marrakech, Morocco