

IITA DG assures staff: Be patient; better financial times ahead

Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) has reassured staff that the tight financial situation at IITA due to last year's reduction in funding to the [CGIAR](#) System was improving and he was very hopeful of a turnaround mid-year.

"Our strategy between now and May is focused on recovery. And we are happy the recovery is happening faster than expected," he said.

He said, for example, the long-awaited [Africa Development Bank](#) (AfDB)-funded program, Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT), had been approved by the Bank's board.

The DG was speaking to staff and partners at the IITA-Eastern Africa hub in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, during a two-day official visit.



DG Sanginga speaking to IITA staff in Dar es Salaam.

He also thanked the staff for their patience and solidarity with the Institute during these challenging times.

"My aim during these difficult times is to protect the research and staff at IITA. You (staff) are our most important

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Tanzania youth Agripreneurs impress IITA DG

IITA DG [Nteranya Sanginga](#) expressed optimism over the efforts of the Tanzania Youth Agripreneurs and pledged to fully support them in their various enterprises. These include cassava processing, livestock feed production, rearing of poultry, rabbit, and fish, and vegetable production.

The DG was on a visit to the Eastern Africa hub in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where as usual, he spends a day with the youth at their Center of Excellence to see their progress and challenges.

He was accompanied by [Victor Manyong](#), the Eastern Africa Hub Director; [Regina Kapinga](#), Head of

Advocacy and Resource Mobilization; [Adebayo Abass](#), Value Chain Specialist; [Eveline Odiambo](#), Regional Head of Finance and Administration; and Edith Kazimoto, Senior Human Resources Officer.

The youth shared the various challenges they were facing in their enterprises. These included lack of equipment needed for production of animal feed and cassava drying. They said they depended on solar drying for cassava and this posed challenges during the rainy season.

The DG pledged a donation of \$10,000 to help them address the challenges

and to boost their production. Manyong, on his part, said he would support the rabbit keeping enterprise to modernize its feeding operation and Abass said he would support the youth to acquire a flash dryer valued at about \$48,000 through a loan.

New enterprises

The DG was especially happy to see that the group had gone into animal feed. He had challenged them to explore this opportunity during his last visit 6 months ago. The group informed him they had produced 1.5 tons of feed; chicken starter and chicken finisher for broilers. They also

plan to produce feed for layers and local breeders.

“It is a good business as animal feed is in very high demand. For poultry and fish farmers, 70% of their expenses goes to feeds. You are doing very well considering you have been working on this enterprise for less than 6 months,” Sanginga said.

The rabbit enterprise was also considered impressive, having started with only 20 rabbits less than 6 months ago which has grown to more than 200 rabbits today. The youths’ major challenges were lack of equipment to produce rabbit feed and rabbit feeding cages, therefore, the support from the hub director will address these challenges.

New members

Recently, the TYA expanded to include other youth who are already running their own successful agribusinesses to mentor those who are just starting their enterprises. They in turn will benefit from the capacity building and networking opportunities.

Two of these youth, Abella Minis who sells eggs and pro-vitamin A maize flour, and Mundula Malozo who blends and sells orange-fleshed sweet potato and pro-vitamin A maize flour, were also present during the visit. They also exhibited their products and said they were pleased to link up with the TYA.



Youth Agripreneurs showcase some of their products to the DG (left).

The team also visited a young agripreneur, Christa Muzanila, who had graduated from TYA and started her own agribusiness outside the Kwembe center. She is involved in chicken rearing and vegetable production in their family farm.

Words of encouragement

Sanginga advised the youth to consider legally registering their group and prepare competitive business plans in preparation for the implementation of the TAAT-ENABLE youth initiative of the African Development Bank.

The program will support youth

engaged in agribusiness and will select two or three business plans within Tanzania to invest in with a starter pack that includes \$15,000 as a grant and \$5,000 as a loan as part of a revolving fund. The DG also advised them to link up with other organizations such as the International Potato Center for the value chain on orange-fleshed sweet potato.

He also appreciated the support from the hub management and scientists who were mentoring the group.

While giving closing remarks at the end of the visit, Manyong encouraged the youth to stay positive and to keep on growing and innovating.

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asset. I am therefore happy to see that you are still passionate and dedicated to IITA and its mission. Be patient and use the little operational budget allocated to you wisely,” Sanginga advised.

The DG also said overall, he was extremely pleased with the state of the hub and thanked the management, under the leadership of Hub Director [Victor Manyong](#) and Head of Finance and Administration [Eveline Odiambo](#), for taking good care of the hub.

He noted that the facilities and grounds were well maintained, giving a very positive image of the Institute. He also noted the new developments since his last visit such as paving the entrance road and ongoing construction of additional offices and storage.

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.

NEXTGEN Cassava enters new phase with \$35M grant for cassava development in sub-Saharan Africa

Although cassava breeders have made much progress over the years, they still face significant challenges in developing disease-resistant varieties that increase overall yield and respond to the needs of smallholder farmers and processors. The NextGen project, which has been at the fore of international efforts to deliver improved varieties of cassava to smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa, is set to expand this work with \$35 million in new funding from the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) and [UKAid](#).

“This grant funds a second five-year phase that will allow us to build on previous work and focus on getting improved varieties into farmers’ fields,” said Ronnie Coffman, International plant breeder and Director of [Cornell University’s](#) International Programs in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, who leads the project.

During Phase 1 of the Next Generation Cassava Breeding project, which was also funded by the Gates Foundation and UKAid from 2012 to 2017, researchers shortened the breeding cycle for new cassava varieties by improving flowering and using genomic selection. Breeders also improved their ability to make selections based on genetics and probability without having to wait for seedlings to reach maturity. This was achieved through analyzing plant genotypes and identifying cassava lines with desirable traits, which all contributes to save breeding time for a crop where flowering and sexual propagation are issues.

Phase 1 also aimed to make cassava genomic information publicly accessible on an open database. Cassava researchers all over the world are now using [Cassavabase](#) to compare results and improve breeding programs without duplicating efforts.

To reduce cost per progeny and improve the quality of data uploaded to Cassavabase in Phase 2, NextGen researchers will use additional methods of whole genome sequencing.

“Our focus for the next five years will be to translate this research into breeding practices to increase impact,” said



IITA cassava breeder Peter Kulakow in a field grown with improved cassava varieties.

[Chiedozie Egesi](#), NextGen Project Director and Adjunct Professor of Plant Breeding and Genetics at Cornell, who is based at IITA in Nigeria. “A key goal in Phase 2 will be to identify traits preferred by farmers and end-users and incorporate them into new cassava lines to ensure that varieties are responsive to people’s needs.”

Egesi said, “We believe we will accelerate genetic gain as well as adopted genetic gain, increase the yields and resilience of cassava production by smallholder farmers, and move African cassava breeding toward greater capacity.”

“Among the 30 new clones developed at IITA using our methods, 10 had higher dry matter yield than any clone currently available for smallholder farmers in Nigeria,” said Jean-Luc Jannink, a Research Plant Geneticist with the United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) and Cornell adjunct Associate Professor in the Department of Plant Breeding and Genetics at Cornell. “Dry matter yield is a close proxy to food yield. Conservatively, we believe that we will increase the rate of genetic gain in cassava by 30 to 50 percent.”

Said [Peter Kulakow](#), IITA Cassava Breeder and Geneticist: “Genetic gain is a measure of the improvement of plant

performance between generations and a goal of most modern breeding programs. Swifter improvements mean more new varieties can be tested and released.”

At the sixth annual NextGen Cassava meeting, 19–24 February in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, teams of NextGen breeders, geneticists, data analysts, computer programmers, food technologists, social scientists, and crop protectionists will be focusing on goals for Phase 2 and discussing how to better coordinate and leverage the exchange of germplasm and genotypic and phenotypic data from each other.

In Africa, NextGen collaborators include IITA, the [National Root Crops Research Institute](#) in Nigeria, the [West Africa Centre for Crop Improvement](#) in Ghana, the National Crops Resources Research Institute and [Makerere University](#) in Uganda, and the Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute in Tanzania. In South America, collaborators include [Embrapa](#) in Brazil and the [International Center for Tropical Agriculture](#) (CIAT) in Colombia. In the US, collaborators are Cornell University (who leads the project), the Boyce Thompson Institute at Cornell, the [University of Hawaii](#), and the [USDA-ARS](#) in Ithaca.

For more information see [www.nextgencassava.org](#)

NRCRI visits IITA to explore areas of improvement

[IITA](#) partners from the [National Root Crop Research Institute](#) (NRCRI), Umudike, Abia State, visited IITA HQ on 14–15 February, to explore and discuss possible areas of improvement and also strengthen partnership ties.

A delegation led by Joseph Ukpabi, Acting Executive Director of NRCRI, was received by [Hilde Koper-Limbourg](#), IITA Deputy Director General, Corporate Services; [Sylvia Oyinlola](#), Head of Administration, Western Africa Hub; and Principal Investigators (PI) of IITA projects. In her welcome address, Oyinlola gave assurances of unending collaboration and commitment, while emphasizing the need to help secure the path to food security in Africa.

[Robert Asiedu](#), IITA Director, Research for Development, West Africa, gave an overview of IITA's active projects and achievements, reiterating the importance and willingness of the Institute to assist NRCRI in achieving their strategic and operational goals. Okechukwu Eke-Okoro, NRCRI Director, Externally Funded Projects, commended the immeasurable effort of IITA towards ensuring that Africa feeds itself through agriculture. "I am amazed at IITA's groundbreaking research and innovations. If only all that we have seen and heard can be replicated in NRCRI, I believe we will contribute a reasonable quota in moving the agricultural agenda forward," he added.

While conducting the visitors around IITA facilities, which included Virology and [Germplasm Health Unit](#) (GHU), Analytical Service



Roundtable discussion during NRCRI visit at IITA.

Laboratory, Geospatial Information System Laboratory, Semi-Autotrophic Hydroponics ([SAH](#)), and Genetic Resources Center ([GRC](#)), Ukpabi stated "IITA is doing a good job! I am impressed with its impact and commercialization efforts; I commend the management for their determination and hard work. From the experiences gathered, we need to find ways of boosting and increasing yam visibility in the eastern part of Nigeria, as tuber crops are being downplayed by breeders in the zone. I count on your support," he asserted.

Concurring with Ukpabi's commendation, Anthony Ano, NRCRI Director for Root Crops, said: "Our

partnership with IITA is over 3 decades, and they have never disappointed us. As we are ready to build on these linkages especially in the areas of yam and cassava, and make a good success of these experiences, I am certain IITA will not let us down."

NRCRI conducts research on genetic improvement of economically important root and tuber crops such as cassava, yam, cocoyam, sweet potato, Irish potato, ginger, rizga, Hausa potato, sugar beets, and turmeric. It also researches subjects such as crop cultivation techniques, storage, processing, and utilization of the crops, concentrating on requirements of farmers in southeast Nigeria.

NZHF Secretariat makes advance visit to Borno; meets with FAO

Ahead of the Nigeria Zero Hunger Forum (NZHF) meeting scheduled for March 2018, [Kenton Dashiell](#), IITA Deputy Director General for Partnership for Delivery, led members of the NZHF secretariat to Borno State to assess the preparedness of the northeastern state towards hosting members of the forum. The mission, held on 12-15 February, was also aimed at providing technical backstopping and advising the Borno team on areas that would make the meeting in March a success.

Dashiell and members of the NZHF secretariat paid a courtesy visit to the Deputy Governor of Borno State, Alhaji Maman Usman. The team was well received, and the Deputy Governor reiterated the commitment of the State to Zero Hunger. He also commended IITA for the donation of seeds to the State. Dashiell informed the Deputy Governor that one of the reasons for the visit was to ensure the participation of other ministries that may have influence on the goal of Zero Hunger.

Dashiell, who chairs the NZHF secretariat at IITA, interacted with the Commissioner of Agriculture, Alhaji Muhamed Dali and members of the agriculture ministry. He also met with the Commissioner of Poverty Alleviation, Mrs Inna Galadima; Commissioner of Rehabilitation, Resettlement, and Reconstruction, Prof Babagana Umara; Commissioner of Livestock and Fisheries, and representatives of the Ministry of Health. The team thereafter made a field tour to the state-

owned screen house (about 5 ha) for the production of tomato, and the mechanization section of the Ministry of Agriculture, which houses brand new tractors, harvesters, and planters, etc.

A trip was also made to an irrigation-accessories plant and a greenhouse which produces seedlings. At the end of the field tour and the interactions, Dashiell expressed confidence over the preparedness of the State.

Besides interacting with state officials, Dashiell also met with the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO) in Borno. The meeting was aimed at further strengthening cooperation with IITA. The DDG was received by Nourou Tall, FAO Representative Head in Borno State. Both organizations discussed areas of collaboration and agreed to build on previous efforts. Dashiell was accompanied by David Oluwadare, Toyin Oke, and [Godwin Atser](#).



Dr Kenton Dashiell and party being received by the Deputy Governor of Borno State.

IITA Flickr account surpasses 5.7 million views

The IITA image repository being housed on the photo hosting and sharing service Flickr has attained a milestone—it has reached and surpassed 5.7 million views! The Institute’s Flickr account, which was set up in December 2009, currently has a total of 5,796,987 cumulative views from 12,067 photos uploaded.

IITA’s use of Flickr promotes accessibility of the Institute’s images to a global audience, which is a hallmark

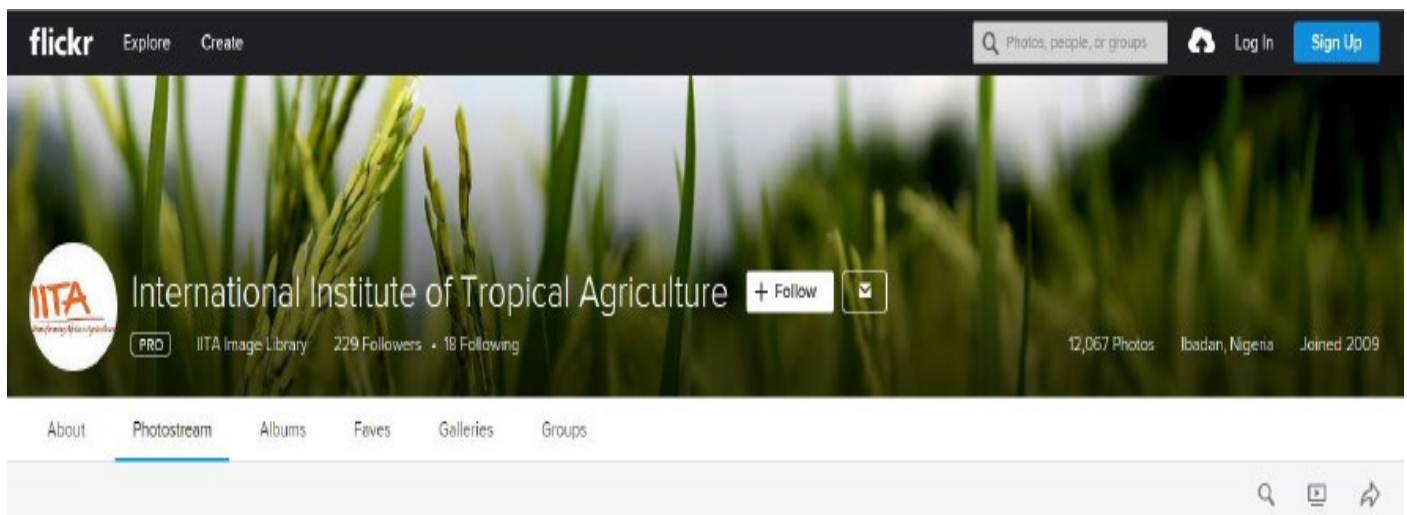
of the CGIAR Open Access policy. These images provide an insider view of the activities of scientists and researchers, institute events, planning meetings partner visits, laboratory and field activities, and Institute activities, etc. and are all easily searchable.

While presenting a report on the reach and performance of IITA’s Flickr account, Sade Oyedokun of the Communication Unit stated: “IITA Flickr account has brought the world

closer and has brought the activities of this Institute to many online users.”

Flickr, pronounced “flicker”, is both an image-hosting and sharing platform that is widely used by a vibrant online community for photography repositories covering widely varying subject matters.

For more information visit IITA’s Flickr feed: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/iita-media-library/>



AfSIS delighted with IITA Abuja conference facility

A delegation from the [Africa Soil Information Service](#) (AfSIS) has paid a thank you visit to the Head of IITA-Abuja station Gbassey Tarawali for what it described as a “quick response to their request to use the IITA Kubwa facility after a hitch to use a planned venue in town in Abuja.”

The team, led by Joseph Uponi, Manager, Analytical Service Laboratory at IITA Headquarters, stressed that the team was able to achieve so much in one day because of the conducive environment.

‘This is a great improvement, great facilities, and fantastic support,’ Dr Bruce Scott of [ICRAF](#) who is AfSIS Technical Adviser, said while also expressing gratitude.

The visit came after their one-day training on AfSIS’ Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) held at the conference hall in Abuja Station.

Receiving the group, [Tarawali](#) expressed delight for the opportunity to host AfSIS. “With the support of the IITA management, our facilities have improved; feel free to come any time,” Tarawali assured the visitors while briefing them about the Station’s activities which include different projects and IITA Youth Agripreneurs.

AfSIS is a project funded by the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) that builds technology innovations and services to



Mr Joseph Uponi addressing training participants.

drive the future of African agriculture. Its goal is to rapidly expand the use of world-class information technology and data science to ensure that Africa’s soil and landscape resources are described, understood, and used effectively to raise agricultural productivity and lower ecological footprints as a means of increasing the prosperity of Africa’s communities and nations.

One of the five AfSIS’ Mid infra-red soil spectrometers (MIRs) in Nigeria is in IITA Ibadan. Similarly, training of NiSIS and IITA staff members in R/

AfSIS SOPs, MIR, and pXRF spectral methods for soil prediction commenced immediately after the launch of the Pilot NiSIS project of mapping the soils in Kebbi and Ebonyi states, which was officially launched by the Honorable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Chief Audu Ogbeh.

Part of this training on AfSIS SOPs was hosted by IITA Abuja on 13 February. The training on pXRF spectral methods will be at IITA Ibadan and the one on MIR spectral methods will be in all the five designated spectral labs in Nigeria, 15–22 February.

Events

- CIALCA project launch, February, Kigali, Rwanda
- Building resilience against crop diseases: a global surveillance system (GSS), 12–16 February, Rockefeller Conference Center-Bellagio, Italy,
- 6th Annual NextGen Cassava meeting, 19–24 February, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- Regional workshop in Africa on invasive species, 21–22 February, 2018 icipe, Nairobi, Kenya
- YIIFSWA-II Annual Progress Review and Work Planning Meeting , 5–8 March, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria
- 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