

## TAAT launch signifies new day for African agriculture

IITA hosted scientists, technologists, economists, development partners, and program specialists from partner organizations to inaugurate [Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation](#) (TAAT), in Ibadan on 22–24 January. TAAT, a multi-year, multi-partner program, was conceptualized based on “Africa Feeding Africa” as a pillar of the Feed Africa Initiative of the [African Development Bank](#) (AfDB). It aims to bring agro-technologies to scale among farmers in Africa.

In his welcome address, IITA DDG, Partnerships for Delivery, [Dr Kenton Dashiell](#), commended the spirit of enthusiasm and cooperation among participants. He said: “If I would bring a group of people together to make plans for transforming agriculture in Africa, this is the team I would pick.” He urged participants to go into countries and do country planning as “real success will only come by working together



*Betty Kibara of the Rockefeller Foundation, one of the donor partners.*

with teams within a country that align perfectly with the goals of that country and what the governments see as their priorities for agriculture.”

In his opening remarks, Dr Martin Fregene, the new Director of Agriculture and Agro-Industry, of AfDB, was very appreciative of all participants while

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## Program coordinator leads stakeholders through TAAT framework in support of the program

During the 3-day (22–24 January) inauguration meeting of [Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation](#) (TAAT) that brought together national and international development partner institutes, agricultural experts, representatives from national agricultural research and extension systems (NARES), policy makers, and entrepreneurs from the private sector, Dr Jonas Chianu, TAAT Coordinator and Principal Agricultural Economist, [African Development Bank](#) (AfDB), provided a framework to support this complex, multi-partner program.

He talked about this in his presentation titled “Framework program in support

of FEED AFRICA, which emphasized the level of malnutrition in Africa and the collective effort of various stakeholders to combat it through innovation, by bridging the gap between proven technologies and agricultural production and productivity for African transformation.

He said that more than 160 million Africans are food insecure and malnourished. He also pointed out that Africa’s recent economic gains are at risk if this continues, as low agricultural productivity and value addition are at the heart of the malnutrition, unemployment, and poverty challenges in Africa. TAAT is a knowledge- and innovation-based



*Dr Jonas Chianu gives an overview of the TAAT Program.*

response to the need for scaling up proven technologies across Africa.

It aims to boost productivity and increase food production over the next 8–10 years through improved food security and income, and will make Africa self-sufficient in key commodities. It will benefit an estimated 11.7 million households over 10 years.

Chianu reiterated that if the technologies that exist to feed Africa are widely deployed today, there will be high-yielding crop varieties and livestock breeds; biofortified crops such as pro-vitamin A-rich cassava, high iron and zinc rice, and high zinc sorghum. If scaled up, these can help to address the problems of malnutrition and stunting of African bodies and minds. TAAT is expected to add 3.15 million direct farm jobs over eight years, add an estimated 120 million tons of food to Africa's food

production valued at US\$1.71 to \$2.8 billion, and contribute to lifting about 40 million people out of poverty.

Chianu highlighted that the reason technology has not moved to scale before in Africa is due to the absence of a well-coordinated regional effort or platform to deliver food production technologies across similar agroecological zones. Looking to the future, the TAAT program coordinator said that the Bank and its partners will seek to refocus the technically excellent efforts of [CGIAR](#) and its network with NARES to emphasize high priority commodities that will reach 40–50% of African farmers with the most relevant food production technologies by 2025.

Echoing the resolve to make it work, Chianu emphasized that the big opportunities in TAAT are strategic alliance/effective collaboration among

key development partners to advance agricultural development in Africa, synergizing and capitalizing on their different strengths, bringing to bear the joint collective effort of international, regional, and national agricultural systems to improve connections between research, extension, and reform regulatory systems that impede speedy transfer of technologies across borders.

In conclusion, Chianu said that for TAAT to be the bedrock of Feed Africa, and for it to succeed, it must move African production much higher on the value chain, with agribusinesses producing and selling processed goods, not simply basic commodities, while providing markets for African farmers, through raising agricultural productivity along eight priority intervention areas (PIAs) and over 18 agricultural commodity value chains.

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reiterating the commitment of the Bank to African agricultural transformation. He shared the story of the transformation experience of the Brazilian agro-sector that saw them move from heavy dependence on food imports to agriculture becoming a \$100 billion sector. He encouraged the participants to work with donor partners, such as the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) and the [Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa](#) (AGRA), to convince governments that they have the right technologies to change Africa's \$35 billion per year food import bill and making agriculture a highly productive and profitable sector. He also charged them to talk with those in the private sector, such as the seed companies and extension organizations, saying, "With the backing of the donor community we will achieve that."

AfDB's Chief Agricultural Economist and TAAT Program Coordinator, Dr Jonas Chianu, gave an overview of the TAAT Program, stating that technologies are already available in Africa but issues such as country borders and insufficient attention to private sector

value chains were constraining factors to scaling of these technologies on a regional level in the continent. He said national boundaries are hindering the widespread adoption of these technologies whereas the "problems we are contending with are not subject to these boundaries."

Chianu also noted that low agricultural productivity and value addition are at the heart of the malnutrition, unemployment, and income challenges in Africa. These have ensured that African agriculture has continued to underperform as it accounts for 60–70% of employment in African countries but produces only 25% of Africa's GDP. The TAAT program has been put together to change this narrative.

One of the many opportunities in TAAT is the building of strategic alliances among key development partners such as AfDB, [World Bank](#), AGRA, Gates Foundation, [Rockefeller Foundation](#), [International Fund for Agricultural Development](#) (IFAD), [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO), [US Agency for International Development](#)

(USAID), [Department for International Development](#) (DFID), and [French Development Agency](#) (AFD). This collaboration will lead to advancement of agricultural development in Africa working with international, regional, subregional, and national centers of excellence (including CGIAR centers) and the private sector.

TAAT is not a research program; it was formulated solely for the dissemination of proven technologies that have already been developed by the agricultural research and development system. TAAT will add extra value by leveraging crop and livestock technologies that have been validated in one or a few countries across entire agroecological zones (AEZs) covering many countries. The TAAT program is expected to result in a Regional Technology Delivery Infrastructure (RTDI) with an emphasis on AEZs and priority commodities that will reach 40–50% of African farmers with the most relevant food production technologies by 2025. TAAT also aims to tackle pests and diseases, such as Fall Armyworm (FAW), across entire regions.

## Got a story to share?

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## TAAT to leverage lessons learned from AGRA

Partners working on the newly launched [Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation](#) (TAAT) program have been urged not to reinvent the wheel of innovation but to take advantage of the progress already made in similar endeavors. This position was put forward in presentations made at [IITA](#) by representatives of the [Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa](#) (AGRA) during the TAAT inauguration held 22-24 January.

AGRA Vice President [Dr. Joe DeVries](#), stated that some of the principles adopted in pursuing Africa's Green Revolution were founded on the realization that achieving it was not going to be a "big bang" revolution as was achieved in Mexico or Asia, but something that needs to happen incrementally. He said Africa's diversity, which includes over 1,000 languages and several important food crops, needs to be embraced to achieve anything as a one-size-fits-all approach will not work.

In the implementation of AGRA's Program for Africa's Seed Systems (PASS), for example, heavy investment is needed for capacity building at national level. TAAT is ultimately an Import Substitution Strategy (ISS) and to succeed at generating the right value from within, capacity building is not only important but critical at the grassroots and among the smallholder farming communities and their different partners.

He also pointed out that the development of plant breeding initiatives and the commercialization of seed and technology adoption are key to the overall uptake of the technologies that TAAT would seek to disseminate. And to show the need for empowerment of these agro dealers and seed companies, DeVries shared a few success stories of some of the seed companies that had received funding from AGRA.

He further stated that farmer awareness of the value proposition of these technologies is crucial to the success of dissemination and these extensions should be well funded. DeVries stated that one of the mistakes AGRA made in implementing the past program was that "we underinvested in farmer awareness."

In a subsequent presentation, AGRA Regional Head, West Africa Regional Office, [Dr. Fadel Ndiame](#), reiterated the importance of leveraging the lessons learned in AGRA operations and building on them in carrying out the TAAT mandate. Ndiame noted that AGRA's past experiences led to the belief that impact can be achieved faster by supporting countries to drive and deliver on their own transformation.

According to Ndiame, the key driver of the policy environment that TAAT will operate in is mostly the country governments. "So, we have to make sure that we find ways to bring



*Joe DeVries, Vice President, AGRA*



*Fadel Ndiame, Regional Head, West Africa Regional Office, AGRA*

alignment between country goals and those of TAAT and then help build the capacity required to accomplish those," He further said.

## IITA participates in special session of AUC on achieving zero hunger in Africa

On 27 January, the [African Union Commission](#) (AUC) organized a high-level dialogue session titled "Achieving Zero Hunger in Africa by 2025" at the AU headquarters, Addis Ababa. The main objective of the meeting was to take stock of progress and lessons in the light of the sustainable development goals from the perspective of different stakeholders.

Representing [IITA](#), [Kwesi Atta-Krah](#), Director, Country Alignment and Systems Integration, gave an address where he highlighted the role of agriculture in driving economic development. "Whatever we are doing

in agriculture, it should be done in such a way that it contributes to the role of agriculture as an engine for economic development, and research has a role in that," he stated.

Atta-Krah emphasized the need to mobilize more resources to the national agricultural research systems as many national research institutes barely have funds to carry out research. He recognized the role international center systems had played in transforming agriculture: "[CGIAR](#) has played a significant role in helping to drive the research agenda and in the continent," he said.

According to Atta-Krah, IITA, in pursuit of improving livelihoods, has identified three key areas to focus on: The need for better integration among research players in the various research domains; The need for a better alignment of our research to the strategic goals of the countries where we breed; and The need to take a country-focus approach to help the countries achieve targets to improve livelihoods in the community and help in economic development.

Committing to the task of eradicating poverty and hunger in Africa, the Director reaffirmed IITA's willingness and readiness by saying, "For

research, coordination, integration, and alignment towards national goals and within international research systems, we believe these are the areas that we will put a lot of emphasis on, working with the African Union, and other regional organizations, and with the national research institutes.”

The meeting was attended by dignitaries such as Nigeria’s former president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, ex-President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. of Brazil, Secretary General of the UN, AUC Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Economy, IFAD President and former president, FAO Secretary-General, and representatives from several countries and institutions.



Meeting participants at the African Union.

## Agricultural Donor Working Group welcomes IITA’s Country Integration and Alignment initiative

The Agricultural Donor Working Group (ADWG) in Abuja has commended [IITA](#) for developing a framework for action to enhance integration and collaboration across various institutions and programs towards achieving national strategic goals, and in line with the goals of CAADP and SDG2.

“IITA has done much; I am happy that IITA is beginning to take the lead in influencing what is happening in the agricultural sector...,” remarked Dr Adetunji Oredipe from the [World Bank](#), who co-chairs the Working Group after listening to the presentation on “Country Consultation on Integration and Alignment towards Agricultural Transformation in Nigeria” made by IITA’s Director of Country Alignment and Systems Integration, [Kwesi Atta-Krah](#).

The model for implementing the alignment to country goals for Nigeria, will involve an analysis of the Federal Government Policy Instruments on Agriculture; Analyzing the agricultural production and productivity situation for the different states, which is essential for understanding the health of agriculture in the various states based on existing secondary data; Assessing and mapping of states on the grid of “Readiness for Transformation”, which will require assessment of an enabling environment in policy and political terms, as well as the technological

potential for transformation and outscaling; and finally, Research and delivery targeting and mapping— involving analysis of R&D interventions in relation to country strategic goals/targets. The framework would provide a means for aggregating impact contributions across various programs and projects to specific government goals. This process is expected to help make research more targeted towards development and support harmonization of research efforts.

Oredipe, who also represented ADWG at the #IITA50 celebration in Ibadan, 24 November 2017, encouraged all donors to key into the implementation of the alignment plans.

ADWG includes the World Bank, [GIZ](#), [International Fund for Agricultural Development](#) (IFAD), [United Nations Industrial Development Organization](#) (UNIDO), [African Development Bank](#) (AfDB), [Japan International Cooperation Agency](#) (JICA), [International Food Policy Research Institute](#) (IFPRI), [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), [US Agency for International Development](#) (USAID), [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO), [Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa](#) (AGRA), and other stakeholders who support agricultural programs.

Atta-Krah was accompanied to the high-level meeting by IITA’s Head of Station in Abuja, [Gbassey Tarawali](#).



Donors and partners look at country alignment strategies.



## Dutch envoy visits IITA

On 19 January, His Excellency Robert Petri, the ambassador of The Netherlands to Nigeria accompanied by his spouse Marijke Petri and Michel Deelen, Deputy Head of mission, visited [IITA](#) to share knowledge, exchange ideas, discuss possible collaboration, and strengthen existing partnerships.

The delegation was received by [Kenton Dashiell](#), Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery (DDG-P4D) and [Hilde Koper-Limbourg](#), Deputy Director General, Corporate Services (DDG-CS).

In his welcome remarks, IITA's DDG-P4D expressed his appreciation to the Dutch government saying, "We want to say thank you very much to the government of The Netherlands and the people because for many years you have been strongly supporting us both financially and with human resources."

Morenike Abu, Contract Compliance Officer, Project Development and Administration Unit (PDAU), gave a report on the projects IITA has with The Netherlands ([Wageningen University](#) and other organizations) and total funding from The Netherlands to IITA.

While speaking on the purpose of visit, the Ambassador said "Part of the reason why we wanted to come here is to see what IITA is doing in the field



*The Ambassador and his team in a discussion with some key IITA staff.*

of agriculture. Nigeria is a huge country as we all know, so many things can be done and many things have to be done. We have been reviewing our portfolio lately, looking out for areas where we could make the biggest impact. We think we should do more on agriculture.

We all know that agriculture is a priority for the Nigerian government and I think The Netherlands has something to offer as we are the second largest food exporter in the world; we could work together more closely together with Nigeria. We want to emphasize that Nigeria is a very important country, the economic engine of Africa. We have to make things work here, for if things start

working in Nigeria, things will surely improve in other African countries."

The visitors also had a roundtable discussion with Iheanacho Okike, Agricultural Economist/Livestock expert on the use of cassava peel as livestock feed and end-use screening. They were then taken on a tour of IITA's research facilities such as the Germplasm Health Unit (GHU), Bioscience lab, [Business Incubation Platform](#) (BIP), Aflasafe factory, and to visit with the IITA [Youth Agripreneurs](#).

Ambassador Petri is the newly appointed Dutch Ambassador to Nigeria, who started his ambassadorial duties in September 2017.

## Events

- ACAI Strategic meeting, 29 January – 2 February, Nairobi, Kenya
- CIALCA project launch, February, Kigali, Rwanda
- Building resilience against crop diseases: a global surveillance system (GSS), 12 – 16 February, Rockefeller Conference Center-Bellagio, Italy
- Regional workshop in Africa on invasive species, 20 – 22 February, icipe, Nairobi, Kenya
- YIFSWA-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