

Highlights
IITA Board of Trustees Meeting
9 & 11 May, 2017
Nampula, Mozambique

- The IITA Board of Trustees held its 2017 spring meeting from 9th to 11 May in Nampula, Mozambique in conjunction with the Nampula 50th anniversary celebration on 8th May.
- The 50th anniversary celebration began with the opening of the new offices in Nampula by the guest of honor, the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, the Honorable Mr José Condugua António Pacheco, and followed with an evening reception. Among the guests were the United States Ambassador to Mozambique, the Governor of Nampula Province, the Director General of the National Institute of Agricultural Research (IIAM), World Food Prize Laureate, Maria Andrade, a number donor representatives and IITA's Mozambican partners and collaborators from ministries, donors, the public and private sector and civil society.

The Board toured the new IITA facilities consisting of offices and meeting room, laboratories, computer laboratory and seed store, the latter funded by USAID, one of IITA's major donors in Mozambique. The Board also paid a visit to a recently established local seed company. IITA has been a major player in the provision of foundation seed and has been instrumental in establishing a sustainable seed system in the country. An important new development in Mozambique is the need for increasing the production of cassava to meet the high demand of the private sector for its various industrial activities.

The IITA Board Chair thanked the IITA representative, Steve Boahen and his staff for a well-organized event, for their preparations for the Board Meeting and for their generous hospitality.

The Board welcomed the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Bukar Hassan, to his first meeting as an IITA Board member.

- In the Opening Session of the Board, the Board Chair reported on the CG reform now in effect for close to a year. He talked about the main entities of the CGIAR and their specific functions, ongoing activities of the System Management Board, and the nomination process for a new Board from July 2017 as the terms of the members of the interim Board come to an end. The announcement on the new Board is expected within the next few weeks. Some of the key issues under discussion are a 3% tax on centers hosting gene banks, further reductions in Window 1-2 funding, and the development of a CRP on Grain Legumes and Dryland Systems to be re-written and submitted for approval.
- The Director General also welcomed the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and looked forward to his support and assistance, internally in Nigeria and also externally with the larger African agricultural development community. He welcomed back John Griffith after a leave of absence and expressed great pleasure to have completed the appointments

of May-Guri Saethre as Deputy Director General (R4D), Alfred Dixon as Director of Partnership and Delivery and Tonny Omwansa as Director Research Support.

- The DG talked about IITA's changing focus in the days ahead and the shift from poverty and nutrition to transforming African agriculture, to respond to the needs of sub-Saharan Africa. With the changed focus, IITA's is targeting its research towards technologies that have the potential for impact to be able to replace food imports (valued at \$35 billion annually) with home-grown production increases of major food crops and creating employment for the large numbers of Africans through agriculture and agribusiness.

The new strategy will be country based, identified by IITA and by donors where governments are receptive and where the opportunities for impact are high. Mozambique and Nigeria have been identified as such countries and the DG provided examples of activities that IITA will be engaged in from high end research to delivery. To support this tactical change for its transformation agenda, the African Development Bank through the TAAT project and the World Bank through their West African Agricultural Production Program will provide funding.

- With CGIAR funding on the decline, the major challenge for IITA in the near future is funding for research. IITA's plans are to focus on increasing bilateral funding, ensure maximum project execution and implement full cost recovery enhancing its focus on delivery, on sustainable intensification and on agri-business. In this context, IITA plans to work with heads of state of African countries and with business people interested in agriculture and to hold a donor/funding conference to build a case for multi-year support to IITA. The estimated target for 2020 is \$200.0 m.
- The Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development assured the DG of the Ministry's support and volunteered to share with other SSA countries its progress and successes in advancing the role of agriculture in Nigeria.
- The Board was pleased to learn of the African Development Bank's approval to move ahead with a phased approach towards implementation of Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation building on the quick wins of the SARD-SC project. The expected date for a project launch of phase 1 is July 1 2017. The Board congratulated IITA on the prominent role that it will play. The project offered a unique opportunity to integrate the activities of the CGIAR and national system partners in the effort to take proven technologies to scale. The Board noted the exposure to risk given the size of the project and advised management to ensure that the mitigation strategies and infrastructure are in place and the right skill sets are covered by project personnel. Expanding the number of staff in the internal audit unit to assist was strongly recommended.
- Alfred Dixon and Evelyn Ohanwusi gave presentations on the implementation of IITA's delivery strategy and the role of the Youth Agripreneurs, IITA's role in the provision of technical backstopping to youth enterprises for scaling out and the process for selecting youth to establish enterprises. At the Board meeting in November 2017, the Board looks forward to receiving the data on the number of youth trained, the number and type of enterprises established and an assessment of their short to long-term viability.

- A report by the Business Incubation Platform (BIP) manager outlined the process for ultimately achieving the institute's vision of creating jobs with the support of new technologies, to build awareness of IITA's technologies, disseminate them and generate income to make BIP sustainable and a vehicle for funding IITA's breakthrough technologies. The goal in 2017 is to achieve break-even for all its business, cease pre-financing of products, and move from its current mode of operations of project and donor support to new partnerships with industry, distributors of products and commercial manufacturing outside of IITA. Franchise models will be pursued and a quality assurance system put in place. The BIP Manager agreed with the Board that he would review the current business models to ensure they continue to be relevant for realizing BIP's long-term goals and present revised business models to the Board in November together with audited accounts for each of the businesses.
- The Board was also informed of the launching of the Synthesis Report of the Nigeria Zero Hunger Initiative launched by President Obasanjo. This initiative, which will be facilitated by IITA, is aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG2) of eliminating hunger and malnutrition by 2030, through promoting the alignment of government policies, plans and programs with development partners. The Synthesis Report was immediately followed by implementation in four states of Nigeria to be expanded thereafter to all 36 states and Abuja. IITA's research projects and CRPs will align with the indicators and targets being used in the Zero Hunger Initiative in the context of Systems and Site Integration.
- The Board adopted the report of the Audit & Finance Committee presented by the Committee Chair. The critical discussions related to strengthening second level controls across the Institute to avoid misuse of funds, the court case in Zambia, transition to a new accounting system as required by the CGIAR, results of the audits conducted by the internal Audit Unit, and the expansion of internal audit staff to be located at the hubs to provide coverage for the increased activities that will be undertaken when the TAAT project becomes operational. The Board noted the 2016 audited statements and the unqualified audit opinion by the External Auditors. In addition, three budget scenarios for 2017 were presented, one reflecting minimal reductions in funding at \$142.0 m, a second at \$140 m reflecting a 12% reduction in funding and a third at \$137.0 m reflecting reductions in funding of approximately 22%. The Board was very pleased to note the significant improvement in the project execution rate from 86.7% in December 2015 to 92.8% in December 2016. It agreed to appoint Ernest & Young to assist IITA in the conversion to the International Financial Reporting Standard and to extend the contract of PWC as external auditor for an additional two years.
- The Human Resource Committee reviewed IITA's work force information. The number of IRS has increased from 227 in 2015 to 243 in 2016 and the number of NRS from 1090 to 1121. Women represent 27% of the workforce in the IRS category and 26% in the NRS category. Recruitment in general entails a significant amount of work on the part of the Human Resources Unit. In this context, the Committee noted the large numbers of NRS staff who had been appointed within the last year. The Committee recommended, and the Board approved, two policies: (1) the Child

Protection Policy and Procedures with the proviso that country specific definitions/strategies will be subsequently included and (2) the Policy for Engagement of Consultants.

- The Program Committee (PC) had very informative and useful discussions that covered a wide range of topics. They endorsed the practice of presentations by early career scientists. Members were impressed by the Research Support update considering it to be timely and forward looking and anticipated the large projects IITA will be undertaking. They welcomed the presentation on the yield KPI as work in progress, the hub reports on the last 6 months achievements, and IITA's strategy for mechanization. The Committee members were impressed by the progress made at the Nampula Station and its plans for growth. Concern was again expressed about the publication culture at IITA where only 50% of the staff were publishing their work in Thompson journals.
- After an extensive discussion on the systems and site integration, the PC endorsed the concept as critical for realizing IITA's vision and strategic objectives. In their view, the organization and location of the activities in this initiative was a decision to be made by institute management.
- The Governance Committee reviewed IITA's Board profile with respect to coverage of the critical scientific disciplines, expertise and experience in areas of partnerships, delivery and governance, regional representation and gender balance. In the selection of future trustees to fill four positions that will be vacant in 2017/2018, the Committee recommended, and the Board approved, the focus on communication and nutrition, biotechnology, and program delivery, giving priority to female candidates and candidates from the region, Canada and the UK.
- As its last item of business, the Board said farewell to John Pickett. Talking about John, the Board Chair referred to his distinguished career as an internationally renowned scientist and member of the Royal Society. John has been a very active member of the IITA Board, passionate about IITA, challenging and constructively critical with a view to making IITA a stronger Institute. At the personal level, the Board and the staff have appreciated his sense of humour and his contribution to the strong fellowship within the Board.
- In response, John congratulated the Director General and his staff for forging a pathway through immense difficulties which is proving to be very prudent and set to lead to further successes. Critical at times, he has over time reassessed his views and believes that the courses of action taken are contributing to IITA's current successes. John was very pleased to be able to contribute to the Board and assured the DG and the Board that they could count on his support in the future.