

Board of Trustees meeting: IITA to transform into a project-based institution

The [IITA](#) Board of Trustees (BoT) held its 2018 spring meeting in Bonn, Germany, 23–26 April.

Attending his final meeting as IITA Board Chair, [Dr Bruce Coulman](#) updated the Board on CGIAR activities. He reported with pleasure that the 2018 General Assembly of the CGIAR System and Organization, which was attended by Directors General and Board Chairs of all CGIAR centers, had been a positive meeting, stating that it was “one of the most constructive” that he had attended over the past six years.

He reported that some of the issues discussed were procedures for the General Assembly, appointment of board members to the System Management Board (SMB), centralized resource mobilization, and CGIAR branding including the branding of cross-center initiatives. He also reported that at a recent SMB meeting,



IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga addressing Board members, German science and technology stakeholders, and other participants at a special session.

discussions were held about a three-year (2019–2021) business cycle to which the CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) will be matched. Among other

SMB meeting discussions was a funding update about the possibility of having CRP funding for 2018 earlier in the year than in the past.

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Welcome to incoming board chair, Amos NamangaNgongji Farewell to outgoing BOT Chair, Bruce Coulman

Amos NamangaNgongji is the new IITA Board Chair effective end of April 2018. He takes over from Bruce Coulman of the University of Saskatchewan. Bruce had joined IITA at an unstable time in its history and contributed enormously to stabilizing IITA and building it for the future.

NamangaNgongji is currently Chairman of the African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership, a position he took up in 2012 after his retirement as President of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). In addition, he is Chairman of Kose Estates, a farming

concern in Cameroon and Senior Agricultural Adviser to McKinsey and Company. During the time he was President of AGRA (2007–2012), the organization grew from 25 to over 100 staff. He had established collaborative agreements with several governments, research organizations, universities, NGOs, and civil society organizations. AGRA pioneered many innovative ideas and took them to scale, successfully raising the profile of African agriculture.

Most notable among his many achievements is his role as special representative of the UN Secretary



New Board of Trustees Chair, Dr Amos NamangaNgongji.

General where he managed a mission of 6000 troops from seven countries and a civilian staff of over 1,500 from more than 60 countries. He organized several local peace negotiations between warring factions in the midst of fighting, hunger, and disease while working to deliver humanitarian aid. His

efforts are credited with contributing significantly to the overall success of the peace negotiations as well as the formation of a transitional government in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

He obtained his MSC and PhD degrees in agricultural sciences from

Cornell University and a postgraduate certificate in project planning and analysis from Bradford University in the UK.

Read more about the new Board Chair here <http://www.iita.org/board-member/namangangongi-amos/>.

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At the meeting, IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) gave a presentation focusing on the changing financial landscape, its consequences for IITA, and the 14 other CGIAR centers, and the required changes that have to be put in place at IITA. He noted that the changes were necessary as dependence on core funding is no longer viable due to the steady and significant decline in central CGIAR funding to centers over the past 30 years. The proposed reorganization aims to transform IITA into a project-based institution in a manner that protects staff and programs with reduced reliance on the presently declining Windows 1-2 core funding.

Considering that traditional sources of funding are on the downward trajectory, the DG also informed the Board of his strategy to work closer with donors at the country level and with development banks, at the same time strengthening IITA's relationship with country governments.

The Board approved the restructuring, which includes a recommendation that senior scientists, due to their international reputation, play a key role in raising funds, and placing IITA at the center, ahead of individual and project aspirations.

The Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery (P4D), [Kenton Dashiell](#) presented on the TAAT implementation progress, and gave updates on the IITA Youth Agripreneurs and the Nigeria Zero Hunger initiative. The Board was pleased to hear that TAAT had been approved and is finally

operational, although they noted the enormity of the task and the importance of ensuring that Clearinghouse personnel have the right skills to manage the project since success is crucial for IITA's reputation.

The Board meeting involved other discussions, committee meetings, and activities including the establishment of a P4D Committee which will be chaired by [Victoria Salin](#), with [Josephine Okot](#), incoming Board Chair Namanga Ngongi, and incoming Board member Joyce Cacho as the other members.

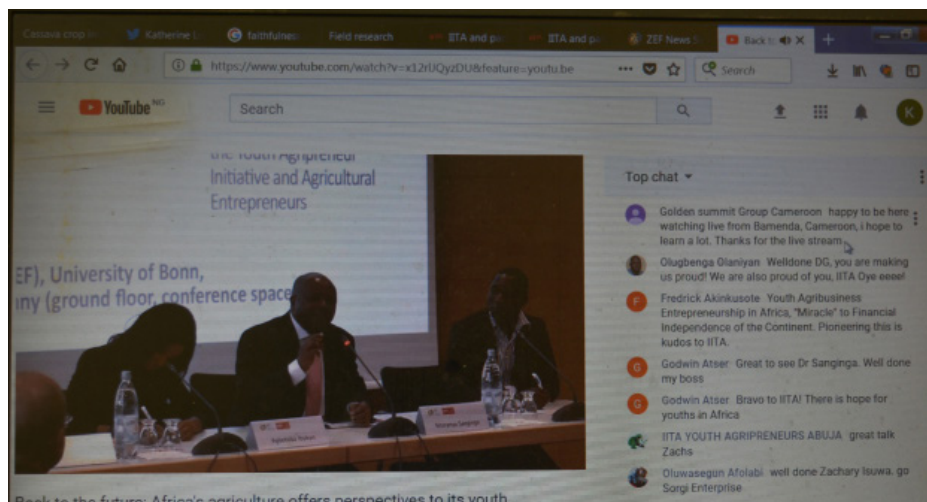
The BoT activities culminated in a special session organized by IITA to showcase to stakeholders in the agricultural sector in Germany how it is contributing to the transformation and development of African agriculture through agricultural innovations that meet the continent's most pressing challenges of hunger, malnutrition, natural degradation, and

youth unemployment.

The objective of the side event was to present the Institute's activities to key members of the German development community, university scientists, and representatives of the private sector.

The session titled, "African Agricultural Transformation: The IITA Youth Agripreneur Approach to Job Creation," was introduced by the DG with success stories from IITA's youth agripreneur model, which is helping generate jobs in agriculture for Africa's teeming millions. Two IITA youth Agripreneurs made presentations on their agribusiness startups. Read more here: [IYA article](#).

The new Board Chair, [Dr Amos Namanga Ngongi](#), succeeded Dr Coulman at the end of the meeting. The Board also welcomed new member [Dr Shuichi Asanuma](#) from Japan to his first meeting as an IITA Trustee.



The special session on African Agricultural Transformation during the 2018 Board Meeting.

Events

- 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

Youth Agripreneurs: Agriculture is a goldmine

For Ibukunoluwa Agbotoba and Zaccheaus Izuwa, agriculture--which used to be seen as a job for the less privileged--is a goldmine that has the capacity to pay their bills and give other youth the opportunity of earning a decent living. Both agribusiness entrepreneurs had the opportunity of sharing their experiences in setting up their businesses at a side event organized during IITA's Board of Trustees meeting, which took place in April at the University of Bonn in Germany.

Agbotoba is a co-owner of [TopNotch Poultry](#), which she runs with business partner Yetunde Oginni with support from an investor, Dr Eric Koper. She stated that the training, exposure, and mentorship offered to her during her incubation program at the [IITA Youth Agripreneurs](#) (IYA) resulted in a shift in her perception about agriculture.

TopNotch Poultry is a small-scale, commercial feed-to-fork broiler enterprise, which aims to establish a reference-farm with feed mill, breeding, incubating/hatching, processing and retail/food units for research, training, and demonstration in best-fit technologies, and practices suitable for youth businesses. In addition to fresh chicken, TopNotch also provides smoked, grilled, and fried chicken.

Giving a presentation on the business, Agbotoba revealed that the business started with a loan of US\$14,000 and had grown with a weekly processing of 500 birds to an annual revenue of \$90,000 and \$14,000 net profit.

On the growth of the business, she added that the demand for their products had grown and that they were projecting processing 1,000 birds weekly, an annual revenue of \$200,000, and a net profit of \$40,000.

Izuwa and his partners have ventured into the production of sorghum grain and seed. Operating under the name Sorghi Enterprise, Izuwa stressed that their business, located in the North-Central part of Nigeria, targets large-scale processors and farmers.

He added that during their incubation program at the IITA research station in Abuja, they realized that the sorghum business is worth \$50 million, and that's how five youths came together to start the business.

Izuwa said the business, which started in 2016, now has a demand of about 40,000 tons of sorghum. He said that they received a request of 20,000 tons each from Honeywell Flour Mills Plc and Guinness Nigeria, two big business enterprises in Nigeria. The business has shown good prospects



Ibukunoluwa Agbotoba, co-owner of TopNotch Poultry, making a presentation.

with a cost benefit ratio of 1:1:6, and is projected to increase by about 20 percent by the end of 2018.

Previously published on [IYA Bulletin](#).

Researchers discuss bridging research and industry for a stable continent at IARSAF 21

More than 200 researchers convened at the [IITA](#) Conference Center on 16–19 April for the 21st Annual Symposium of the [International Association of Research Scholars and Fellows](#) (IARSAF)-IITA to interact, provide an update on their research activities, and exchange innovative ideas.

The 4-day conference, themed “Sustainable Graduate Research for Transformation of Africa’s Agro-food and Industrial Utilization,” was timed to merge with special sessions tagged “Mentor and mentee” and “Farmers Clinic day.” The meeting was attended by lecturers, research scientists, policymakers, and delegates from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and

Rural Development, with the aim to critically seek avenues to link graduate research with the agro-industrial sector to help contribute to reducing food and nutritional insecurity in Africa.

In welcoming the participants, IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#), represented by [May-Guri Saethre](#), Deputy Director General, Research for Development (R4D), applauded the scholars for choosing a topic of great importance to the ongoing transformation agenda in the African agricultural sector. “It is particularly vital that you aligned your topic towards solving the challenges of climate change, invasive pests and diseases, and population growth.

This symposium will certainly be the first step in this direction. On behalf of the entire IITA, we assure you of our continued support in driving the R4D agenda of IITA to ensure Africa succeeds in transforming its agriculture in a sustainable way for a better future for all Africans.”

IARSAF is an organization of scholars working on their master’s and PhD degrees in collaboration with IITA scientists and their universities. IITA supports the group because one of its mandates is to increase the research capacity of young researchers who represent the future of agricultural research and transformation in Africa.

Giving his goodwill message, [Kenton Dashiell](#), IITA Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery (P4D), encouraged all the participants to do more than reading, writing, and getting high scores in examinations. "I want you to know how essential it is for you all to be more than students. Count yourselves lucky to belong to the agricultural sector; but you need to stand out by not allowing your research to remain on the shelf. Make a difference by delivering and disseminating the results of your research to satisfy current needs of farmers and the industries."

Concurring, [Michael Abberton](#), Head, IITA Genetic Resources Center, said while delivering his keynote lecture: "You cannot write good papers unless you have read good papers. I ask you all to read critically if you want visible social economic impact of your research work."

During the plenary session, oral and poster presentations were made across IITA's research thematic areas: natural resources management, plant production and plant health, biotechnology and genetic improvement, agrobusiness and social sciences, and food and nutrition science. Following the session was the official launch of the IARSAF website (www.iarsaf.org) by [Hilde Koper-Limbourg](#), IITA Deputy Director General, Corporate Services.

At the mentor and mentee session, the fellows had the opportunity to learn and interact with Saethre; [Robert Asiedu](#), Director, Research for Development, IITA-West Africa; Dashiell, and [Kwesi Atta-Krah](#), Director, Systems and Site Integration as they shared knowledge about their experiences, to help them manage their research challenges.

"This is an opportunity for the gathering of great minds. At this point, it is important to know that this year's theme is unique because it covers three key areas: research, academics, and industry. As young researchers it is crucial you take full advantage of this symposium, as you are at the frontier



Kenton Dashiell giving his goodwill message at the symposium.



Tope Adegboyega, IARSAF President, addressing the participants at the annual symposium in IITA.

in solving African problems," said Professor Felix Salako, Vice Chancellor of the [Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta](#) (FUNAAB), while delivering his keynote address. In addition, Dr Ayoola Oduntan, Group Managing Director, Amo Byng Group, Lagos, emphasized that the participants should endeavor to "harmonize their thoughts, network with other researchers, have a more 'problem-solving' mindset, and be more innovative to ensure finding long-term solutions to the logjams threatening

food security and economic growth in Africa."

Abberton, Salako, and Oduntan were presented with certificates for their support, guidance, and mentoring as well as sharing their vast wealth of experience.

In concluding the meeting, IARSAF President [Taofeek Tope Adegboyega](#) encouraged the members to "be the change that we want to see, for surely, a food-secure Africa will be a stable and prosperous continent."

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.

IARSAF disseminates improved seed varieties to farmers as they mark the end of their 21st annual symposium

Taking the 21st annual symposium further, the [International Association of Research Scholars and Fellows](#) (IARSAF)-IITA, went on a field trip on 19 April to Ikenne Local Government Area (LGA) in Ogun State and Akinyele LGA in Oyo State to train, disseminate IITA's research solutions, and provide technical support to local farmers.

The visit, tagged "Farmers' Clinic Day," was attended by more than 110 farmers from the two locations, with the objective of discussing some of the challenges they face and proffering long lasting solutions to their problems. This was borne out of the need to ensure that IARSAF fellows' research aligns with the IITA strategy of transforming African agriculture by taking breakthroughs to farmers in their communities.

In his opening remarks, the Chairman, Ikenne LGA, Hon. Rotimi Akinsanya represented by his Vice Chair, Hon. Simisaye Rafiu, appreciated [IITA's](#) efforts in ensuring that improved planting materials are in the hands of farmers. "I urge all the farmers to take agriculture very seriously, as it is the best approach to guarantee a bright future for all Africans. Whatever you are being given here today, nurture and monitor it, and I assure you that you will reap a good harvest."

[Taofeek Tope Adegboyega](#), IARSAF President, gave an overview of IARSAF and its activities, while emphasizing the importance of addressing the issues faced by smallholder farmers. "We have come as an association under the auspices of IITA to give a listening ear to all your challenges, and support you as much as we can. This meeting will provide useful take-home solutions for all farmers."

During the training course, specific emphasis on pest infestation, wrong use of herbicides, and low yield and income generation were highlighted by



The program facilitators disseminating improved seed varieties to farmers in Ikenne LGA.

most of the farmers as major problems threatening their yields. Segun Ademola, a farmer from Ikenne LGA stated: "I am proud to be called a farmer, but because of the high level of pest infestation in my cassava and vegetable farm, I am not always proud of my yield. I need IITA's intervention and support."

Ruffai Ekpo, a cassava and maize farmer, stressed that his major setback in farming is lack of improved varieties in the area. "Most times we pay huge sums of money thinking we are getting improved varieties, but when we plant and harvest, it is obvious that what we paid for was not what we got. We appeal to IITA for assistance." Also in attendance were farmers from the Sacred Heart Church of the Catholic Diocese of Ijebu-Ode mobilized by the IITA Head of Administration, West Africa Hub, [Sylvia Oyinlola](#).

[Moses Anzenge](#), IARSAF Public Relations Officer, talked to farmers on best-bet weed management practices, including appropriate spacing, tillage, use of improved varieties, and the use of safe and environmentally friendly herbicides. "Without farmers, there

is no future, so I encourage you all to carry out good agronomic practices to increase your productivity," he added.

To enlighten the farmers, Wilson Igbaifua, IITA Farm Manager, asserted: "We have heard all your problems. We will assist you as much as we can today by giving you improved seed varieties of maize, cassava soybean, and cowpea."

The Association presented about 10 bundles of cassava stems, 50 kg of maize seed, and 20 kg of soybean and cowpea seeds to farmers in each of the locations as part of extending the knowledge generated by IITA.

"Multiply whatever we give you today by planting, because they are foundation seeds and are meant for regeneration purposes. I assure you, if you have planting materials from IITA, you are guaranteed 100% germination," said Wilson Igbaifua.

In excitement, the farmers commended IARSAF and IITA for training and disseminating foundation seed to them, after which the scholars embarked on a tour of IITA Ikenne station.

IITA-Onne reestablishes ties with Niger Delta Development Commission

The [IITA](#) station in Onne, Rivers State, has reestablished strategic partnership with the [Niger Delta Development Commission](#) (NDDC) in the areas of capacity development, youth

empowerment, and service provision. The discussions were initiated during a visit made by IITA-Onne Head of Station, [Richardson Okechukwu](#) accompanied by Chinyere Onyendi,

Communication Assistant at the NDDC Headquarters in Port Harcourt.

In receiving the duo, NDDC officials comprising Mr Marcel Eshiguo,

Director of Agriculture; Dr Luke Ibanga, Deputy Director of Agriculture; and Aju Aniette Ufut expressed their remorse for not reaching out to IITA first. "It is a shame IITA has been in Rivers State and we have not been able to visit them first!" Mr Eshiogu echoed.

Okechukwu, speaking on the existing partnership with NDDC in the Cassava Enterprise Development project where about 600 processing centers were established across the NDDC states, explained that the station was shut down for a decade, but has now been back in operation for two years. He reiterated that the station is the best breeding site for plantain and banana and is active across the value chain: production, processing, capacity building, marketing, service provision, and the youth program. He further said that the station is well known for its training program. However, the challenge has been getting start-up funds for the trainees, hence the need to create strategic partnerships.



The IITA-Onne Youth Agripreneur explaining the youth program to the NDDC officials.

NDDC was delighted to learn of the Institute's return to Rivers State and reiterated the agency's commitment to partner with IITA. In a bid to strengthen the collaboration, the officials made a return visit to the

station during which the NDDC Director of Agriculture said the agency is on course to strengthen its partnership with the Institute on agribusiness empowerment of the Niger Deltans.

Women and youth sensitized on agribusiness

To commemorate the 2018 International Women's Day, IITA-Onne delivered a talk on women and youth empowerment in agribusiness at the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture, Business Women Group (NAWORG) Rivers State Chapter exhibition week tagged "Start small, grow it Big," held at the Port Harcourt Chambers of Commerce. Several organizations and SMEs were also present to showcase their work and recognize and celebrate innovations.

Speaking at the event, [Richardson Okechukwu](#) (Head of station, IITA-Onne) enlightened the participants on value addition of agricultural produce and the skills required to improve agribusiness. He explained that the alarming increase in the Nigerian population has awakened the agribusiness sector, thus the high demand for farm produce.

He encouraged the interest of the women and youth in agribusiness saying that agriculture has transcended the use of crude implements such as hoes and cutlasses. He further said that entrepreneurial, visionary, leadership, and innovative skills are important to have comparative advantage over



Richardson Okechukwu talking about agribusiness to the women and youth.

other producers; adding that learning about the business which includes branding, packaging, marketing, and other business information are very key as well. He also pointed out that business sustainability requires the Agripreneur to be conversant with government policies, and maintaining natural resources and the environment.

The IITA stand had a great turnout of visitors who showed interest on how to make some of the products on display.

Many visitors expressed appreciation for the "great work that IITA was carrying out." The climax of the event was when the participants tasted the plantain wine and other postharvest products made from cassava and plantain.

The team at the IITA stand comprised Chinyere Onyendi (Communication Assistant), Ijeoma Ebulie (Account Assistant), and Jacinta Ezurike (Training Officer).