

## Greening Youth Foundation and IITA partner to promote cross-cultural environmental education in Nigeria

[Greening Youth Foundation](#) (GYF) and [IITA](#) have signed a memorandum of understanding to collaborate on the development and implementation of culturally relevant environmental education materials, projects, and activities for underserved youth and young adults in various states throughout Nigeria.

The partnership will promote next-generation, environmental stewardship in Nigeria by fostering advocacy and awareness of needs for natural resource protection at local and national land sites. It will also provide opportunities for youth employment and internships that will lay a foundation for future appointments in the domestic and international natural resource management sector.

GYF Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Angelou Ezeilo said, "GYF



*Representatives of GYF went bird watching at the IITA lakeside during their courtesy visit to the IITA Forest Center, Ibadan. Photo: A. Ajayi*

is very excited to embark upon this knowledge exchange journey with IITA. As IITA has such a strong presence

in Nigeria and has been working with youth and young adults for many years, this partnership furthers the

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## IITA supports Congo-Brazzaville's new national cassava program

The Republic of the Congo recently acquired 82 tons of cassava plantlets from [IITA](#) to be used in establishing the new national cassava program. This came as a result of a visit by the Director of the Congo-Brazzaville Agricultural Factory, Mr Sam Kasu, who was on a month-long exploratory tour of the IITA Ibadan campus. During the visit, he also requested that the IITA GoSeed module be replicated in his country as CongoSeed to advance agriculture in the region.

The visit explored the use of new technologies to improve cassava

productivity and ensure that the newly implemented National Cassava Program launched in Congo-Brazzaville would significantly impact the lives of the people, as cassava is a staple in the country and is used in manufacturing to make confectionary.

As Kasu noted, "Farming is a business itself and it plays a major role in food production." The possibility of having sustained cassava production will be enhanced by disseminating improved cassava plantlets into the hands of smallholder farmers. He added that successful farming requires

one to have a good background and knowledge of business to get commensurate "economic value" of the work done. "Traditional ways of farming will result in loss of money but using business principles, one can see that farming is a business itself," he said.

Although his mission was primarily to purchase improved cassava varieties and to acquire knowledge that would help increase the standard of living of people in Congo-Brazzaville, Kasu acknowledged that he had learned more than he had expected.

"I was impressed with the new technique for cassava propagation called Semi-Autotrophic Hydroponics (SAH). To achieve our goal of setting up a good cassava program, we need IITA's support in providing improved seeds, because good seeds promote agriculture. As part of the government's plan to improve and sustain the entire agricultural value chain especially cassava, we would like to collaborate with IITA in replicating the IITA GoSeed initiative to CongoSeed for the efficient implementation of our mandate," he said.

He thanked IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#), as well as Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery, [Kenton Dashiell](#), for their warm reception and enormous support in contributing to the improvement of cassava in Congo-Brazzaville.

"I am very happy to see that IITA is ready to help Congo-Brazzaville set up a good agricultural seed company. From what I have seen, I am certain that this collaboration will yield good results and impact positively on the lives of the people especially the smallholder farmers within the region," he stated.



*Bundles of improved variety of cassava stems from IITA acquired by Congo-Brazzaville for their new cassava program.*

During his visit, Kasu interacted with the scientists and many other IITA personnel who took him on a tour of the Institute's facilities. He took note of the [IITA Youth Agripreneurs](#) scheme, asserting that he would recommend youth and people working on any cassava value chain to visit IITA and acquire knowledge for the general improvement of agriculture.

He also visited Niji Farms, an IITA partner enterprise in Oyo, and from these visits saw how farmers are carrying out mechanized farming on

large tracts of land, using less labor and making more profit. He also said that the garri making machine is one of the automated machines he would like to bring back to Congo.

He said that the President of Congo-Brazzaville, Denis Sassou Nguesso, remained committed to the successful implementation of the national cassava program. This was underlined when he sent two cargo planes to Lagos to assist with airlifting the planting materials that were purchased for Congo-Brazzaville.

## Greening Youth Foundation and IITA partner to promote ... [Continued from page 1](#)

mission of GYF to reach underserved youth across the globe, to foster an appreciation of the natural world, and to promote careers in natural resource management. I am confident that this will be the start of a mutually beneficial relationship for both organizations and the communities they serve."

An upcoming pilot project will train three IITA interns who in turn will reach over 2500 elementary school students during the first year of the program. GYF will work with IITA to customize its existing [Forever Green](#) curriculum and train IITA interns to present lessons at local schools in the project areas in Ekiti, Oyo, and Osun states. Environmental education materials include such topics as recycling, sustainable forestry and agricultural practices, connections with the natural environment, climate change, and natural resource management careers. Once trained, interns will be certified and authorized to deliver the curriculum materials.

To finalize the learning exchange, certified teachers will travel to Atlanta, Georgia, USA, for a month-long internship, where they will work with their American counterparts to co-teach the curriculum in the US. At the completion of the knowledge exchange, IITA interns will be fully equipped to deliver the West African version of the curriculum in Nigeria or other countries. The pilot of the program is planned to start in January 2019.

According to Adewale Awoyemi, Manager of IITA's [Forest Center](#), "The IITA Forest Center has extensive experience in raising awareness about environmental conservation among school children. In achieving this, the center has 20 School Conservation Clubs in Oyo, Osun, and Ekiti states in southwestern Nigeria and runs one of the best bird clubs in Africa, the Ibadan Bird Club, to build capacity among future

leaders. I strongly believe that this collaboration between GYF and IITA will produce better outputs, which will be locally adaptable."

The Greening Youth Foundation is a national leader in connecting young people from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds to natural resource management careers across the United States. GYF provides programming to over 5000 children, youth, and young adults annually, and manages over 500 interns and service crew members on projects in 48 US states and the Pacific Islands. The Foundation currently maintains its headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, with satellite offices in Arlington, Virginia, and Ikoyi, Nigeria (West Africa).

*From GYF media advisory: [Greening Youth Foundation and International Institute of Tropical Agricultural partner to promote cross-cultural environmental education in Nigeria](#)*



# Nigeria's Minister of Federal Capital Territory visits IITA Abuja

Nigeria's Minister of the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA), Honorable Muhammadu Bello, visited the [IITA-Abuja Station](#) recently. The Minister, who was accompanied by the Secretary of the Agriculture and Rural Development Services Department of the FCTA, Honorable Nzekwe Ifeanyichukwu, and top officials in the Ministry were received by the Head of Station, [Gbassey Tarawali](#), [Beatrice Aighewi](#), [Patrick Adebola](#), and other members of staff.

While welcoming the Minister, who was the first ever FCT Minister to visit the station since it was established in 1991, Tarawali gave a presentation of IITA's work in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa in the last 50 years, as well as the history of IITA Abuja.

Tarawali and the management team led the visiting Minister and his team on an extensive tour of the station with stops at the yam barn, the [Aflasafe](#) exhibition, the plantain sucker field, the stream, and the boundaries of the station, where he saw first-hand the great work that is being done in the station, as well as some of the challenges.



*The FCTA Minister Honorable Muhammadu Bello (in blue cap) was given a tour of IITA Abuja station by the Head of Station, Gbassey Tarawali.*

The Minister expressed appreciation to IITA for the warm welcome he received. "We would do our best to support you (IITA). We will find a way to help you tackle your challenges," the Minister assured Tarawali.

Bello mandated the Agriculture Secretary (who is a Commissioner of Agriculture) to expedite action to address some of the

challenges in the Station which include the need for a perimeter electric fence.

In conclusion, he expressed the commitment of the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari in revamping the nation's agricultural sector, and emphasized that agriculture remains the biggest contributor to Nigeria's GDP.

## IITA hosts launch of ABiNet; leads proposal on insect-driven aquaponics system

The first aquaponics network in West and Central Africa called the Aquaponics Based-Insects Network (ABiNet) was recently launched at the [IITA-Cotonou station](#). The launch was held 14–18 May during a meeting focused on aquaponics promotion in West and Central Africa and included a write-shop. Participants came from IITA Cameroon and Benin, the [University of Douala](#) and the [University of Dschang](#) in Cameroon, and the [University of Calavi](#) in Benin.

Speaking at the ceremony, IITA Benin Country Representative [Manuele Tamò](#) emphasized the alignment of the current initiative with the IITA research strategy on insect food and feed supported by the Deputy Director General, Research for Development, [May-Guri Saethre](#). ABiNet is made of international research centers such as IITA, the [World Vegetable Center](#) (WorldVeg), and [WorldFish](#), universities, and agripreneurs from West and Central Africa.



*Group photo at the launch of West and Central Africa aquaponics research for development network*

The first task assigned to the network was to develop a proposal to respond to the [Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's](#) (SDC) call on the City Region Food System. On this,

the network under the leadership of [Rousseau Djouaka](#), IITA/Wellcome Trust Research Fellow, developed a proposal on the insect-driven aquaponics system, which stands on four main components:



- i. A fish production component, which generates natural fertilizers (e.g., fish metabolites) for vegetable production.
- ii. A vegetable component, which is connected to the fish component and permanently receives water loaded with nutrients from the fish farming system.
- iii. A Black soldier fly (*Hermetia illucens*) rearing component which powers the system by producing enough insect larvae (protein source) for feeding fish and for supplying other satellite systems such as chicken production units.
- iv. A gravitational recycling and rotational water distribution component, which permanently irrigates vegetables and makes the aquaponics system climate smart and less labor demanding even during prolonged dry seasons.

The first draft of the concept note was developed during the write-shop and will be reviewed internally by IITA before submission to SDC.

## New Governor of South Kivu, DRC, cites IITA's research efforts

His Excellency, Governor Claude Nyamugabo Bazibuhe of South Kivu in DR Congo, has praised [IITA's](#) efforts to support agricultural development in his region and country and assured the Institute of his government's support for its activities. Governor Bazibuhe expressed his sentiments when he made an official visit to IITA-Kalambo station on 23 May.

IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) led the IITA team in welcoming the Governor at the Kalambo campus. Among those present were IITA Country Representative Zoumana Bamba and the officer-in-charge of the Kalambo station Chris Okafor. DG Sanginga gave the Governor a tour of the research facilities at the station including the ongoing construction of the Tissue Culture building set to be completed later in 2018.

"I am very happy that my province is hosting such an important research center in the region. We are happy to have such a center because it projects the good image of our country," said Governor Bazibuhe when he spoke to the local media, noting that IITA Kalambo station could become one of the best research centers in Africa.

DG Sanginga acknowledged the importance of the Governor's visit to the IITA Kalambo station, reinforcing the long-standing collaboration between IITA and the local government as well as the Governor's personal interest in agricultural development and transformation. DG Sanginga also invited the Governor to the commissioning of the IITA Kalambo Tissue Culture building in September 2018 to be named the "Science for Peace Building."

Responding to the local press, DG Sanginga said the ongoing research and project activities at the Kalambo



DG Sanginga (right) led His Excellency, Governor Claude Nyamugabo Bazibuhe of South Kivu on a tour of the IITA Kalambo facilities.

station will contribute toward reducing youth unemployment, poverty, and malnutrition within 5 years. IITA has developed technologies and programs that are currently being scaled in respective countries to transform lives in Africa.

"We are currently implementing the IITA Youth Agripreneurs program, a change maker, recognizing agriculture as a business and to create employment opportunities for unemployed youth," Sanginga explained when he spoke about some of the transformative projects and technologies from IITA. He emphasized the potential of the Semi-Autotrophic Hydroponics (SAH) technology to facilitate rapid production and propagation of clean cassava planting materials for farmers living in remote areas.

Governor Bazibuhe appreciated IITA's continued research on cassava and banana, two crops that hold high significance in the South Kivu

Province. The Governor noted especially the production of improved cassava varieties, a staple food in Congo, in disease-ravaged areas and the extensive research on banana diseases and increased yield.

In parting, the Governor thanked the IITA team and pledged to support the Kalambo research station, saying the provincial government will make every effort to contribute to the growth of the center.

The Governor's visit came just a day after the DG had paid him a courtesy visit on 22 May during which the DG had briefed him on the activities of IITA in DRC in general and South Kivu in particular, and drew his attention to the bad roads going to the IITA station. The Governor assured the DG that the government has finalized plans to repair the road. He also promised to promote IITA at the national level particularly to the President of DRC who is interested in developing the agricultural sector.



# Stakeholders strategize to harmonize and strengthen ME&L system

In line with the key messages conveyed by the [CGIAR Platform for Big Data in Agriculture](#) during the [BigDatainAg Convention 2017](#), stakeholders across four [CGIAR](#) centers working under the CGIAR Research Program on [Roots, Tubers and Bananas](#) (RTB), convened at IITA Headquarters, on 22–25 May, to promote harmonization, standardization, and interoperability of systems, more than looking for a “one-size-fits-all” solution. Thus, in this context, defining harmonized result and indicator frameworks, as well as sharing approaches and tools for Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (ME&L) is essential for the overall viability and soundness of the system.

The 4-day event, organized by RTB and strongly supported by the [International Potato Center](#) (CIP) and [IITA](#), was attended by M&E specialists, managers, management staff with M&E responsibilities, and M&E officers from the [International Center for Tropical Agriculture](#) (CIAT), [International Potato Center](#) (CIP), [Bioversity International](#), [Agricultural Research Center for International Development](#) (CIRAD) and IITA with backstopping from [ALINE](#) (Agricultural Learning and Impacts Network). Amid creating opportunities for learning and knowledge sharing, the meeting aimed to foster synchronization and strengthening of the existing ME&L systems at the center and CRP levels, and draw a roadmap and workplan for the rollout of the harmonized MEL system with roles and responsibilities defined.

In her remarks, [Rosem Rwampororo](#), Head of IITA's Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, applauded the participants for their efforts to strengthen communication and collaboration among ME&L personnel within and across centers for the successful implementation of center and CRP-level M&E systems. “The harmonization process is crucial for ensuring that data and findings can be meaningfully aggregated from the bottom (i.e., project, country-specific data) to the Center, CRP, and System levels,” she added.

The integrated framework will build on and articulate efforts made by several entities (projects, centers, partners, CRPs) to generate and consolidate relevant information such as ex-ante appraisal, continuous monitoring and evaluation



*Round table discussion of the participants based on their area of indicator interest.*

of findings, and impact assessment data into a system that optimally serves the management needs of CGIAR and its partners. Some of the indicators, recently approved by the System Council as part of the common CGIAR progress reporting indicators, include number of innovations, gender equality, youth, number of agribusinesses, partnerships, training/workshops, and number of new innovations. This was of particular interest in defining common standards and practices.

During the plenary session, topical presentations made by stakeholders on diverse fields cut across the various M&E pipelines, ranging from system-level perspectives on results reporting and performance-based management, harmonizing indicators and aggregation in complex ME&L systems, the ME&L system in the RTB community, aligning currently collected indicators with the common indicators and SRF targets,

visualizing indicators, and evaluating challenges in a funding scenario.

Reacting to the progress achieved, Richard Ofei, RTB – Project Management Officer (PMO) for IITA, stated, “Strengthening the M&E system is the best way to show the evidence of what we have done. Therefore, there is a need to synergize efforts to ensure that all that has been said in this workshop is implemented immediately for better impact.”

The implementation of this integrated framework occurs in a context where projects, centers, and CRPs are already implementing their own management strategies and associated M&E systems. To be efficient, the integrated framework will need to build on the existing structures and processes, and facilitate the exchange and aggregation, across levels and entities, of data and information that will be useful for decision-making, learning, and accountability.



*Group photograph of the workshop participants at IITA Ibadan.*