

IITA participates in global conference on nutrition and food security

[IITA](#) has been commended for its role in promoting improved nutrition and global food security through the engagement of youth in agriculture at a conference organized by the [Global Institute for Food Security \(GIFS\)](#) tagged “Emerging technologies for Global Food Security,” held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, 19–21 June.

The conference began with a welcome address from Dr Maurice Moloney, Executive Director and CEO of GIFS, Canada, who gave a summary of what should be expected from the event. Scientists and researchers from institutions around the world, including the [University of Saskatoon](#), [Cambridge University](#), the [African Agricultural Technology Foundation \(AATF\)](#), the [International Potato Center \(CIP\)](#), the [University of California, Davis \(UC Davis\)](#), and other organizations, delivered presentations on advanced technologies in the world of genetics and plant breeding.

During his presentation, IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) emphasized the need for the world to engage the youth in the dissemination of science and research to ensure that the results of research conducted in laboratories reach the rural farmers and other grassroots users of the technologies.

Singinga related that the intervention of IITA in the research and production of [Aflasafe](#) under its [Business Incubation Platform \(BIP\)](#) has addressed the aflatoxin risk, which has resulted in many fatalities in some African countries. He added that many countries have bought into



DG Nteranya Sanginga (left) inspecting pasta made from durum wheat (produced at the University baking lab).

the IITA-initiated innovation, which is now becoming a private sector-driven initiative to increase production and meet up with the demand for Aflasafe.

Also speaking on the role of IITA in reducing youth unemployment in Africa, Sanginga stressed that IITA's engagement of unemployed graduates in agriculture has yielded a positive result as many of the youth trained under the [IITA Youth Agripreneurs \(IYA\)](#) initiative have embraced agriculture as a business.

He explained how the youth who were from different academic backgrounds were taken through a series of training to develop skills in agriculture and business development. They were also provided with training along various agricultural value chains, mentored and coached on business management skills, and

provided with start-up capital after developing bankable business plans, which had been vetted by business experts.

Many of the nutrition and research initiatives conducted in IITA are being out-scaled on a commercial basis by the youth.

This initiative, which has resulted in the birth of agribusiness enterprises, has created jobs and employment for many others. He stressed that the youth, through developing proposals for projects, have trained other youth across Africa.

Also speaking on the impact of the training and incubation program of IYA at the conference, an IYA representative, Molayo Owoeye, said that through partnerships with organizations like

[Chevron Nigeria Limited](#), the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), the [United States Agency for International Development](#) (USAID), and the [African Development Bank](#) (AfDB), IYA has extended the impact and benefits of agribusiness to unemployed youth in multiple locations across Africa.

She explained that the youth developed proposals, which were submitted to these organizations seeking partnerships on training and empowerment of youth in lucrative value chains. After the training and incubation programs, the youth were provided with starter kits to establish sustainable agribusiness enterprises.

She added that IYA will also be playing a crucial role in the implementation of the ENABLE-TAAT program. Through this, more youth will be trained under the agribusiness incubation program to produce more CEOs that would manage businesses.

GIFS was founded to perform research that will help to deliver transformative innovations in agriculture to both developed and developing countries. GIFS helps in creating technologies that will have commercial utility with the aim of achieving global food security.



The University of Saskatchewan.

The purpose of the conference was to share innovative knowledge and creative technology, and make critical connections needed to address global food security. About 350 scientists, policy makers, and entrepreneurs from around the world attended the conference including the emeritus Board Chair of IITA, Dr Bruce Coulman, and the chairman of the Advisory Council of BIP and member of the Board, Mr Hans Johr.

The DG also went on a tour of the University of Saskatchewan and the Pulse Laboratory. The University of Saskatchewan (U of S) is a Canadian public research university founded in 1907. The university began as an agricultural college and established the first Canadian university-based department of extension in 1910. The DG visited the Mechanization unit, Malting Lab, Pulse Lab, and the Baking Lab.

Support expressed for Madagascar's ENABLE youth program

As part of the program implementation and promotion of youth in agribusiness in Francophone countries, the ENABLE youth program in Madagascar has been receiving support from different sectors in the country. The program, which is an initiative of the [African Development Bank](#) (AfDB), is being implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture with technical support from [IITA](#). It aims to create youth employment through agribusiness ventures. The country views the initiative as a vehicle towards not only job creation but also addressing food and nutrition security concerns in the country.

In a recent mission to Madagascar, an IITA-led team comprising [Mary Thiong'o](#), Fred Murhula, and Cheick Diarra, met with stakeholders in the banking sector and organized private sector, including several agribusiness ecosystem actors



IITA mission team members meeting with Madagascar agriculture stakeholders.

involved in various activities along the agricultural value chain. The mission, which included visits to Atsinanana and Vatovavy-Fitovinany regions, lasted from 12 to 22 June with the aim of exploring opportunities to support the ENABLE Youth program through developing business partnerships, access agricultural financing, and create avenues for socioeconomic development of Madagascar in general.

The goal of the mission was to familiarize value chain actors with the program to promote youth entrepreneurship and establish business models that would ensure that youth become engaged in sustainable business activities.

The value chain actors visited expressed their willingness to support the young graduates to start their own businesses and become millionaires. They reiterated their commitment to collaborate with the Ministry of Agriculture in ensuring that youth Agripreneurs were well mentored and supported to conduct businesses along the value chains of their choice. Through this partnership the youth will gain knowledge, skills, and understanding of the dynamics of the business sector. Further, they will be introduced to both local and international markets, gaining understanding about standards and other requisite regulations that will support their business ventures.

The team had a fruitful exchange with the stakeholders from the banking sector of Madagascar as they lobbied for support in accessing financing opportunities. Speaking to the manager in charge of the Bank of Africa in Tamatave region, the mission implored the financial sector to collaborate with the ENABLE youth program to facilitate access to finance by developing friendly financing instruments to support youth in starting agribusiness ventures. Noting that one of the key challenges facing youth in startup ventures was access to financial services, the team indicated that the ENABLE youth program was committed to ensure youth had bankable business plans against which funding would be extended.

The team intimated the bank with details about the initiative, indicating that the incubation program would provide mentorship and handholding services as well as developing a Risk Sharing Financial Mechanism for the youth to enhance risk minimization.

In their rejoinder, the manager expressed the bank's willingness to offer technical and financial support to the youth Agripreneurs and indicated that they would draw from their rich experiences in financing agribusiness projects.

During the visit to Manakara, capital of Vatovavy-Fitovinany region, the team

interacted with local development actors, soliciting their support for the implementation of the ENABLE youth program in the region. The stakeholders, drawn from the private sector, farmer organizations, and local SMEs, noted that youth unemployment, especially in their region, remained a huge challenge and was a concern for everyone.

They noted that the socioeconomic development of Madagascar in general and Vatovavy-Fitovinany region in particular was of interest to all stakeholders and indicated that the problem required involvement of all actors in the region. They consequently affirmed their support for the program, which they see as being critical to the achievement of their objectives.

Andrianaivo H. Felene, Director of the FINARITRE cooperative, said that within the region, youth have an opportunity to participate in the ENABLE youth program. Other stakeholders present also committed to support the young entrepreneurs to invest in promising value chains and to find the most profitable markets locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

The Youth Agribusiness Incubator in the two regions (Vatovavy-Fitovinany and Atsinanana) will commence in August 2018 and will focus on assorted value chains that are projected to have viable business opportunities.

IITA strengthens partnerships in Burundi

[IITA Deputy Director General R4D May-Guri Saethre](#) and Central Africa Hub Director [Bernard Vanlauwe](#) visited IITA Burundi from 17 to 20 June to meet with and engage staff and partners. The visit provided an opportunity to get acquainted with research updates from the Burundi station as well as assess facilities and staff working conditions.

Saethre also visited with the management of the Institute of Agronomic Sciences of Burundi (ISABU), the Ministry of Environment, Agriculture, and Livestock (MINEAGRIE), the [Norwegian Church Aid](#) (NCA), the Agricultural Markets Development Project (PRODEMA), and the Farmers' Association in Rumonge.

The DDG was welcomed by ISABU Director General Engineer Nahimana



From left to right: Dr Rurema Deo-Guide, Burundi Minister of Agriculture; DDG May-Guri Saethre, and Bernard Vanlauwe, R4D Director for Central Africa Hub. Photo by Emmanuel Njukwe

Dieudonné who appreciated the cordial relations that exists between IITA and ISABU and IITA's investment in building the capacity of ISABU staff and researchers. Saethre advised both institutions to foster collaboration in joint proposal development and investment of project activities for better use and management of resources.

At MINEAGRIE, the DDG was received by Burundi's Minister of Environment, Agriculture, and Livestock, Dr Rurema Deo-Guide. Minister Deo-Guide assured the DDG of the willingness of the Burundi Government to support and cooperate with IITA in resource mobilization towards providing scientific and technical assistance to Burundi institutions, particularly agriculture which employs over 90% of the population. Minister Deo-Guide spoke about his visit last year to IITA Ibadan and IITA Cotonou while participating in IITA's 50th anniversary celebrations. He urged that the good initiatives he witnessed then be replicated in Burundi for IITA's visibility especially as he was an IITA alumnus and IITA ambassador.

Saethre met with IITA staff and those of hosted institutions such as [Bioversity International](#), [International Livestock Research Institute](#) (ILRI), and [World Vegetable Center](#) (WorldVeg) where she received updates about ongoing projects and activities. She appreciated the good collaboration that exists between IITA and hosted institutions, and stressed that this will have to be the key to the success of all projects



DDG R4D (first from left) with beneficiaries of improved cassava varieties and technologies on good agronomic practices.

led by IITA and partners in Burundi. It was an interactive meeting and staff took the opportunity to ask questions and express their opinions.

The visit to NCA focused on opportunities for collaboration; at PRODEMA the discussion was about co-investment in the agriculture sector. The DDG was updated on current initiatives and PRODEMA management acknowledged the support and value that IITA and partners have added to PRODEMA projects, which have led to improved productivity, better postharvest equipment specification, and increased capacity among smallholder farmers operating as cooperatives. Saethre advised

that they be time conscious in the implementation of activities to meet project timelines and tailor activities based on the needs of communities for food, nutrition, and financial security.

During a field visit to Rumonge, the DDG met with the Governor of Rumonge Province, Bigirimana Juvenal, before interacting with members of the farmers' association involved in the PRODEMA project on multiplying improved cassava varieties. The farmers appreciated the visit and said the improved cassava varieties were yielding 3–5 times more than local cultivars and that it will help them feed their families and provide better income to cater for other needs.

French Ambassador cites research quality of IITA

The French Ambassador to Benin, Her Excellency Véronique Brumeaux, visited the IITA-Benin station on 20 June. She was accompanied by the Benin Representative of the French [Research Institute for Development](#) (Institut de recherche pour le développement [IRD]), Florent Engelmann, who organized the visit, the communication attaché to the Embassy, Bouchra Idri; and that of IRD, Rita Saudegbée.

The visit started with a short briefing by the IITA-Benin Country representative, Manuele Tamò, who gave a general overview of IITA and presented the specific activities and purview of the Benin station. This includes the new

[Biorisk Management Facility](#) (BIMAF) platform and the Clearinghouse of TAAT, along with sister institutions [Bioversity International](#), [World Vegetable Center](#) (WorldVeg), the [French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development](#) (CIRAD), [Access Agriculture](#), the AfricaRice/GIZ Green Innovation Center, and [East-West Seed](#).

The delegation toured the IITA station facilities, stopping at Bioversity International where they were given a practical demonstration on how remote sensing using drones can be adapted to detect abiotic and biotic stresses in banana and plantain. Mathilde Savy, a nutritionist seconded by IRD to

Bioversity International, explained the holistic approach of improving diets of women and children using underutilized local crops.

At the IITA-Benin Biodiversity Center, Entomologist and Biocontrol Specialist [Georg Goergen](#) presented IITA's impressive arthropod collection and highlighted the need for increased biodiversity studies for early interception of new invasive species as was the case for the fall armyworm, which was detected for the first time by IITA.

Visiting scientist [Ghislain Tepa-Yotto](#) introduced the BIMAF platform, showing the insect rearing facilities

where the fall armyworm and its natural enemies are presently reared under strict hygienic conditions.

IITA Molecular Entomologist [Djouaka Rousseau](#) led the delegation on a tour of the Agro-Eco-Health platform, focusing on the recently established Aquaponics-based Insect Network and gave a tour of the pilot aquaponics platform.

The delegation also met with staff of the Green Innovation Center, where Bruno Tran of the [AfricaRice Center](#) gave an overview of the Knowledge Management Facility and how to engage youth with ICT learning tools.

During a short debriefing, the Ambassador expressed her satisfaction with the visit and said that she was impressed with the quality of IITA's research, which is directly targeting and impacting farming communities.



HE Véronique Brumeaux (left) being shown the BIMAF platform and fall armyworm rearing facilities by Ghislain Tapa-Yotto and his assistant Seraphin Eteka. Photo by Bouchra Idri

CocoaSoils launches sustainable intensification program

The [CocoaSoils](#) program has been launched in Ghana, with plans to launch in three other countries. The launch event dubbed “Sustainable intensification of cocoa production through the development and dissemination of integrated soil fertility management” took place at the forecourt of the [Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana](#) in New Tafo, on 19 June.

The program launch was attended by about 90 experts and representatives from COCOBOD, the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, universities, fertilizer companies, chocolate-producing companies, farmers as well as members of the press.

The National Coordinator for CODAPEC and chairperson for the launch, Dr Ofori Frimpong, in his introductory speech remarked, “I am excited to know the project is a public-private sector partnership aimed at improving soil fertility using the integrated soil fertility management approach.” He noted that the government alone could



Richard Asare being interviewed at the 3FM studio in Accra.

not carry all the burden of sustainable intensification of cocoa production of which soil fertility is an integral aspect.

He continued, “We in the cocoa industry believe that all efforts aimed at ensuring greater improvement in the

development of the cocoa sector will require the collective efforts of both the government and the private sector. We are therefore delighted by the concerted efforts of all stakeholders in the implementation of the CocoaSoils Project.”

The program consisted of speeches from other dignitaries including, Dr Adu Ampomah, the Deputy Chief Executive (A&QC) of COCOBOD; Dr F.M. Amoah, the Executive Director of the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana; Dr Richard Asare, the program Coordinator of CocoaSoils; and Dr Amos Quaye, the CRIG facilitator for CocoaSoils.

The program was also interjected with cultural displays and poetry reading.

As part of the program launch, Asare honored invitations to be interviewed on two radio stations, Onua FM and 3FM in Accra. The first interview took place prior to the launch on 18 June and was conducted in Akan, the language of Onua FM's target listeners. The interview covered ways to enhance cocoa farming to benefit the Ghanaian economy as well as steps being taken by the current government to improve the cocoa sector.

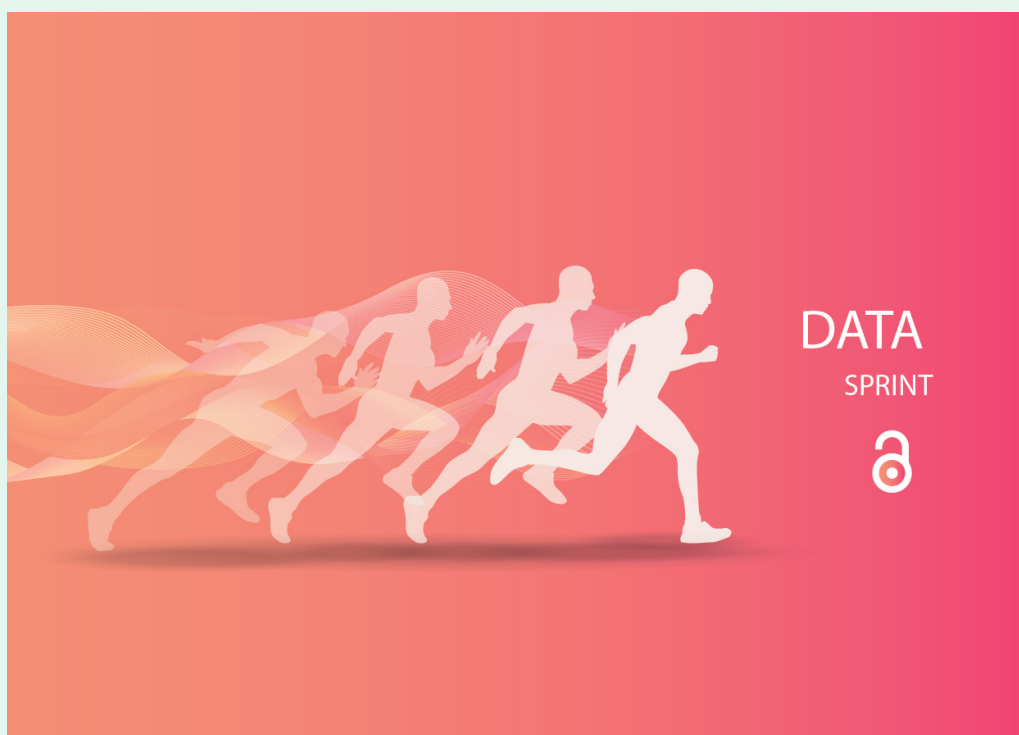
The second interview on 3FM was conducted in English on 25 June. The interviewer, Winston Amoah, asked questions about the impact of previous research studies on cocoa productivity and how the CocoaSoils project differed from them. He also discussed the collaboration between the partners and used the opportunity to thank COCOBOD and the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana for joining the cocoa partnership.

IITA kicks off data challenge with #datasprint2018

In a bid to increase the level of compliance with the open access policy, [IITA](#) has allocated resources to help capture and optimize historical research data for storage in open access repositories. To achieve this, IITA is embarking on a data sprint challenge for scientists who have data from the 1990s to 2018 to get them uploaded on the CKAN data repository.

According to IITA Institutional Data Manager, Olatunbosun Obileye, the purpose of the exercise is to get our datasets that are yet to be stored in open access repositories ready and available to the public. He said, "Research data from our scientists are precious IITA assets and it is expected that after the embargo period they should be accessible to the public, especially those that the donors expect to be open access."

The data sprint is about making research data available and will last for three months from 1 July to 30 September. Researchers are expected to send their datasets to the CKAN officer (iita-ckan@cgiar.org). The open data team supports the researchers in completing the metadata form and ensuring it meets the CG Core metadata schema standards. The curated data is ensured fit for upload and finally uploaded to CKAN.



#datasprint2018 will run for 3 months, from 1 July to 30 September.

The goal of the data sprint is to have at least 100 quality-checked datasets that have both data and metadata annotated with ontology and uploaded onto CKAN by 30 September. This will be facilitated by incentives to both individuals and hubs with the most dataset uploads.

Winners will receive awards which include mini grants to attend a scientific conference or the Big Data Convention in Nairobi. For more details on #IITADataSprint2018 visit <http://www.iita.org/data-sprint/> or contact Olatunbosun Obileye (o.obileye@cgiar.org) or Tonny Omwansa (t.omwansa@cgiar.org).

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.agha@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.