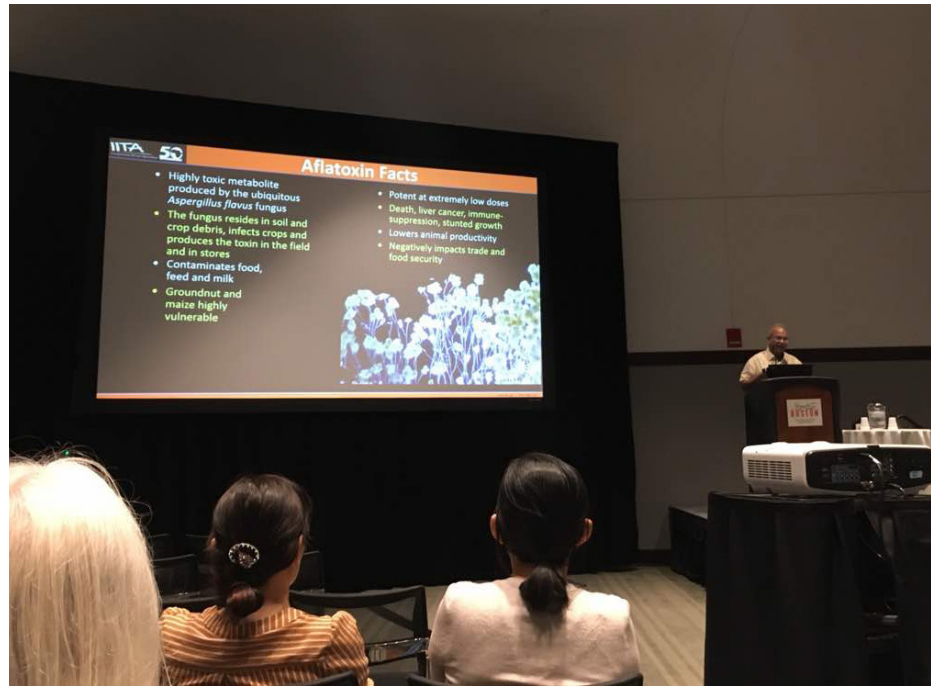


IITA shines at the International Congress of Plant Pathology

Senior Scientist [Ranajit Bandyopadhyay](#) was one of several keynote speakers at the [11th International Congress of Plant Pathology](#) (ICPP) held in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, held 29 July to 3 August. He gave a presentation titled 'A multipronged approach for aflatoxin mitigation in Africa centered on biological control' under the keynote session on 'The Role of Plant Pathology in Food Safety,' highlighting mycotoxins.

[Ranajit led the IITA contingent that included Leena Tripathi, Alejandro Ortega-Beltran, Titilayo Falade, and Everlyne Wosula.](#) Falade and Wosula both won a bursary award from the Congress' organization to attend. ICPP is held every five years, and was hosted by the [American Phytopathological Society](#) (APS). The theme of ICPP 2018 was *Plant Health in a Global Economy*.



Ranajit Bandyopadhyay giving a keynote address on mycotoxins at the ICPP 2018.

Ranajit's talk analyzed key challenges in implementing various

recommendations for reducing of technological, institutional and aflatoxin and proposed elements policy options that can be combined

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IITA-DRC holds third planning workshop for CBSD Project

IITA's project "Action to control the Cassava Brown Streak Disease in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)," organized its annual review and planning meeting for 2018–2019 in Mbuji-Mayi, the capital city of Kasai Oriental Province.

The opening ceremony was chaired by the provincial Minister of Agriculture, H.E. Charledoux Mbuyi who welcomed the participants. He assured the then IITA Country Representative, [Nzola-Meso Mahungu](#), of his personal involvement and that of the Provincial Government in implementing project activities. He also said the specialized

services of his ministry will take into account all the recommendations and conclusions from the meeting for their own development programs.

Introducing the meeting, Mahungu reviewed the objectives of last year's meeting held in Kisangani and invited colleagues and partners involved in the projects to align the presentations to last year's plans.

Each INERA station where the project activities are implemented was invited to show its achievements. Results from different research areas, comprising breeding, crop protection, agronomy

and multiplication of planting materials, and monitoring and evaluation were highlighted and discussed. Lessons learned and challenges were drawn, and an orientation was given for the activity planning session. On the following day, scientists from the different research areas constituted four working groups to discuss activities for the 2018–2019 workplan.

During the workshop, three thematic presentations were made on 'Breeding activities and the use of Marker Assisted Selection (MAS)', 'Varietal maintenance in cassava seed system,' and 'SAH technology' by Mouritla

Sikirou, Sylvain Bidiaka, and Mamy Binzunga, respectively. On the last day, a session on capacity enhancement of participants on mapping GIS data using Google MyMAPS was facilitated by Adrien Ndonga.

Also, a presentation on IITA finance procedures and requirements for financial reimbursements was done by Samuel Munkiba, the IITA Station Administrator in Kinshasa. He then reminded partners on technical and financial reporting dates given in the partnership agreements.

Workshop participants include the representative from the [United States Agency for International Development](#) (USAID), Augustin Kadima, delegates of the Ministry of Agriculture, in particular those of the National Seed Service (SENASEM), as well as researchers from IITA-DRC (Kinshasa and Bukavu) and from the National Institute for Agricultural Studies and Research (INERA), University of Kinshasa, and University of Kisangani. Other partners included the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#) (FAO), [HarvestPlus](#) Program, WAVE Project, Kasai Agricultural Support Project (PRODAKOR) funded



IITA Country Representative, Nzola-Meso Mahungu (standing), presenting at the workshop.

by the Belgian Agency ENABEL, and members of the private sector, including seed agri-multipliers.

The CBSD project in DRC is funded by

USAID and is now on its third year. It operates throughout the country from pilot provinces including the Central Kongo, Tshopo, South and North Kivu, and Kasai/Lomami.

IITA shines at the International Congress of Plant... [Continued from page 1](#)

into aflatoxin management systems in developing country agriculture. The presentation was well-received: several scientists searched out Ranajit afterwards to congratulate him and acknowledged the importance of IITA's work to address aflatoxin contamination of maize and groundnut in sub-Saharan Africa. Many others made very supportive comments via Twitter.

Ortega-Beltran co-chaired the Mycotoxicology Committee meeting where special sessions on mycotoxins for next year's APS annual meeting were discussed and planned. IITA's work was highlighted through invited presentations, posters, and discussion sessions. In addition, IITA's collaborative work with the [Agricultural Research Service](#) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA-ARS) was presented by several PhD students.

Ranajit was also invited to make a second presentation in the symposium on *'Frontline of fungal secondary metabolite and mycotoxin research to mitigate threats to food security'*. Co-authored with [IITA](#) colleagues and collaborators, Ranajit's presentation was on *'Development outcomes and impact of scaling-up of aflatoxin biocontrol in Africa'*. This presentation summarized the benefits of Aflasafe in improving food and feed safety, trade, and income as well as current efforts and future projections in scaling up Aflasafe in Africa.

Tripathi delivered a talk on *'Biotechnological strategies for control of Banana Xanthomonas Wilt Disease'* in the symposium *'Advancing disease resistance traits from lab to field'*. This presentation summarized IITA's advances and prospects in developing transgenic banana resistant to Xanthomas wilt.

IITA's pathology and biotechnology research received considerable exposure and was appreciated in the Congress.



Aflatoxin-contaminated maize.

CAY-Seed project ends with workshop to disseminate results

At the close of the [CAY-Seed project](#), the implementing team at [IITA](#) assembled more than 100 farmers and agricultural extension agents (AEAs) from some of the major yam-producing states in Nigeria for a 2-day knowledge and information dissemination workshop on quality seed yam production in Kubwa, Abuja.

Opening the workshop, CAY-Seed Regional Project Coordinator Kingsley Osei welcomed participants and said that the workshop aimed to extend the knowledge generated from the project and the lessons learned.

At the workshop were representatives of other IITA yam projects, namely YIIFSWA-II project leader [Norbert Maroya](#) and AfricaYam project leader [Patrick Adebola](#). Other partners at the event were Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary, who worked closely with farmers in rural Abuja, Perpertua Iyere-Usiahon, Yam Desk Officer at the [Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development](#) (FMARD), and Ebenezer Zidafamor, YIIFSWA-II focal person at the [National Agricultural Seed Council](#) (NASC).

The workshop highlighted the importance of yam in Nigeria and West Africa, emphasizing that the region accounts for about 90% of the yam produced in the world. It was noted that although Nigeria is the largest yam producer, it is yet to benefit from exporting yam. Moreover, the production value of yam exceeds the combined value of cassava, maize, sorghum, and millet.

IITA Yam Seed System Specialist [Beatrice Aighewi](#) stated that Nigerian yam farmers have low yields, producing only 11.8t/ha whereas yields in Japan are about twice as much. She attributed the low yields primarily to the unavailability of quality seed yam in Nigeria as yam is traditionally produced as a dual crop-ware and seed yam. It is common to find that tubers saved for planting are often converted to food during lean periods, being further compounded by the absence of dedicated seed producers in most production areas.

Aighewi also noted that most yam producers have a vague perception of the attributes of seed yam quality and



Aisha Abubakar, CAY-SEED beneficiary, sharing her experience and its impact on her life.

will use whatever is readily available for planting. She reiterated the urgent need for establishing a viable seed yam production system and illustrated the value of seed yam in Nigeria and its potential as a business.

Farmers and AEAs were also informed about the advanced seed technologies being promoted by the YIIFSWA-II project to further improve seed yam quality and availability. They were amazed at the potentials of the aeroponics system which grows yam in air.

Some project farmers were given the opportunity to share about their activities during the project lifecycle. Other beneficiaries (farmers) also gave reflections and impressions of the project.

Aisha Abubakar, a farmer from Kwali Area Council, spoke of her initial misgivings about the project and how she eventually stayed the course till the day of harvest. "Currently we have cultivated two fields with yam that we got from the initial demonstration done in our community. Moreover, some of the women are using minisett to produce seed yam on their own. I wish that CAY-SEED could continue so that more people can have access to the knowledge we have gained," she said.

Another yam farmer from Kilwankwa, Kwali Area Council, Micah Ishaya, said that the project was introduced to their community in 2016 when a

demonstration plot exhibiting advanced yam minisett technology (AYMT), positive selection, and other good agricultural practices was established. He said that both young and old farmers were amazed by the size of the yam setts, not believing they would sprout. To their amazement all the setts sprouted and eventually yielded tubers. He also said that other beneficiaries are using what they have learned to expand their yam farms and fund their children's education.

Participating women found the technologies less tasking and did exceptionally well on implementation. Now, they are reaping the benefits. All beneficiaries in their testimonials appealed for the project to continue so that more communities can benefit.

A representative of the Agricultural Development Program in Nasarawa State, Steve Kpama, spoke highly of the experience gained from the workshop stating: "Although we are familiar with the minisett technique, I learned from here that many improvements have been made to the technology making it adaptable for farmers to utilize based on their means."

Based on the success stories and the positive impact at the community level, FMARD Yam Desk officer Iyere-Usiahon said that the project will be adopted by the Ministry and included in the 2019 plan for funding by the Federal Government.

IITA alumnus receives Medal of Honor for academic merit

Distinguished professor of soil sciences and [IITA](#) alumnus, [Dr Rattan Lal](#), has been awarded the Medal of Honor from the Menéndez Pelayo International University [in Spanish: [Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo](#) (UIMP)] in Santander, Spain. The award ceremony took place on 24 July and was attended by the Spanish Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and Environment, Luis Planas Puchades. The presentation was presided over by officials of the university including the rector Emilio Lora-Tamayo, the general secretary Miguel Ángel Casermeiro, and the deputy secretary general Guillermo Díaz Pintos.



Former IITA staff Dr Rattan Lal (left) receives medal from UIMP Rector Emilio Lora-Tamayo.

According to rector Lora-Tamayo in his address, the award honors “your outstanding academic merit, which comprises a long trajectory of defense of the environment and, more specifically, for the study of soil as a living body and a key element in terms of global change.” Lora-Tamayo also expressed gratitude for being in a position to bestow the honor, stating that “the university feels very honored to deliver this medal.”

UIMP general secretary Casermeiro noted that Lal is “undoubtedly one of the most cited authors in the field of soil science, if not the most, with more than

36,000 references,” as he has authored and co-authored more than 2,200 articles, books and chapters and is considered a pioneer in the integration of public health in the sustainability of soils.

While receiving the medal, Lal expressed his gratitude to UIMP and all students and teachers who have worked with him throughout his career. As part of his speech, Lal noted that, in the field of soil science, “the best thing is to combine modern science with what ancient cultures say about resources.”

Lal, a Nobel Peace prize winner in 2007, is currently the director of the Carbon Capture and Handling Center, [College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences](#) of [the Ohio State University](#) in Columbus, Ohio.

He is also a part of the [Conservation Agriculture](#) network of the [FAO](#), which promotes optimized soil health practices and enhances biodiversity and natural biological processes above and below the ground surface, which contributes to increased water and nutrient use efficiency and to improved and sustained crop production.

TAAT embarks on training for fiduciary staff

To ensure effective Financial and Procurement Management among the different Value Chain and Enabler Compacts, the [Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation](#) (TAAT) program conducted a two-day training on the fiduciary responsibilities of the implementing institutions towards the achievement of the program’s objectives. The training was held 31 July to 1 August at the [IITA](#) campus in Ibadan.

The 33 participants represented various implementing institutions including the [International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics](#) (ICRISAT), [International Water Management Institute](#) (IWMI), [International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas](#)

(ICARDA), [International Center for Tropical Agriculture](#) (CIAT), [International Livestock Research Institute](#) (ILRI), [International Potato Center](#) (CIP), [Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa](#) (FARA), [African Agricultural Technology Foundation](#) (AATF), [Africa Rice Center](#) (AfricaRice), [International Fertilizer Development Center](#) (IFDC), and IITA.

In his opening remarks, IITA Director, Development and Delivery Office, [Alfred Dixon](#), spoke on the implementation of the TAAT program and the expectations of the [African Development Bank](#) (AfDB). He explained that AfDB has financial and procurement procedures that must be followed for effective implementation of each of the funded

projects. He therefore urged all participants to take advantage of the training to ensure that all their fiduciary activities are in line with the Bank’s requirements.

The TAAT Program Coordinator, [Chrys Akem](#), gave an overview of the TAAT Program as part of the Feed Africa strategy of the AfDB aimed at transforming agriculture and scaling up agribusiness opportunities in key agricultural commodity value chains for inclusivity, sustainability, and nutritional security on the continent.

Akem explained that TAAT aims to improve the livelihoods of more than 160 million Africans who are food insecure and malnourished by raising

agricultural productivity. TAAT is expected to lead to 120 million tons of additional raw food production per year and contribute to lifting about 40 million people out of poverty. TAAT is also working towards moving African production much higher on the value chain with agribusinesses producing and selling processed goods and providing markets for African farmers. The TAAT Program Accountant, Seyi Fashokun, gave a presentation about the need for participants to perform their duties in the different compacts of the program to effectively manage program funds. He noted that AfDB and other donors such as the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) aim to achieve value for money, economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity in the disbursement of funds. More importantly, he cited the 3Cs of Compliance, Communication, Commitment and 3Ts of Trust, Teamwork, and Truth as required tools for the success of financial management.

Fashokun also highlighted the general principle of “eligible expenditures,” explaining that all funds spent must be justified in line with planned and approved activities. The Program Accountant also mentioned internal controls as a vital tool for financial management and added that the essence of the training is to ensure that finance staff carried out their activities in line with the Bank’s financial management guidelines.

During his presentation, TAAT Program Procurement Specialist Monsuru Bakare gave an overview of the AfDB procurement requirements stating that procurement of goods, works, and the acquisition of consulting services financed by the Bank for the program will be carried out in accordance with their procurement framework.

He further stated that the Bank’s procurement methods as contained in the Protocol of Agreement will be used



Training participants during one of the presentations.



Group photo of training participants.

under the program as an outcome of the fiduciary risk assessment.

Participants were taken through the processes of procurement of goods, works, and consultancy services in line with Bank guidelines. Contentious

issues identified by participants were addressed during the interactive session that followed. Akem concluded the training by challenging participants on an immediate plan of action and putting into practice the knowledge they had gained.

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, Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org) for Eastern Africa, and David Ngome (d.ngome@cgiar.org) for Central Africa.