

EAC launches policy briefs on aflatoxin prevention and control developed with IITA

A set of policy briefs outlining key strategic policy recommendations and actions to prevent and control aflatoxin contamination along food and feed value chains in East Africa and its associated threat to human and livestock health, trade, and food security in the region, were officially launched at a two-day regional forum in Nairobi, Kenya, 15–16 August.

The event was organized by the [East African Community](#) (EAC) Secretariat in partnership with [IITA](#) and [USAID](#). It was attended by members of the [East Africa Legislative Assembly](#) (EALA) Committee on Agriculture and delegates from the five EAC partner countries (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda) and other development partners.

The policy briefs, produced by the EAC, contain key findings and



Prof Boga (right) handing over a copy of the EAC policy briefs on aflatoxin control after the launch to IITA's Victor Manyong, East Africa Hub Director.

recommendations of 11 multisector the EAC Aflatoxin Prevention and technical papers developed under Control Project (APPEAR) funded by

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IITA scientist to receive NSN honorary award for work on nutrition

[IITA](#) Senior Food and Nutrition Scientist [Bussie Maziya-Dixon](#) has been nominated as a recipient for an honorary award from the [Nutrition Society of Nigeria](#) (NSN). News of her nomination was conveyed in a letter signed by the NSN National General Secretary, Charles C. Nkwoala.

Nkwoala said: "The National Executive Council of NSN has identified your various landmark achievements in nutrition in Nigeria and beyond, and considered you qualified to receive this Honorary award particularly in recognition of your invaluable contributions to improving the nutritional wellbeing of Nigerians through your



Dr Bussie Maziya-Dixon speaking at a recent Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH) workshop in Abuja.

various activities and programs in the country.”

Maziya-Dixon, whose work includes biofortification of cassava with vitamin A, is a Swazi national, but has worked extensively in Nigeria. She is currently the Nigeria Country Leader on the [CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health \(A4NH\)](#).

NSN is a professional, nongovernmental association founded in 1963 at the University of Ibadan. The forum aims to promote and foster collaboration in the study and practice of nutrition among various stakeholders in the nutritional development of Nigeria. As part of their mandate, NSN recognizes individuals who have exhibited exemplary character, commitment and selfless service to improving and

advocating for improved nutrition in the country.

The conferment of the award will take place on 19 September during the opening ceremony of the 2018 Scientific Conference and Annual General Meeting of the Nutrition Society of Nigeria, at the [Ambrose Alli University](#) in Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria.

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USAID East Africa Regional Economic Integration Office and led by IITA.

The key objective of the project was to develop an EAC evidence-based aflatoxin implementation strategy and action plan for aflatoxin control and prevention along the health, agriculture, livestock, trade, industry, and environmental sectors.

The policy briefs were launched by the Principal Secretary, [State Department of Agriculture Research, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Irrigation](#), Prof Hamadi Boga, who represented his Cabinet Secretary, Hon Mwangi Kiunjuri.

Boga applauded the EAC Secretariat for the initiative, noting that Africa loses up to US\$670 million annually from lost exports due to aflatoxin contamination.

The EAC Deputy Secretary General in charge of Productive and Social Sectors, Hon Christophe Bazivamo, noted that aflatoxin prevention and control is one of the flagship programs implemented by the EAC Secretariat.

“The overall goal of the program is to contribute to food and nutrition security as well as to protect human, animal, and plant health in EAC from the adverse impacts of aflatoxin along the food and feed value chains,” said Bazivamo.

Leading the [IITA](#) delegation at the forum, Director for Eastern Africa Hub [Victor Manyong](#) pledged that IITA will continue working with the EAC Secretariat to silence the silent killer,



Group photo of the conference participants.

aflatoxin. He also noted the importance of a conducive policy environment in addressing the aflatoxin challenge and noted IITA's collaboration with EAC to develop the technical papers.

“Developing knowledge and mitigation technology is only one thing. Getting the technology to be massively adopted by beneficiaries is an equally important challenge, which calls for a proper conducive policy environment,” he said.

Other speakers from IITA included [Charity Mutegi](#), Kenya Country Coordinator - Aflasafe Project and [George Mahuku](#), Senior Plant Pathologist for Eastern, Southern and Central Africa, who presented

papers on *Effectively communicating about aflatoxins* and *Preharvest losses associated with aflatoxin and mitigation*, respectively. Manyong also presented a paper on the Impact of aflatoxin on trade.

The nine policy briefs comprehensively look at all aspects of aflatoxin prevention and control. For more details, [download and review the policy briefs here](#).

At the end of the event, a Regional Forum was established to create awareness and sensitize high-level policymakers and other key stakeholders on the necessary policy action and interventions to address impacts and effects of aflatoxin.

Sterling Bank explores partnership with IITA on agribusiness financing

A commercial bank in Nigeria, [Sterling Bank Plc](#) is exploring areas of partnership with [IITA](#) on an agribusiness financing loan scheme for “agripreneurs” who have been trained and mentored by the Institute.

The agribusiness financing scheme known as the Agribusiness Small and Medium Enterprises Investment Scheme (AGSMEIS) is a voluntary initiative of the Bankers’ Committee to support the Federal Government of Nigeria’s efforts and policy measures for the promotion of agricultural businesses and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as vehicles for sustainable economic development and employment generation.

In view of this, a six-person team from Sterling Bank visited IITA’s headquarters in Ibadan, Nigeria on 16 August to conduct a sensitization workshop for the Institute and the IITA Youth Agripreneurs on the loan scheme.

The loan scheme, with a 5% interest

rate, has the capacity to provide up to 10 million naira (about \$27,777) to a potential beneficiary with a loan tenure of seven years and moratorium of up to 18 months for the principal and 6 months for interest.

Enlightening the participants, the team lead from the bank, Bukola Awosanya who is also the Group Head, Agriculture and Export Finance, said that the scheme is targeted towards improving access to affordable and sustainable finance by agribusinesses and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), creating employment opportunities in Nigeria, and boosting the managerial capacity of agribusinesses and MSMEs to grow into large corporate organizations in line with the Federal Government’s agenda to develop the real sector and promote inclusive growth.

She added that business owners across the agricultural value chain covering production, input supply, storage, processing, logistics, and marketing, MSMEs in manufacturing,

mining, and petrochemicals and in the service sector such as information and communication technology (ICT) and the creative industry are eligible for the loan.

They are, however, expected to go through business development training from the Central Bank of Nigeria’s recognized Enterprise Development Centres (EDC and Enterprise Development Institutes (EDI).

Recognizing the role that IITA has played over time in promoting agriculture across the African continent and grooming young entrepreneurs in agribusiness, Sterling Bank has identified the Institute as a potential EDI, that is required to send a list of trained and profiled beneficiaries to CBN for review.

The workshop was attended by some IITA management staff, IYA Agripreneurs and trainees, and representatives from EKIMIKS Ltd and the Hello Tractor project.



Team Lead from Sterling Bank; Mrs Bukola Awosanya addressing the participants at the workshop.

FAO and partners combat Banana Fusarium Disease

The [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#) met with partners at the [ProMusa International Banana Symposium](#) that took place at the [International Horticulture Congress](#) in Istanbul on 12–16 August to engage in global discussions on Fusarium wilt disease plaguing banana.

The workshop was organized as part of the [Global Programme on the Banana Fusarium Wilt Disease](#) by FAO and partners, which include [Bioversity International](#), [IITA](#), and [World Banana Forum](#), to finalize two guidance documents—a collection of recommendations for travelers and a policy guide—to prevent the spread of [Tropical race 4 \(TR4\)](#) of the fungus *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *ubense*, which particularly affects banana in Asia but is seen as a global concern.

In his address, [Fazil Dusunceli](#), FAO Agricultural Officer and Plant Disease Specialist, stated that “No effective eradication solutions have been found so far against this aggressive disease, so preventing the local and international spread and rapid containment is the most effective approach to minimize its global impact.”

Dusunceli further explained that *Fusarium* fungus is spread through infected plant material and infested soil particles attached to vehicles and farm equipment. “Irrigation, drainage water, and floods play critical roles too, but the disease is made a ‘real threat’ by systematic weaknesses such as limited capacities to implement phytosanitary regulations, lack of awareness among banana farmers and workers, and the absence of effective biosecurity measures at the farm level,” he said.

He added that it is important to strengthen international collaboration and bolster public-private partnerships



Stump of infected banana tree. Source: Viljoen, 2018.

for the Global Programme, which is a US\$98 million project, to actualize its goal of strengthening national capacities to implement the necessary phytosanitary practices for prevention and containment in countries not yet invaded by the disease and for management in countries where the disease already affects production severely.

Dusuncil advised: “For the long term, we need to develop new, resistant varieties which are appropriate for the value chain. That requires a dedicated and collaborative effort. And, at the same time, banana production should become more resilient by promoting

more diverse and multi-crop-based systems.”

Tropical race 4 of the fungus *Fusarium oxysporum* f. sp. *ubense* (TR4) poses a grave risk to the production and trade of banana, with potential consequences for markets and for those depending on this popular crop as a source of income or staple in their diet.

The Global Programme on the Banana Fusarium Wilt Disease promotes communication and advocacy globally and contributes to raising awareness of the disease, particularly in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Near East.

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.