

IITA awarded 2018 Africa Food Prize for research leadership and innovation!

IITA is this year's recipient of the [Africa Food Prize](#). The award was given by the [African Green Revolution in Agriculture \(AGRA\)](#) and was announced during the Award Ceremony and Africa Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) Gala Dinner on 7 September in Kigali, Rwanda.



IITA DG Nteranya Sanginga receives the Africa Food Prize on behalf of the institute.

The award recognizes individuals and institutions "leading the effort to change the reality of farming in Africa from a struggle to survive to a business that strives." The US\$100,000 prize "celebrates Africans who are taking control of Africa's agriculture agenda. It puts a spotlight on bold initiatives and technical innovations that can be replicated across the continent to create a new era of food security and economic opportunity for all Africans," according to the AGRF website.

Recent awardees include former [International Fund for Agricultural Development \(IFAD\)](#) President Kanayo Nwanze (2016); entrepreneur,

founder, and owner of Faso Kaba Sarl Maimouna Sidibe Coulibaly from Mali, and academic expert in Food Security and Nutrition Ruth Oniang-o (2017).

IITA is the first institution to receive the distinguished award and was selected for its "deep commitment over several decades to producing a steady stream of innovations that have boosted the nutrition and incomes of millions of people across Africa." In recent years, that work also has included a critical focus on connecting crop science to creating employment for Africa's youth, and ensuring African farmers can adapt to the stresses of

climate change and the growing threat for an array of crop pests and plant diseases.

"IITA stood out for its steadfast and inspiring commitment to a research agenda that aligns with both our African traditions as well as the evolving needs of African farmers and consumers..." said His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria and Chairman of the independent Africa Food Prize Committee.

"From the cassava we're still eating today, to the valuable and nutritious soybeans we now grow in our fields, to maize varieties that can withstand drought and deadly toxins—our diets and our agriculture businesses would be much poorer today without IITA's leadership, and its willingness to forge powerful bonds with African farmers and African communities," Obasanjo continued.

Receiving the Prize on behalf of the Institute, IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) said that he believes that a great deal of IITA's success rests on its ability to develop relationships and collaborations that allow the fruits of its research to be scaled up and made available to millions of farmers.

"I'm extremely honored to be receiving this prize on behalf of IITA and proud to be part of a group of researchers dedicated to building lasting and relevant solutions for the continent," said Sanginga. "But it would be remiss of me if I didn't acknowledge the important role of our various partners, from other research centers to governments to the private sector, without whom our research might never have seen the light of day."

Snapshots at the Africa Food Prize Award Ceremony



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The Africa Food Prize began as the Yara Prize, and was established in 2005 by Yara International ASA in Norway to honor achievements in African agriculture. The Yara Prize was moved to Africa in 2016 and renamed the Africa Food Prize.

The award celebrates the achievements of IITA, which marked its 50th year of service to African agriculture and smallholder farmers in 2017. The Institute was established in 1967 as the first African link in a network of international agricultural research centers to contribute towards global food and nutrition security. It was created based on the need to have an African version of the Green Revolution

that transformed Asia through increased agricultural production in the 1960s.

IITA has become the largest international agriculture research



DG Nteranya Sanginga

center in tropical Africa, contributing to food and nutrition security in the region and is supported by numerous donors, governments, and partners, and focuses on increasing food security and availability, enhancing the profitability of foods, feeds, and other agricultural products, and sustainable management of natural resources.

Read the linked media releases below for more details:

1. [Nigeria-based international center wins Africa Food Prize 2018!](#)
2. [Africa Food Prize Awarded to Agricultural Research Institute for Leadership and Innovation in Finding Solutions to the Continent's Most Pressing Challenges](#)

NASC lauds BASICS project for active participation at Africa Expo

The Governing Board and the management of [National Agricultural Seeds Council](#) (NASC) have recently expressed appreciation for the active participation of the members of the [Building an Economically Sustainable, Integrated Cassava Seed System in Nigeria](#) (BASICS) project at the maiden edition of SeedConnect Africa Expo 2018, which was held in Abuja, Nigeria, on 5–6 June.

NASC Director General Dr Phillip Olusegun Ojo informed the Board of the support provided by the BASICS project at the expo and at other times. The Board, including the Minister of Agriculture, Chief Audu Ogbeh, requested that a formal letter of appreciation be sent to that effect.

In the letter addressed to the BASICS Project Director, [Hemant Nitturkar](#), Ojo reiterated the high opinion held by the NASC management and board stating: “The quality of your active participation at the conference cannot be overemphasized and is in no doubt going to assist in reshaping the focus of the National Agricultural Seeds Council in its resolve to turning it to a center of excellence for seed activities in West Africa.”



BASICS Project Director, Hemant Nitturkar (right) with IITA DG Nteranya Sanginga.

Relaying this to management staff at IITA and other BASICS team members, Nitturkar was also full of praise for the work put in by the project team. “The [Cassava Seed Tracker](#), led by [Lava Kumar](#), the training of NASC staff at IITA and in UK, and the seed diagnostic lab work, led by [Julian Smith](#) of [Fera Science](#) have really been seen in NASC

and the Ministry as the way forward towards their snowballing efforts to build a center of excellence for seeds in West Africa in NASC,” he said.

Ojo further expressed optimism for future collaboration in continuing efforts to reposition the Nigerian agricultural seed sector to its place of pride.

Ivorian delegates visit IITA; acquire knowledge for ENABLE Youth implementation



Sougrynoma Zainatou Sore, Head of IITA Capacity Development Office, giving a presentation on IITA's activities from inception to date.

As a sequel to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between [IITA](#) and the Government of [Côte d'Ivoire](#) to replicate the [ENABLE](#) (Empowering Novel Agri-Business-Led Employment) Youth program in the country, 10 delegates from the Ivorian government visited IITA Headquarters in Ibadan, Nigeria on 27–31 August, to learn, exchange ideas, and be updated on the various youth-in-agribusiness initiatives. This was in preparation for the implementation phase of the ENABLE Youth program in the country.

The team, led by Karitia Coulibaly, the Ivorian Cabinet Deputy Director of the Ministry of Youth Promotion and Employment, was received by key IITA staff and some [IITA Youth Agripreneurs](#) (IYA). The visitors explored measures to understand the best practices to adopt for the successful implementation of business incubation platforms geared towards ensuring that youth unlock the potentials of agriculture in the country and beyond.

Speaking at the meeting, IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) gave a brief narrative of how the IYA forum started, and how it has been his vision

to empower African youth to help secure food security in Africa.

[Zoumana Bamba](#), IITA-Congo Country Representative, welcomed the delegates and assured them of the Institute's commitment to providing technical assistance for the smooth running of the program. "IITA is a renowned center, known for training youth to be job creators in the agricultural sector. The ENABLE Youth program has been successfully implemented in various countries including Madagascar and Sudan, and I believe Côte d'Ivoire will also attain great heights," he said.

Côte d'Ivoire's ENABLE Youth Coordinator, Guy-Herve Pillah, stated that with the focus to reduce the level of youth unemployment in the country, the existing collaboration creates an opportunity for the 20 beneficiaries to be properly guided to establish innovative agricultural initiatives. "That is why we have come to IITA to learn from your wealth of experience to enable us to achieve our goal," he added.

In her presentation on IITA Youth and Agribusiness Program, ENABLE-TAAT Youth Coordinator [Evelyn Ohanwusi](#)

said: "Over the years, IYA has led the way for youth into agriculture and thus, has built its expertise in managing agribusiness projects targeted at the realization of agriculture becoming a business. We have also trained various youth by extending opportunities in agriculture and agribusiness to them as a means to advance economic development in Africa."

The 5-day exploratory program included a tour of IITA facilities, visits to some of the IYA-led activities in Ibadan (Afribroiler, Gracevine, and Frotchery) and Abuja, and discussions with the management on ways to ensure full sustainability of the program.

Commending IITA for its groundbreaking research, Coulibaly tagged the meeting "amazing" adding: "I am happy to see African youth making progress in different agricultural value chains. We are eager to put into practice all that we have learned and I am positive that very soon, you will hear our success stories. We are looking forward to having bigger collaborations with IITA as this could bring about more favorable light in the agricultural sector across Africa."

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.

Improving cocoa productivity through integrated soil fertility management

Cocoa plantations in West Africa are sometimes not as productive as expected, yielding low income for farmers. To compensate and improve their livelihoods, some farmers have expanded their farms into forests. Among other factors, poor soil fertility has contributed to a decline in productivity and, although cocoa production is an essential source of livelihood for millions of farmers, the lack of knowledge on good crop nutrition and proper management of cocoa trees cannot be overemphasized.

The [Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation](#) (NORAD)-funded CocoaSoils Program led by [IITA](#) and [Wageningen University and Research](#) (WUR), was created this year to address this issue. CocoaSoils engages the expertise of the [World Cocoa Foundation](#) (WCF) along with the Cocoa Research Institutes of Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria. Also involved are international research centers such as the [International Centre for Tropical Agriculture](#) (CIAT), the [World Agroforestry Centre](#) (ICRAF), and the [UN Environment World Conservation Monitoring Centre](#) (UNEP-WCMC).

The program aims to deploy an Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) approach to achieve sustainable intensification in cocoa farming across West Africa. To make appropriate ISFM recommendations for farmers, it is imperative to have a good understanding of the roles of the different soil nutrients to the cocoa trees and yield. This knowledge is not readily available, therefore, the partners of the CocoaSoils program are setting up "Core and Satellite Research for Development" trials to help provide site-specific ISFM/fertilizer recommendations across West Africa.

The core trials are long-term trials covering at least two hectares while smaller trials (satellite trials) will be set up in farmers' fields to test different fertilizer combinations and shade interactions to examine the effects on yield under field conditions.



The CocoaSoils Program aims to increase cocoa yield without expanding cultivation into forested areas.



Cocoa production is an important income earner in West Africa.

The results from these two types of trial will inform recommendations that will be delivered to farmers through a Partnership for Delivery mechanism that uses existing service delivery channels by both public and private sector partners to achieve better yields and improve sustainability of cocoa production. This should help prevent expansion of cocoa cultivation into forested areas.

Trials have been confirmed in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria while opportunities are being explored to conduct similar trials in Ecuador, Brazil, and Indonesia. In the next five years, CocoaSoils plans to have developed ISFM recommendations to be integrated into extension messages for cocoa intensification as well as achieve a deeper understanding of the cocoa tree's nutritional requirement.