

YIIFSWA-II steals the show at NASC Seed Fair Abuja

The [National Agricultural Seed Council](#) with the mandate of ensuring the availability and accessibility of quality seed for farmers in Nigeria, hosted its annual seed fair in Abuja on 4 October.



Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Chief Audu Ogbah eating bread made from yam composite flour.

The theme of this year's seed fair was "Enhancing improved seed adoption towards achieving food security." The fair was attended by the Honorable Federal Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), Chief Audu Ogbah, members of his ministry, research centers, seed enterprises, agro dealers, secondary school children, farmers, and other stakeholders.

In line with this year's theme, [YIIFSWA-II](#) exhibited seed yams, High Ratio Propagation Technologies (HRPTs) that ensure the quality of the seed yams produced in the project as well as processed yam foods promoting value addition.

At the opening of the event [Norbert Maroya](#), the Project Leader of YIIFSWA-II, informed the audience of the mandate of the project and its achievements so far after which he invited the Honorable Minister and other participants to the YIIFSWA-II booth to see the potential of the Aeroponics System (AS) one-node vine seedlings from the latest harvest. He also extended an invitation to the Minister to attend the upcoming

Continued on page 2

Biocontrol: The silent revolution to pest control

On 21 September, IITA Insect Ecologist [Manuele Tamò](#) gave a seminar presentation at [IITA Ibadan Headquarters](#), to highlight achievements and challenges encountered in combating some of the insect pests that pose a threat to cowpea (*Vigna unguiculata*) production in Africa.

The seminar titled "Biorisk management: The silent revolution..." was attended by IITA management staff and scientists, with the aim to learn and understand some of the techniques deployed in habitat management against major

insect pests in legume systems. Over the years, Tamò, along with other scientists, discovered a natural solution called classical biological control. "This natural response to controlling invasive pest species is an option that controls pests by reestablishing the natural balance. This method should be considered first, particularly in the case of unfamiliar invasive species," he stated.

In his welcome address, [Robert Asiedu](#), Director, Research for Development, IITA-West Africa emphasized the efforts made by Tamò in the management and prevention of pests attack on crops in Africa. “As we all know, Tamò has been part of the strong team that has brought so many successes in IITA, especially in devising ways to reduce the outbreak of pests in the field; thereby increasing productivity and crop yield.”

In his presentation, Tamò said: “One major constraint to the increased and sustainable production of cowpea is the damage caused by field insect pests, particularly during the flowering and

post-flowering growth stages.” Among the most serious pest species attacking cowpea are flower pod borers (*Muruca vitrata*) and pod and seed-sucking bugs such as *Riptortus dentipesfab* and *Clavigralla tomentosicollis*st. It has been reported that *M. vitrata* is the most devastating insect pest causing yield losses of about 80% in cowpea,” he added.

Tamò's current research focuses on several regional integrated pest management (IPM) projects. Through this, he has established extensive links with other scientists and extension agents in 11 African countries. He is also engaged in collaborative activities with

entomologists and biological control specialists in international research centers such as the [International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology \(icipe\)](#) and the [International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics \(ICRISAT\)](#), [Africa Rice Center \(AfricaRice\)](#), and several universities worldwide.

In the future, Tamò explained that scaling out biocontrol approach to all major cowpea producing countries in West Africa will serve as the best option in reducing the population of pest infestation, especially *M. vitrata* to about 40–60% depending on the agroecological region.



Manuele Tamò, IITA Insect Ecologist, giving his seminar presentation.

YIIFSWA-II steals the show at NASC Seed Fair Abuja Continued from page 1

YIIFSWA-II Demonstration Open Day on seed yam production using HRPTs to take place on 18 October at [IITA-Ibadan](#).

At the YIIFSWA-II booth, the Minister was excited to see the seed yams cultivated from AS single node vine seedlings. He expressed amazement that there were several yam tubers weighing more than 1 kg.

YIIFSWA-II Communication Specialist, Oiwoja Odihi explained that “with the current progression of YIIFSWA-II activities in the nation, farmers will soon have access to quality seed yam of improved varieties for cultivation. Thus, ensuring food security in the nation.”

“This is impressive and also to have a water yam variety that can be pounded,

fried, boiled, and processed into the various food that we have here is good news. As you know, where I come from we like pounded yam,” said the Minister.

The emphasis of the seed fair was to introduce new and improved seed of key crops and to encourage farmers to adopt these new technologies.

Got a story to share?

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Focus on achieving wider impact and building resilience for larger populations, Africa RISING urged

The [Africa RISING](#) program should keep working towards achieving wider impact and building resilience for larger populations, the [United States Agency for International Development](#) (USAID) Bureau for Food Security Program Leader for Sustainable Intensification, Dr Jerry Glover has advised.



To express their appreciation, farmers in Cheyohi Community in the Northern Region of Ghana ceremonially dressed Jerry Glover (top) and Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon (bottom) in the traditional Ghanaian smock. Photo credit: Jonathan Odhong/IITA.

Glover gave the advice while speaking to implementing partners of the [IITA](#)-led Africa RISING West Africa project during a visit to project sites in northern Ghana on 11–15 September.

One of the ways to achieve this goal, he noted, is by getting Africa RISING activities integrated into regionally focused initiatives that are funded by USAID in West Africa like the soon to be unveiled soil health consortium. The goal of these region-centric efforts, Glover explained, is to ensure stronger coordination and streamlining of investments by the Agency as well as to facilitate wider spread of improved agricultural technologies to benefit a bigger proportion of smallholder farmers.

“Our centrally funded research activities (from Washington DC) like Africa RISING in Ghana and Mali should address this regional need. One of the intended outcomes of this will be the increased ease of access to information about validated agricultural technologies. This will make it easier for the USAID country missions who fund different in-country development activities to fund scaling of technologies that are backed up by great research. In the case of the soil health consortium as a specific example, the Agency is looking to ensure that all its investments in soils research and development work in the region are generating information and recommendations that address some of the

high-level, consensus-based issues across the production zones,” explained Glover.

He also urged the project team to sharpen their focus on building resilience for smallholder farmers communities by collaborating with the Sustainable Intensification Innovation Lab (SIIL), which is currently implementing activities with a focus on resilience building in Burkina Faso and Senegal. He noted that this was another area of key interest to USAID, explaining that based on lessons learnt from the first phase of the Feed the Future Program, gains in some of the custom indicator points like nutrition and productivity can easily be wiped out by a bad weather event or a market slump and this would leave a farmer in the same vulnerable position where they started despite having had a good harvest.

Glover's comments were welcomed by the Africa RISING West Africa and East/Southern Africa Project Manager, [Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon](#) who noted that the project's orientation in the second phase was already in certain ways aligning to ensuring interventions are regionally relevant and achieving impact at scale. She committed that the project will aim to integrate itself into the soil health consortium as well as the other upcoming initiatives by the Agency with a similar focus. Hoeschle-Zeledon also noted that Africa RISING will continue engaging with the USAID country missions to share with them information regarding some of the best improved agricultural interventions emerging from the project's work.

Also speaking during the partners meeting, [Fred Kizito](#), Africa RISING West Africa Project Chief Scientist, noted that during the West Africa project's recent review and planning meeting held in June, partners had discussed the issue of regional relevance and one of the ways they had decided to achieve this was by integrating the use of geographical information systems (GIS) and modelling efforts in most of their planned activities for the 2018/19 season.

As part of the site visits, the team also interacted with farmers in five communities in the Northern Region and the Upper East Region of Ghana. The farmers expressed a high level of satisfaction with the improved agricultural technologies and practices introduced by Africa RISING. The team also made courtesy visits to Regional Agricultural Directors in the two regions where options for furthering partnership with the Ghana [Ministry of Food and Agriculture](#) representatives in the region were explored.

Staff from Nigeria's premier horticultural research institute receive training on plantain and banana production

As part of efforts to build the capacity of national research systems, [IITA](#) scientists provided a 2-week training from 10 to 21 September for 10 scientists and technical staff of the [National Horticultural Research Institute](#) (NIHORT). The training which was organized by the IITA Plantain and Banana program, in collaboration with the IITA Capacity Development Office and the IITA West Africa Hub Directorate, focused on imparting hands on skills to the trainees in the areas of tissue culture, macropropagation, and field evaluation/management techniques for plantain and banana.



Delphine Amah, IITA Regional Plantain breeder, addressing the trainees.

Speaking at the opening meeting, the Head of Genetic Resources Unit, NIHORT, Dr Dorcas Ibitoye commended IITA for organizing the training. "Being an IITA alumnus, I know that IITA is a leading research institute that has proven its credibility in Africa and beyond in this field. I felt the need to request IITA to train our staff on this mandate crop because I knew they have up-to-date information, facilities, and technical skills that could add value to what we already have at NIHORT. With this training, we are in a better position to offer solutions that will drastically reduce poverty and malnutrition in Nigeria and beyond," she said.

Corroborating her statement, Head of Genetic Resources Center and Deputy Director of IITA West Africa Hub, [Michael Abberton](#) said: "IITA will continue to build up the capacity of NIHORT to ensure efficient delivery of their

mandates. One of the ways we can achieve this is by effective communication and strengthening the existing partnership." Of the 10 participants who attended the training, three received training on tissue culture, four on macropropagation, and another four on field evaluation and management techniques.

"We are positive that with this training in these three key areas of banana and plantain production, you will be able to lead NIHORT's work to develop sustainable production and utilization of this crop in Nigeria. It is also IITA's hope that you help build the capacity of your colleagues who did not attend this training," noted [Delphine Amah](#), IITA Regional Breeding Manager, Plantain and Banana program.

At the end of the training, participants gave feedback about the training and how it had enhanced their skills. Omolara Aderonmu, a tissue culture trainee, stated: "Being a tissue culture technician, I never knew how to go about banana tissue culture, but now I have been exposed to the various modern ways of culturing and managing tissue culture plants." Another trainee, Uterdzua Orkpeh who was trained on field management techniques said that the most unique thing he learnt was managing plantain and banana field in a flooded area.

In her closing remarks, Dr Ibitoye expressed profound gratitude to IITA and boldly stated that "This is a mission accomplished!" She also affirmed a stronger collaboration in future between the two organizations.

IITA and AfDB to help Taraba transform cassava as part of TAAT framework

[IITA](#) says it plans to work closely with the Taraba State Government to transform cassava in the framework of the [African Development Bank](#) (AfDB) funded [Technologies for African Agriculture Transformation](#) (TAAT) program.

The decision was communicated during a two-day visit to Taraba state on 26–27 September. The visit included the inauguration of the Cassava Compact—a component of the TAAT program, training of extension agents, and site selection and validation for the establishment of cassava demonstration plots.

IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) said the inauguration of the Cassava Compact of the TAAT in Taraba would open the door for the scaling of new innovations to cassava growers in the state and north-east region of Nigeria. He said the



Secretary to the Government of Taraba, Anthony Jellason, speaking at the inauguration of the TAAT Cassava Compact.

transformation of cassava in Taraba State offers tremendous opportunities in food security and job creation, with the hope of contributing to the reduction of the

food import bill of Africa which is presently about \$35bn per year. Dr Sanginga was represented by IITA Communication & Knowledge Exchange Expert [Godwin Atser](#).

Governor of Taraba State HE Darius Ishaku commended IITA and AfDB for selecting Taraba State as part of the TAAT Cassava Compact program, adding that the program would amplify the efforts of the state government in cassava transformation and revitalize agricultural activities in the state.

"While we remain grateful to AfDB and IITA for the kind gesture and honor done to the state, I wish to also pledge that Taraba

State Government will do its best to ensure the success of the program in the state," Governor Ishaku, who was represented by the Secretary to the State Government, Anthony Jellason said.

The inauguration of the TAAT Cassava Compact was followed by a training of 60 extension agents drawn from the state Agriculture Development Program (ADP).

The State Commissioner for Agriculture, Dr David Ishaya commended the efforts of IITA and AfDB in transforming cassava and empowering extension service providers, the training participants expressed appreciation for the training and promised to pass on the knowledge to farmers.

Read full article here: <http://www.cassavamatters.org/north-east-iita-and-afdb-to-help-taraba-transform-cassava-in-the-framework-of-taat/>

IITA Women's Group visits leading Nigerian school; encourages students to embrace agriculture

In a bid to create more awareness about the importance of agriculture to the economy, IITA Women's group visited [Lifeorte International School, Ibadan](#) (LIS) on 2 October to familiarize themselves with the institute and also sow a seed of mindset change to the students and staff.

The seven-member delegation comprising Charlotte Sanginga, Ranjana Bhattacharjee, Gloria Oluwadare, Kazembe Mulenga, Vaishali Nitturkar, Amina Abdoulaye, and Felicia Attah-Krah was received by Dr Sarah Olubi-Johnson, Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of LIS and Grace Aina, Principal, LIS. The meeting availed the visitors the opportunity to interact and invest in the students some life changing principles that would help them realize that agriculture is the engine to economic development.

With the aim to enlighten and change the perception of the students about agriculture, Mrs Sanginga said, "Agriculture is the bedrock for economic development and its relevance cannot be overemphasized. Having chosen LIS to be the first school ever visited by the IITA Women's Group is for a good reason and I know that will be fulfilled. We have come to impact, mentor, and inspire you all on the need to sow a seed so as to be sure of a lifetime legacy,

bearing in mind that if you want to be part of change, you have to join us in making history."

Dr Olubi-Johnson gave a breakdown of the school from its inception to date, highlighting the importance of capturing young minds from the cradle and nurturing them through the precarious age of adolescence, where they will be able to distinguish right from wrong, while striving for excellence at all times. The Executive Director, Mentoring and Child Support, Kunle Sokoya conducted the visitors round the facilities and applauded them for stimulating the passion of young school children into accepting agriculture to guarantee a food-secure continent.

In her address, Bhattacharjee highlighted the need for everyone to contribute towards transforming African agriculture by securing the path to food and nutrition security, which will further translate to reduced poverty and malnutrition. According to her, "Nigeria is one of those countries that needs rapid societal changes. This is because of the low agricultural base and lack of interest by the younger generation in agriculture. She also emphasized that the world's population will rise from 7 billion to 9 billion by 2050, and for us to be able to feed the additional 2 billion people, we need to grow about 60-70% more food."

"I challenge the management to engage the children into hands-on training on farming to provide a strong foundation on agriculture. I believe that if the necessary agricultural practices are put in place, your efforts will not be in vain. We will return next year to check the progress of your crop and give a reward to the best group," she added.

Giving an overview of the IITA Women's group farm, Oluwadare and Mulenga apprised the participants of their involvement in agriculture, and how they have been working to improve the livelihood of people, especially women and children through the provision of scholarships and agricultural produce.

Nitturkar addressed the students on the essence of developing an interest in agriculture, and led them through some relaxation activities to help them overcome stress and keep them fit to undertake new tasks.

In concluding the meeting, Dr Olubi-Johnson assured the team that agriculture will not only be taught but also practicalized. She immediately charged the principal to form a committee to oversee the progress and the smooth running of the farms.



Charlotte Sanginga, Head of Scholarship and Charity Committee, IITA Women's Group, addressing the staff and students of LIS.