

IITA will continue to stand out as a leading research institute in all areas—Nteranya Sanginga, IITA DG

I am pleased to announce to all that 2018 came to a successful end as a result of the dedication and commitment of staff, despite the dramatic decline in central funding encountered by the Institute. In the midst of it all, [IITA](#) had no option but to prepare for the future and reorganize its mode of operation by transforming into a project-based institution in a manner that protects staff and programs, ensuring minimum disruption. This became a major priority as a way for the Institute to change its financial landscape.

IITA has made great strides and notable achievements this year. One of the outstanding achievements of IITA was the [African Food Prize award](#) which was won by the Institute after a careful consideration of many able candidates. This became a reality due to remarkable research,

innovation, and development efforts of IITA, which have had tremendous impact on food security and incomes of many livelihoods across Africa. We have made progress on all thematic areas and our financial outlook for 2018 is satisfactory. All categories of staff are playing a key role in raising funds, placing IITA at the center, ahead of individual aspirations. This year's Partnership for Delivery week was a huge success, as IITA staff across all hubs convened to deliberate and brainstorm on ways the Institute can go beyond research, while delivering to end-users to attain impact at scale.

Congratulations to the entire IITA team for all the milestones attained this year and I am optimistic that come 2019, our innovations will get into the hands of more farmers and we will also have more



DG Nteranya Sanginga.

success stories to tell. I wish all the staff a fruitful celebration as we all look forward to more breakthroughs and achievements in 2019. Long live IITA!

I am optimistic that 2019 will be even better—Kenton Dashiell, DDG-P4D

The Partnerships for Delivery (P4D) Directorate is two years old and we began to make some progress with the delivery and scaling of proven technologies to end-users during 2018. All this has been possible because of the support and high morale of staff. The Directorate works in partnership with Governments, the private sector, NGOs, and IITA's R4D to transform African agriculture step by step. One of the successes this year was the start-up of the AfDB-funded Technologies for African Agriculture Transformation ([TAAT](#)) program, led by [IITA](#) and in partnership with other CGIAR centers such as [AfricaRice](#), [ICRISAT](#), [ILRI](#), [ICARDA](#), [CIMMYT](#), [CIP](#) and other Africa-based organizations such as the African Agricultural Technology

Foundation ([AATEF](#)) and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa ([FARA](#)).

The 2018 Partnership for Delivery Week (P4DWeek) was successful as scientists, specialists, and other staff from all the hubs of IITA convened to discuss and strategize ways of advancing its research agenda, and attaining impacts at scale. The event also culminated in the opening of the Tissue Culture building and presentation of the Annual Award of Excellence to staff by BoT chair, Namanga Ngongi.

I wish all staff a happy celebration and I am positive that next year will be even better for IITA, our staff and all our family members.



Kenton Dashiell.

Looking forward to a rewarding year as we increase our footprints across Africa—May-Guri Saethre, DDG-R4D

The year 2018 has been quite a successful year for [IITA](#) as it was filled with achievements! In the course of the year, our R4D team worked on ensuring that IITA took steps to increase its footprint across Africa, establishing its global brand, and engaging in regional communication strategies.

One of the major initiatives of the R4D Directorate was the capitalization on our prevailing active presence in the different Hubs across Africa, and penetration in the Sahel region through the incoming [NORAD](#) project in Mali and Niger. This will be accomplished by showcasing IITA's technologies such as in drought or in biorisks/ climate change in the Sahel.

A core group of funders, which includes [USAID](#), [BMGF](#), [ACIAR](#), and [DFID](#) took the opportunity to enhance and modernize CGIAR system capacity in crop breeding, in which IITA is fully engaged at all levels. There is a current activity to develop

a CGIAR strategy on biofortification as a first step towards developing a broader strategy for addressing hidden hunger in Africa.

IITA has considered a new gender strategy and institutional arrangements in relation to funding so as to ensure the implementation of gender in research and its reporting in a comprehensive manner across the system. As a result, IITA R4D will hire a Female Gender Specialist Scientist in 2019.

These levels of success would not have been attainable without your commitment and devotion to IITA. In spite of the year's financial constraints, we have all done a great job! Our high level of commitment has shown that our faith in IITA's pursuit of transforming African agriculture is very strong. 2019 will definitely be a better year as we will put in more effort to bring IITA closer to achieving its goal. Now, with the ever-increasing demand for safe and nutritious food



May-Guri Saethre.

to feed a growing global population, the R4D landscape in 2019 is looking very good, as we hope to advance the impact of our research!

Once more, I appreciate you all for your support throughout this year and I wish you an amazing holiday as well as a wonderful Christmas and New Year in advance.

Corporate Services adapting to change—Hilde Koper-Limbourg, DDG Corporate Services

Another year gone!

This year we started work on changing IITA's culture and staff mindset to adapt to the new reality of [IITA](#) being a "project-based institute". Change is never easy, especially not change brought on by funding challenges, but we made a confident start.

I appreciate the commitment and the hard work put in this year to continue to help achieve IITA's goals. Your commitment to IITA is vital for us to achieve our goals through the set-out strategy.

For Corporate Services this means that we will have to keep adapting to the changed circumstances of IITA, and thus our clients. We need to improve our services by becoming more efficient and innovative, doing more with less funds, and finding new ways of service provision by leaving the past and modernizing our services.

This year we started implementing our new Work-Life Balance Policy of IITA, and I hope this Policy will help our cross-generational and diversified workforce to enjoy both work and life, while still striking a balance between staff members' personal needs and a fit for strategic and operational needs of the Institute. We are changing the retirement age for NRS to 65 years of age, starting from 1 January 2019. Due to budget challenges we had to make some savings and could not do everything we wanted to improve the conditions of our staff, but we remain committed to do the best within our means.

The slogan in a recent team building retreat of FMS was 'Everyone Counts!'. All our staff have their own responsibilities, knowledge, skills, and strengths. I appreciate all your great work this year; it is because of every one of you, and because we know what we can achieve while working together,

in a culture of professionalism, transparency, and respect, that IITA has a future, and we can be confident that we will make a difference.

Please enjoy some well-deserved rest with family and friends during this holiday season, and let's get right back to it in 2019.



Hilde Koper-Limbourg.

IITA's mobile app to track cassava seeds now in Tanzania

Timely access to quality seed is a major challenge in the production of cassava in Tanzania. A mobile application for real-time tracking of cassava seed production developed by IITA for Nigeria is now available in Tanzania as part of efforts to address this challenge.

The application, known as the [Cassava SeedTracker](#), provides real-time information on seed variety, quantity, and availability and facilitates timely access to seed markets. It enables producers to register their seed crops, regulatory authorities to do electronic certification of seeds, and those who need quality seed to locate seed suppliers and arrange for purchase.

Though SeedTracker is a web-based application that can be accessed on any internet-connected device, it can also be used offline.

The app was first developed by a team at IITA-Nigeria led by [Lava Kumar](#), a Virologist and Head of the Germplasm Health Unit under the Building an Economically Sustainable, Integrated Seed System for Cassava in Nigeria (BASICS) project with the goal of applying 21st century ICT technology to improving the quality and efficiency of cassava seed production.

IITA is introducing the app in Tanzania in partnership with the Tanzania Official Seeds Certification Institute ([TOSCI](#)) and Mennonite Economic Development Associates ([MEDA](#)).

According to James Legg, IITA Plant Pathologist, SeedTracker will



Clean Cassava production field in Tanzania, tracked by IITA's seed tracker app.

support farmers to access quality certified planting material (seed) from producers and for producers, it will allow them to get markets for their produce. The app will also allow authorities to certify the seed.

"We are excited that the SeedTracker is now 'live' in Tanzania. However, IITA will continue to work with partners working for the development of cassava in the country to see that all of the app's 21st century promise is fully realized," he said.

IITA has been working with TOSCI on developing quality standards for cassava seed in the country to ensure that seed produced is healthy and free of viruses. This is because farmers have been grappling with two viral diseases—cassava mosaic disease

and cassava brown streak disease—that have greatly reduced the crop's production in the country.

Researchers have identified several ways to halt the spread of the two diseases, including the development of high-yielding, disease-resistant varieties and setting up systems to multiply and distribute healthy seed.

One challenge, however, has been to ensure that seed is completely free of viruses as these are carried in cassava stems or cuttings. TOSCI is already active throughout the country inspecting cassava seed that is being produced for sale by farmers. Currently, however, this is a manual process which involves pen and paper. This is now set to change with the arrival of the Seed Tracker.

Forest Center of IITA celebrates "First-ever" Nigerian Bird Festival

On 6 and 7 December, the IITA Forest Center celebrated the first-ever Nigerian Bird Festival with funding support from the [AG Leventis Foundation](#) and [US Consulate General](#), Lagos. The event convened students, ornithologists, environmentalists, and nature lovers on the IITA-Ibadan campus, to celebrate birds and highlight the need to protect them and their habitats. Over 70 representatives from different organizations and institutions attended the maiden event including the [AP Leventis Ornithological Research](#)

[Institute \(APLORI\)](#), University of Jos, [Nigerian Conservation Foundation](#), members of the Forest Center's School Conservation Clubs (SCCs), comprising the University of Ibadan, the Federal University of Technology Akure, Adejare International School, Ibadan; American Christian Academy, AUD High School, Ibadan, Olive Branches Group of School, Osogbo; Ilesha Grammar School, and Saint Anthony's High School, Ikoyi-Osun.

In his opening remarks, Adewale Awoyemi, Forest Center Manager,

welcomed participants to the event and spoke on the importance of birds. He said: "From indicating the status of the environment to environmental cleanliness and pest control, birds are such wonderful creatures that assist in stabilizing different ecosystems. Apart from the ecosystem services rendered by birds, they are also living organisms and have the right to life, which we must all respect". He further emphasized the need for a harmonious relationship between humans and nature.

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Hilde Koper Limbourg handing over an award to Prof. Manu.



Participants identifying birds.

Thereafter, participants were engaged in various activities aimed at elucidating the beauty of nature such as camping, bird-related poems, drama, and a bird identification competition. One highlight of the event was the exhibition displayed by the participating SCCs and other presenters. Their exhibition focused on four thematic areas: waste management, climate change and its impact on birds, the importance of birds in the ecosystems, and drawing, painting, costumes, and pictures of birds, all demonstrating the beauty and services provided by birds and why we need to conserve them.

Another highlight of the festival was the presentation of an “Award of Excellence in African Ornithology” to Professor Shiiwua Manu, who is the Director of [APLORI](#) and Technical Advisor to the Forest Center. The award was presented to him for his dedication to bird conservation by [Hilde Koper-Limbou](#) (IITA Deputy Director General for Corporate Services) on behalf of IITA. Upon receiving the award, Prof Manu expressed his delight saying, “I am privileged to have been recognized by a reputable organization like IITA and will continue to promote the conservation of birds and other taxa”. He commended

Forest Center staff for their dedication to duty and encouraged participants to contribute to the protection of biodiversity. All presenters at the event were also presented framed photographs of birds.

In her closing remarks, Koper-Limbou, commended the Forest Center staff for their innovative ideas on biodiversity conservation and promised that IITA would continue to provide the institutional support to ensure the conservation of Nigeria’s rich biodiversity. She thanked all participants and encouraged them to inculcate sustainable management of natural resources in their daily activities.



Group photograph of all the participants with the organizers.

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