

## FAO recognizes IYA's youth empowerment initiative

The [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#) has named the [IITA Youth in Agribusiness \(IYA\)](#) program as one of the 20 Success Stories of Agricultural Innovation from around the world. These were profiled at the first [International Symposium on Agricultural Innovation for Family Farmers](#), which took place in Rome, Italy between 21 and 23 November.

The theme of the symposium focused on unlocking the potential of agricultural innovations in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals as stated by the United Nations. One of its objectives was the celebration of these innovations and their innovators, which was achieved through an Innovation Fair that showcased the selected 20 success stories.



Part of the IITA Youth in Agribusiness display at the Innovation Fair in Rome, Italy.

The featured success stories all involved agricultural innovation that addresses key challenges such as climate change, sustainable natural resource management, food insecurity, and hidden hunger, and unemployment, especially among youth. The Fair also provided a unique space to explore key questions and issues on agricultural innovation around the world.

IYA was recognized for its incubation program for young people and for resuscitating abandoned agricultural facilities to train youth and establish pilot agribusiness enterprises. This has been a driver for youth employment across sub-Saharan Africa as well as providing the foundation upon which other youth engagement and empowerment programs have been built.

See the [Innovation Fair booklet](#) for more on IYA's initiative on agricultural parks.

## IITA and Government of Benin sign Host Country Agreement

The Government of Benin through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation signed a Host Country Agreement with [IITA](#) in Benin last 17 December. The signing ceremony was presided over by the Secretary General of the Ministry, Ambassador Hervé Djikpé, who signed on behalf of the Government of Benin, and the IITA-Benin Country Representative [Manuele Tamò](#). The ceremony was honored by a surprise visit by the Minister, Aurélien Agbénonci, who wanted to assure the audience of his appreciation for the work of IITA in Benin.

The IITA-Benin Country Representative gave a brief overview of the history of IITA in Benin, and presented on the new orientation of the station, particularly the establishment of the [Biorisk Management Facility \(BIMAF\)](#) and the Clearinghouse of the [Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation \(TAAT\)](#) program. He emphasized that both initiatives are well aligned with the new Government Activities Program (PAG in French), with BIMAF contributing to mitigating the impact of climate change on agricultural

productivity, and TAAT, through its compacts, providing new technologies to transform African agriculture and engaging the youth.

In his speech, the Secretary General thanked IITA for the continuing contribution to agricultural research leading to improved livelihoods in Africa. He also reiterated the firm intention of the Government of Benin to continue and expand its partnership with IITA in Benin, which will soon be materialized with the establishment of the International Research Center for Climate Resilient Agriculture (CIRACC in French) in the Benin station.

He added that the signing of the Host Country Agreement will give IITA a more solid institutional, legal, and political framework to be able to operate in Benin.

IITA has been operating in Benin since the establishment of its research and training center in 1985. The station houses a biodiversity center, which has the largest and best-curated collection of insects in West Africa.

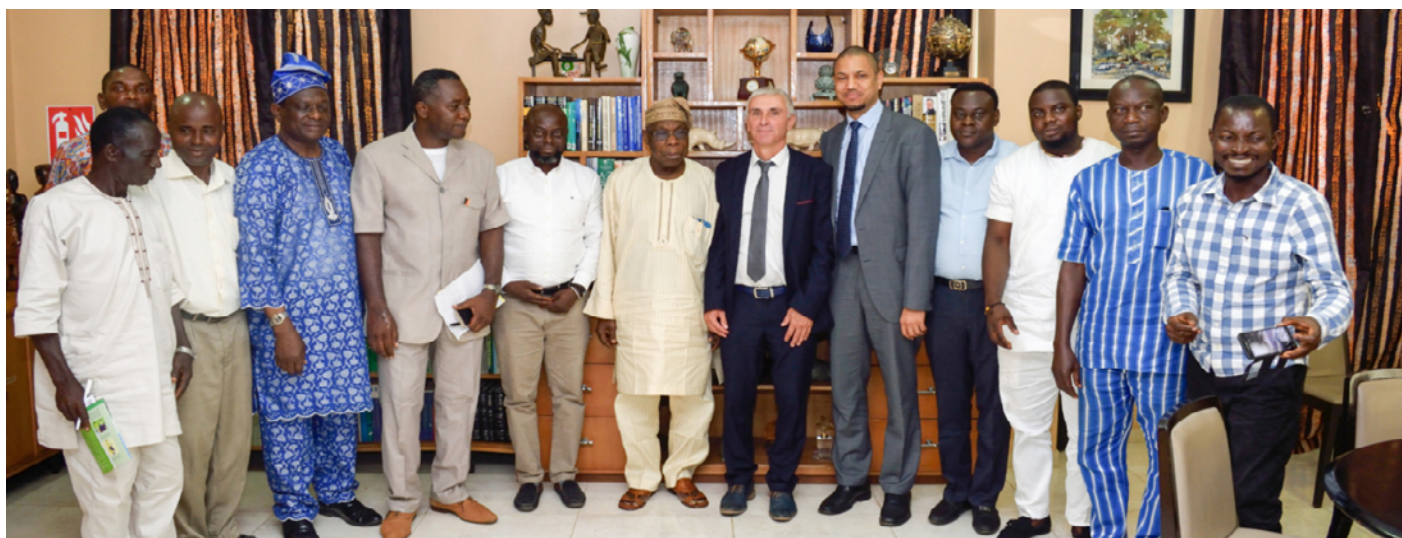


*IITA-Benin Country Representative Manuele Tamò (left) with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Secretary General, Ambassador Hervé Djiakpé.*

## Obasanjo to join forces with IITA and Bayer on disseminating innovations on weed control to farmers

Former President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, has agreed to support the dissemination of improved technologies on weed control and other agricultural innovations to farmers, as part of efforts to bring about agricultural transformation in Africa. Chief Obasanjo declared his position when he received a delegation comprising [Bayer](#) and [IITA](#) officials in Ogun State.

The delegation presented reports from the [IITA-managed Cassava Weed Management Project](#) on the efficacy of Lagon—a cassava and maize weed control herbicide from Bayer. They also presented the former president with the Six Steps to Cassava Weed Management toolkit—a step-by-step extension guide for controlling weeds in cassava farming



*Former President Obasanjo (middle) with Bayer and IITA representatives in Nigeria.*



systems that has proven to double yields of cassava from the current national average of 10 tons per hectare to more than 25 tons per hectare.

Receiving the presentation, Chief Obasanjo commended the team for a job well done and promised to support efforts of getting the word out. "We want to be a hub for spreading the good news," he stated.

Earlier, the Country Cluster Commercial Lead for Bayer West/Central Africa, Laurent Perez, said the company was willing to work with the former President to improve the livelihood of farmers.

"As a major stakeholder and strong voice in Nigeria and Africa, Bayer is willing to partner with Obasanjo Farms to achieve our set objectives for Nigeria," he added.

Perez noted the strategic role of Nigeria in the field of agriculture, stressing that the country has huge potential and a very active agricultural environment. According to him, it was in the light of the potential of Nigeria in the agricultural space that Bayer AG Germany decided to make a long-term investment in the country.

He called on the Nigerian government to come up with policies that would be investor friendly so that the huge potential in Nigeria could be fully tapped and utilized.

The IITA Director of the Development and Delivery Office and Cassava Weed Management Project Leader, [Alfred Dixon](#), stated that the improved weed control options being developed by IITA and Bayer are helping farmers

to achieve more than double their cassava yield.

Dixon, who was represented by IITA Communication & Knowledge Exchange Expert [Godwin Atser](#), reiterated the willingness of IITA to work with the former President to lift farmers out of poverty, noting that weeds were depleting farmers' incomes and limiting farm sizes.

The delegation, which included the Managing Director, Bayer Middle Africa, Mohammed Jimoh; Country Sales Manager, Temitope Banjo; Development & Regulatory Affairs Manager, Ahmed Mansur Bello; and Area Sales Manager, South West, Adeyemi Adeyemo; also discussed other areas such as crop protection, training, and seeds and came up with an action plan.

## IITA Cameroon participates in the **"first ever"** World Soil Day celebration

On 5 December, staff of [IITA](#) Cameroon, led by Martin Yemefack, IITA Senior Scientist, convened at the main campus of The Institute of Agricultural Research for Development (IRAD), Nkolbisson in Yaoundé, to participate in the World Soil Day 2018 celebration. Being the maiden edition, the event was commemorated with a symposium themed "Soil nutrient management: A solution for sustainable development."

The occasion was attended by soil scientists, stakeholders, policy makers on soil in development planning, as well as students. The symposium provided an excellent opportunity for officials of the Cameroon Soil Science Society (CASSS) to strengthen its position as a national body and to consolidate its relationship, collaboration, and partnership with government and global institutions



*IITA Country Representative Dr Masso Cargele was represented at the occasion by Visiting Scientist Yemefack Martin.*

involved in the domain of soil management.

Presentations centered on international challenges on soils with a focus on the Global Soil Partnership, Africa Regional Soil Partnership, and the World Bank Project for Africa. Participants also focused on soil pollution and sustainable development in Cameroon with an emphasis on the negative effects of toxic chemicals and other pollutants to plants, wildlife, humans, and the soil.

Stakeholders deliberated on strategies for improving education and capacity building in soil science and extension services in Cameroon. Discussions were based on issues relating to training and education challenges, the responsibilities of soil scientists, and organizing training in Cameroon.

Issues concerning digital soil mapping were equally highlighted as an opportunity for sustainable agriculture, with priorities on theories of digital soil mapping, soil data collection and modeling, land suitability classification, soil and land aptitude, and its application in Cameroon.

Speaking on water management and soil nutrients, IRAD Scientist Tueche Jacque Roberto stated that soil scientists are now experiencing climate change in the cropping calendar. "We have introduced different irrigation practices that will also help manage soil nutrients for crops to grow well. Soil is very important for sustainable development in terms of farming, road construction, building, and mineral resources; as such, it should be conserved by all."

Representing the student participants in the symposium, Cynthia Yenisi, an Upper sixth Art student expressed her excitement, saying: "I am privileged to attend the seminar on soil science. We were told that the soil is not only the ground we move on, but is also a non-renewable resource which humanity lives on for food. I have learnt that there are different classes of soils and a total of 32 soils with Cameroon having more than 20 different types. I am certain that the knowledge and experience acquired would help me in the future as I hope to be a soil biologist."

In concluding the event, stakeholders visited the various stands where different soil types, natural and chemical fertilizers, soil products, and food items were displayed.



*Students with participants at the symposium.*

## Got a story to share?

Please send your story with photos and captions every Tuesday to [iita-news@cgiar.org](mailto:iita-news@cgiar.org) or Katherine Lopez ([k.lopez@cgiar.org](mailto:k.lopez@cgiar.org)) and Uzoma Agha ([u.gha@cgiar.org](mailto:u.gha@cgiar.org)) for headquarters and Western Africa, Catherine Njuguna ([c.njuguna@cgiar.org](mailto:c.njuguna@cgiar.org)) for Eastern and Southern Africa, and David Ngome ([d.ngome@cgiar.org](mailto:d.ngome@cgiar.org)) for Central Africa.