

Highlights
IITA Board of Trustees Meeting
28 to 30 November 2018

- The IITA Board of Trustees met at the Institute headquarters in Ibadan from 26 to 30 November. During its first two days, the Board participated in Partnerships for Delivery Week “Beyond Research” where the focus of presentations was on IITA’s work related to delivery and out-scaling of IITA’s technologies.
- Incoming Board Chair, Amos Ngongi Namanga, welcomed all Trustees to their first meeting under his chairmanship and extended special welcomes to new Trustees, Joyce Cacho from the United States and Abdulkadir Mua’zu, Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. In his farewell remarks to Prof. Emmanuel Kucha, who joined the Board as Vice Chancellor of the Federal University of Makurdi and completed his two-year tenure at this meeting, he extended his thanks for his valuable service and presented him with a certificate of appreciation. Prof. Kucha will be succeeded by the Vice Chancellor of the Federal University of Umudike, in the ex-officio position which rotates every two years among the Vice Chancellors of the Federal Universities of Agriculture.
- In the opening session of the Board, Dr. Ngongi Namanga recognized the distinguished leadership of his predecessor, Bruce Coulman and extended his appreciation and thanks for his invaluable guidance and service to the Board and Management throughout his tenure and especially during the turbulent years between 2011 and 2013. He expressed gratitude to his Board colleague, John Griffith, who served the Board with distinction as Chair of the Governance Committee, who for health reasons had to resign before the expiration of his term. John has left a fitting legacy, he said, in the form of the annual contribution that Board members make to the Women’s Group Scholarship Fund in memory of his late wife, Rhonda.

He drew attention to the remarkable progress that IITA has made under the leadership of Director General Sanginga and to the external recognition IITA is receiving with the recent awards starting in 2016 with the AI Sumait Prize for African Development to the recent Africa Prize in Kigali and the invitation to the Director General’s to join the procession of the World Food Prize laureates at the 2018 World Food Prize ceremony. He commended the DG for his courage in launching into new areas of business such as the TAAT, the Youth Agripreneur Program and the Business Incubation Platform. Success of TAAT program focused on the delivery that IITA has embarked on, combining the theoretical and the practical and will be very important for IITA and for the CGIAR.

As one of the new members of the System Management Board (SMB) that represents all Centers, much of the Board Chair’s and the SMB’s attention is focused on the CGIAR wide business plan and on the alliances between centers. He is hopeful that these are preliminary signs of a system that is open to making fundamental changes that are responsive to global needs.

- The Director General began his report by acknowledging the contribution of the DDG’s and the Directors who, he said, played key roles in running the institute and along with the staff are very committed to IITA and its future development. His report titled “Implementing Phase 3 of the IITA strategy 2012 to 2020” centered around plans for the next three years at IITA. IITA will continue to maintain its core competencies, at the same time engage in new areas of research that have emerged through the development of the CGIAR Business Plan, while articulating and filling the missing links between research and delivery. The role of the hubs will be reinforced and strengthened incorporating partnerships for delivery, eventually becoming self-sufficient and independent operating units. In agreement with the

Board the Institute will commission an independent external review that is forward looking and provides a blue print for IITA's future operations and its role in transforming African agriculture, paving the way for new leadership in late 2021.

- At the inaugural meeting of the Partnership for Delivery Committee, members received information on the TAAT, the BIP and the Youth Program activities. Given TAAT's ambitious goals, the Committee sought clarification on staffing and whether the program's current staffing levels and expertise were adequate to meet its goals. On the BIP, the Committee was pleased to learn of the improvement in cash management where all businesses, apart from one, were in positive cash flow positions. One of the Committee's key questions related to the strategy for commercialization of those businesses no longer needing incubation. Members looked forward to receiving further information at its May 2019 meeting on these programs, the pipeline of new technologies for incubation and progress reports on the businesses led by youth.
- The Board approved the report and the recommendations of the Audit & Finance Committee. It approved the total expenditure budget at \$118.809 m, a net expenditure budget of \$107.412, an operating surplus of \$0.750 m, a capital expenditure budget of \$1.0 m and the Board budget at the same level as that of 2018 at \$361,000. Topics covered in the Audit and Finance Meeting were the automation project where good progress was noted, the 2017 IFRS accounts, the adoption of which had to be postponed until the external auditors had completed their audit. The internal audit's coverage of its annual activities and proposed 2019 work plan, strategy and charter as well as the ongoing review which is expected to be completed by May 2019 were also discussed. The Committee noted the significant amount of work done by the Risk Management Committee and congratulated it on being the recipients of the risk management award for non-profits operating in Nigeria.

On the recommendation of the Audit & Finance Committee, the Board agreed to ringfence the activities of the BIP by creating a Limited Liability Company which will be 100% owned by IITA. The ringfencing will be guided by a sub-committee of the Board to ensure that appropriate governance and operating structures and audit arrangements are in place. The Committee will report back to the Board at the May 2019 meeting. A key rationale for the proposal was BIP's role in facilitating the commercialisation and dissemination of IITA technologies critical for achieving impact, which is very attractive to several donors and reducing IITA's risk exposure.

- In the Human Resources Committee, the key topics covered included progress against HR goals and metrics with particular attention to the gender and diversity metric. Also discussed were work life balance, succession planning for key positions at IITA and the establishment of a bridging fund to support scientists between projects. On the recommendation of the HR Committee the Board approved management's proposal to extend the retirement age for national staff to 65 years and to award an upgrade for national staff recognizing performance over time that has impacted positively on the Institute. The upgrade will be based on specific criteria established by Management.
- The Program Committee was informed about IITA's strong and successful engagement in the development of the CGIAR business plan as well as the soon to be implemented engagement in Sahelian countries spearheaded by the grant from Norway. Members noted the involvement of IITA's Biorisk Management Facility (BIMAF) in the latter. The PC noted the high level of professionalism in the BPAT reviews of IITA's breeding programs providing a useful blue print for future investment and improvements in IITA's breeding activities. They considered the KPI achievements to be impressive with some already well documented, gaining well deserved international attention with others soon to follow.

While good progress had been made, they recognized that not all targets are likely to be achieved within the time frame and may have been overly ambitious at the outset.

The PC found considerable variability in IITA's level of involvement in the six CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) from a significant involvement in Roots, Tubers and Bananas to minimal involvement in Policies Institution and Markets. Consequently, IITA's achievements corresponded to its level of engagement. Still impressive progress has been recorded generating national and international attention.

Other issues discussed in the PC meeting were publications and the importance of ensuring that publications were given equal importance in P4D as in R4D maintaining the strategy for publishing in high output journals and capitalizing on the availability of IITA's long-term data sets. The importance of timely reporting to donors was emphasized as was the importance of elevating IITA's media recognition, utilizing the latest multi-media formats that appeal to wide-ranging audiences.

The PC exchanged views on the biological control station in Cotonou and provided useful ideas for future consideration. It also advised IITA to ensure it stays involved and looks for opportunities in the Two-Degree Initiative. The PC concluded its meeting with presentations from four early career scientists.

- At the recommendation of the Governance Committee, the Board agreed to advance the appointment of Rhoda Tumusiime from May 2020 to November 2019 and proposed the terms of reference for Emeritus Board Member, former Board Chair as a pro-bono ambassador/advisor to IITA. Both recommendations were approved by the Board.
- As its last item of business, the Board met in-camera to discuss the Director General and Board Secretary annual evaluations.