IITA news
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IITA participates in TICAD 7 in Japan

IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga participated in The Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 7) on 28–29 August, held in Yokohama, Japan. The TICAD was launched in 1993 by the Government of Japan, to promote Africa's development, peace and security, through the strengthening of relations in multilateral cooperation and partnership, particularly with the country. As part of the conference, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) Japan and Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS) organized a special side event titled 'Achieving African agricultural transformation for improved food and nutrition security'. During the event, DG Sanginga presented a keynote speech titled "The dissemination of research results is important for improving productivity and nutrition in Africa."

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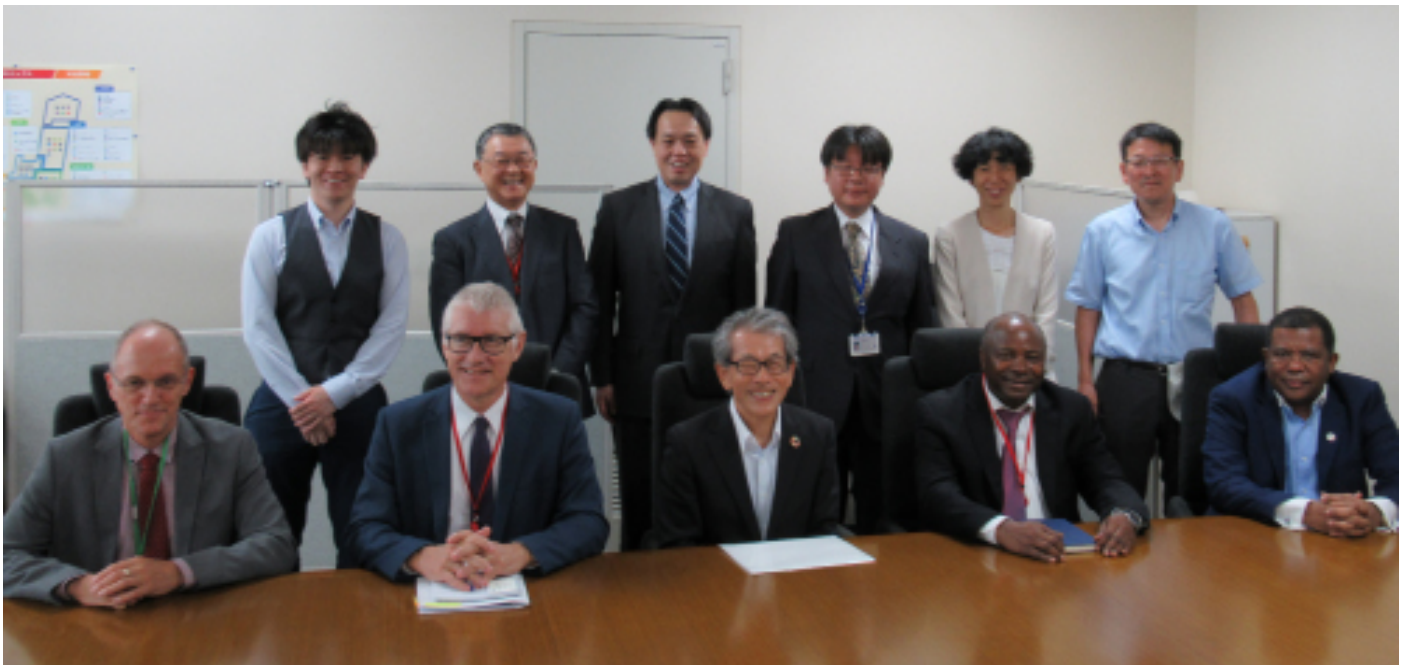

L-R (Front row): Dr Marco Wopereis, Director General, World Vegetable Center; Dr Matthew Morell, Director General, IRRI; Dr Masaru Iwanaga, President, JIRCAS; Dr Nteranya Sanginga, Director General, IITA; Dr Belay Begashaw, Director General, SDG C/A; (Back row) second left: Dr Shuichi Asanuma, IITA Board member; third left: Mr Yoshihisa Hishinuma, Director-General, Agriculture, Forestry Fisheries Research Council Secretariat, MAFF. Photo by AFFRC.

IITA DG pays courtesy visit to Japanese government, MAFF, and MoFA Japan

In related news, Sanginga embarked on courtesy visits to MAFF and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). IITA Board Member, Dr Shuichi Asanuma, and Yam Agronomist, Dr Ryo Matsumoto, completed the IITA delegation.

Mr Yoshihisa Hishinuma, Director-General, Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries Research Council Secretariat, and Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS) President, Dr Masaru Iwanaga, received the team along with the Director Generals of other CGIAR centers and SDG C/A. DG Sanginga used the opportunity to express appreciation for their strong support of the Yam and Cowpea improvement programs in IITA.

At MoFA, discussions were held on future cooperation, including capacity development of young Japanese to IITA.

Sanginga also attended several other meetings with representatives of Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA), Japan international Cooperation Agency (JICA), and JST-SATREPS Group to develop new partnerships for food security in Africa. According to Dr Sanginga, "Incorporating Japan's technology and dissemination program is a very effective means for agricultural development in African countries. It is also very important to build a win-win relationship. Let us continue to communicate to maintain strong collaboration."

IITA participates in TICAD 7 in Japan Continued from page 1

In line with the event theme, 'The Power of boosting Africa; for the future of food and agriculture,' Sanginga explained the role of IITA in ensuring food security in Africa and gave an overview of the IITA Business Incubation Platform (BIP).

DG Sanginga giving a keynote address. Photo by JIRCAS.

Events

Africa RISING East and Southern Africa Project Review and Planning Meeting – Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 10–11 September.
First Start Them Early Program (STEP) Planning Workshop, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, 10-12 September
AgResults Nigeria Aflasafe Pilot Project Close-Out Symposium, Abuja, Nigeria, 12 September
Africa RISING Internally Commissioned External Review Team visit to project sites in northern Ghana, 15–21 September
Youth in Agribusiness Sensitization and Launch Workshop - IITA Station, Republic of Benin, 19 September
Launch, Start Them Early Program (STEP), IITA, Kalambo, Democratic Republc of Congo, 21 September
Africa RISING Internally Commissioned External Review Team visit to project sites in southern Mali, 22–28 September
Commissioning of Pres. Olusegun Obasanjo Research Campus, IITA, Kalambo, Democratic Republc of Congo, 8 October
Board Meeting and R4D Week, IITA headquarters, 18-22 November

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Knowledge 4 Farmers

Got a story to share?

Please send your story with photos and captions every Tuesday 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 and Southern Africa, and David Ngome (d.ngome@cgiar.org) for Central Africa.

IITA yam breeding team visits yam processing company in Japan

The IITA yam improvement team consisting of Asrat Amele, Head of Yam Breeding, Patrick Adebola, Project Leader of AfricaYam, and Ryo Matsumoto, Yam Agronomist, visited the Maruko Foods yam processing factory in Japan together with IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga and IITA Board Member, Dr Shuichi Asanuma, on 27 August. Also in the delegation were the Japanese collaborators, Dr Hironobu Shiwachi and Dr Hidehiko Kikuno from Tokyo University of Agriculture (Tokyo NODAI) and Dr Satoru Muranaka from Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS).

Maruko Foods is a food processing company with the largest share (approx. 60%) of the production and sale of processed yam products, in Japan. The company is interested in processing and using African yams.

The partnership began in 2014, when Maruko Foods President visited IITA, with scientists from Tokyo NODAI, to seek collaboration in the areas of nutrient composition analysis and processed product development.

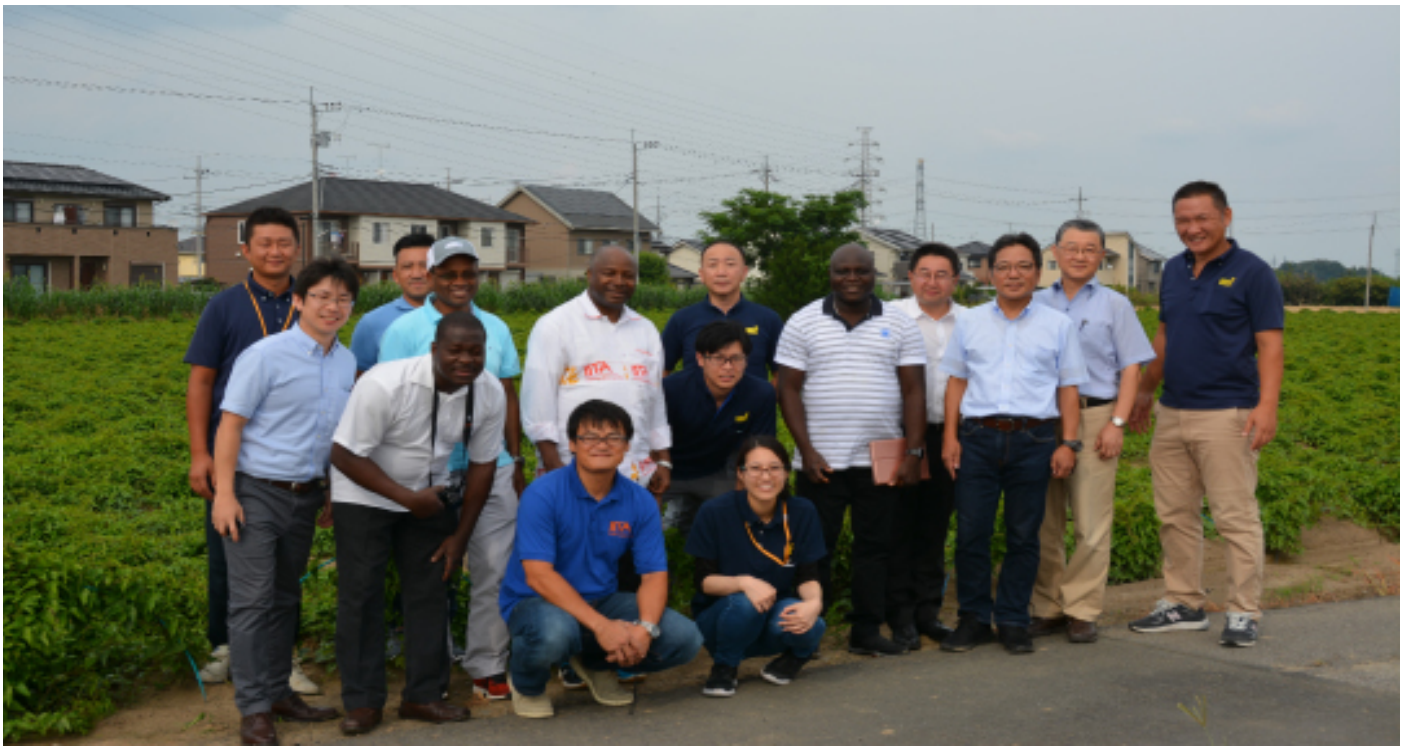
The preservation and processing of yam is an important strengthening point in yam production in West Africa. With this background, this visit was arranged.

DG Sanginga eating tororo, a yam product.

Matsumoto, who had planned this visit, said "Japan has a long history of eating yam, such as *D. opposita*, known as Nagaimo or Chinese yam, as a nourishing vegetable. Although the species are different, yam yield in Japan is 18 t/ha while the average yield in West Africa is 9.0 t/ha). Yam processing has been carried out for a long time in Japan, and mechanized processing and quality control are performed today at a very high level.

I hope that the knowledge gained through collaboration with yam processing companies, such as Maruko Foods in Japan, will greatly contribute to the development of yam improvement in West Africa."

At the end of the visit Sanginga said, "From the viewpoint of food safety in West Africa and increased income for small-scale farmers, it is very important to increase yam productivity and promote processing. Through this visit, I was able to draw a clear image of the yam processing business. Our visit was a great success and will enhance further collaboration between IITA and Maruko Foods for yam improvement."

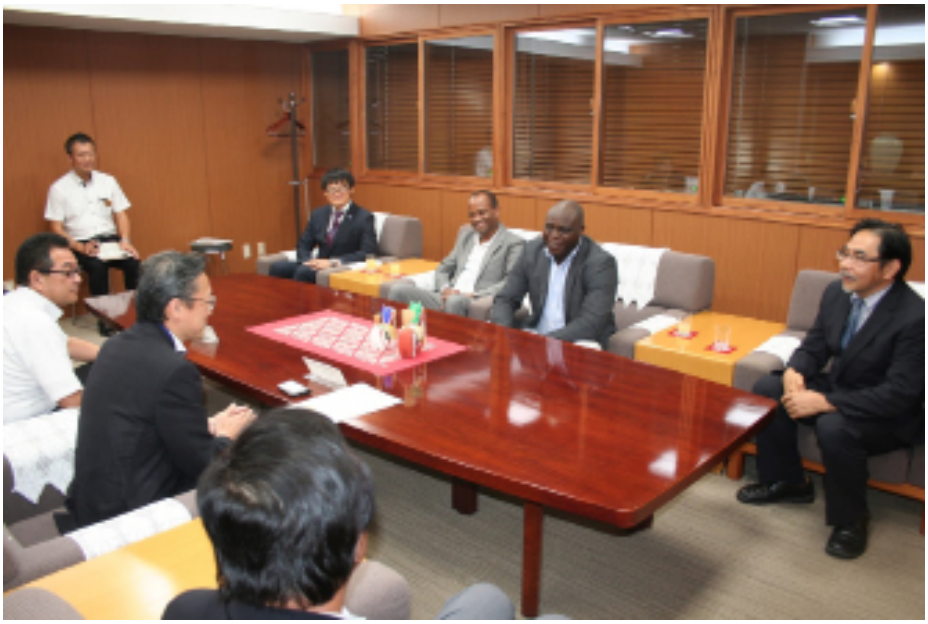


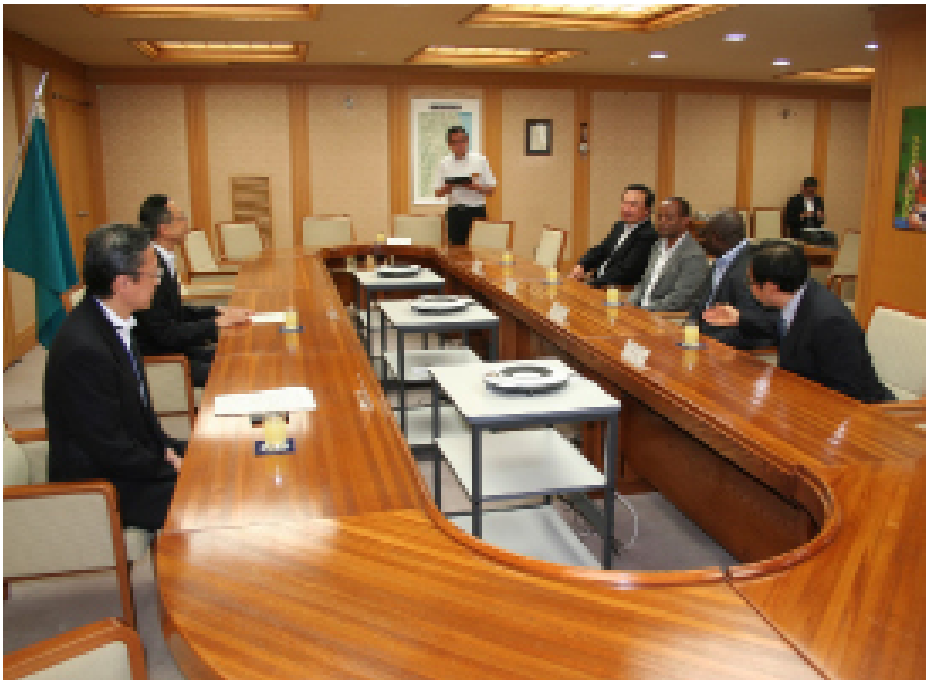
The team from IITA, Tokyo NODAI, and JIRCAS visited a yam field with Maruko Foods staff.

AfricaYam holds activity meeting at IBRC

An AfricaYam project meeting was held with collaborators Dr Ryohei Terauchi, Lead Scientist at the Iwate Biotechnology Research Center (IBRC), and Dr Satoru Muranaka from Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS).

IBRC is one of the 11 partner Institutes of the AfricaYam project led by IITA. Terauchi invited scientists from IITA, Dr Patrick Adebola, Project Leader of AfricaYam, and Dr Asrat Amele, the Head of Yam Breeding, for a two-day visit to his laboratory at Iwate, Japan. The visitors were received on 29 August by the President and Chair, Board of Trustees of the Institute, Mr Eikou Sugihara. He thanked the visitors for coming to Iwate and indicated that the Institute was willing to continue supporting the collaboration between IITA and IBRC. He was happy that IBRC was able to support African small-scale farmers through the genomics work they are doing in collaboration with IITA.





Top: Meeting with Director General of Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery in Iwate prefecture. Photo by IBRC. Bottom: Meeting with Vice Governor, Iwate prefecture.

The visitors were later taken on a tour of IBRC laboratories, green houses, research field trials, and other facilities. The visitors were impressed by the state-of-the-art genomics facility at IBRC.

A workshop was also organized by IBRC during the visit where all the scientists working on yam presented their work. Topics discussed included Guinea yam genome version 2; yam population genomics, linkage mapping with controlled crossed family, GWAS, and Sex determination in yam. Discussions were also held on joint publications and areas of future collaboration. Presentations were made by both visiting scientists. Amele presented a general overview of the IITA Yam Breeding Program; Adebola's presentation focused on the activities of the AfricaYam project.

On 30 August, the scientists paid a courtesy call on the office of the Vice Governor of Iwate Prefectural Government in Morioka. They were received by the Vice Governor, Mr Kazuei Tamotsu, as well as the Director General, Department of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries in Iwate, Mr Mikiya Ueda. Adebola gave a summary of the historical background of the ongoing collaboration between IBRC and IITA, which had started in the early 1990s. He explained that the purpose of their courtesy call was to seek continual support to further strengthen the relationship between the two institutions. Adebola pointed out that IBRC is one of the few advanced institutes that are working on yam outside the continent of Africa.

The sequencing work they had done on the yam genome was a great achievement, which would help to accelerate the delivery of improved varieties to African yam farmers. In his remarks, the Vice Governor thanked the visitors for coming and assured them that his administration would continue to support IBRC and their collaboration with IITA. He commended IBRC for the high quality of their genomics work, which had earned them several awards. He further stated that Iwate Prefectural Government was very pleased that IBRC is contributing to African agriculture though their collaboration with IITA.

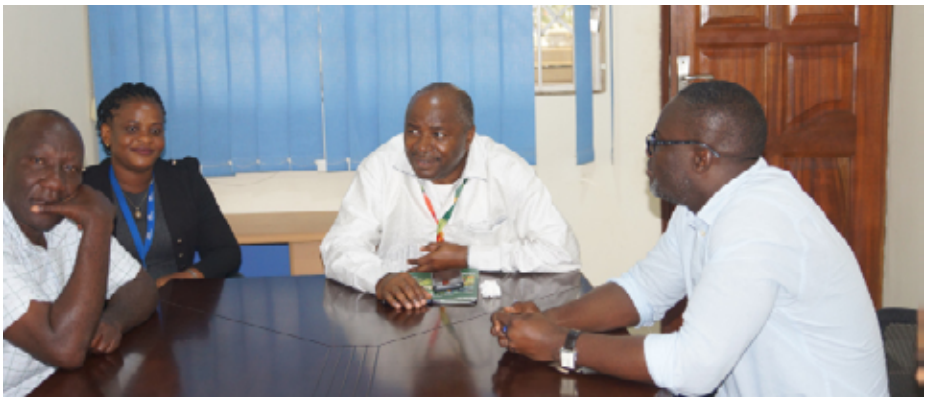
Sanginga visits IITA Accra

On 4 September, IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga visited the IITA-Accra office in Ghana to interact with staff members.

The visit to the station coincided with the DG's attendance at the 2019 African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF), which took place in Accra on 3–6 September. The DG also delivered a presentation there as an introduction to the initiative *Emerging crops to end hunger*.

The visit served as a familiarization tour of the office and provided an opportunity to share with the IITA-Accra staff the Institute's vision on Research for Development (R4D) and Partnerships for Delivery (P4D). Sanginga also provided some inspirational words on management issues and employee welfare.

IITA Acting Country Representative for Ghana, Richard Asare, welcomed Sanginga.

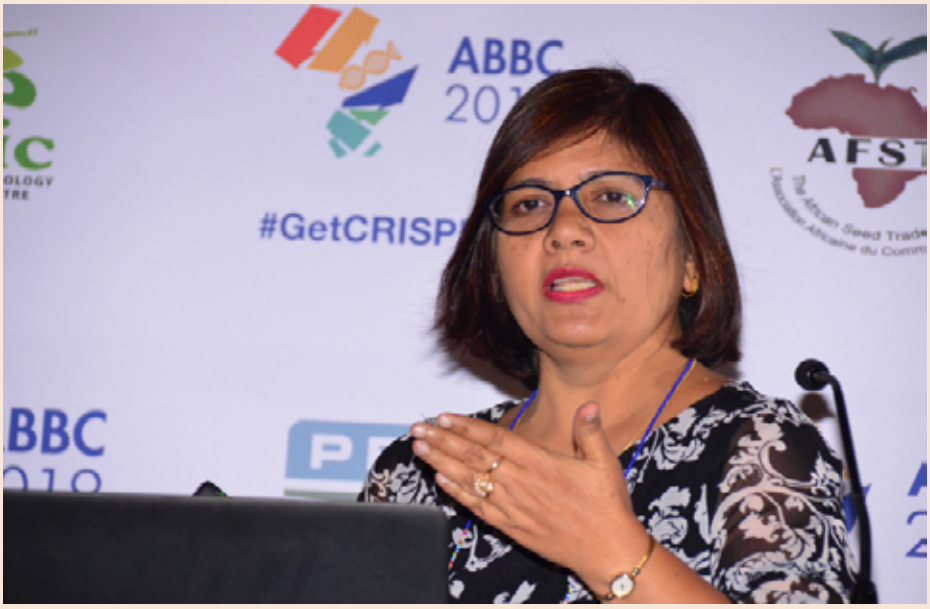


Top: Dr Nteranya Sanginga interacting with Dr Richard Asare and staff members. Bottom: IITA-Accra staff members with Dr Sanginga.

IITA working on Africa's first genome edited banana

The new frontier for agricultural innovation is genome editing and IITA is already leading the way by using the technology to improve several crops. Principal Scientist and Deputy Director of IITA East Africa Hub, Dr Leena Tripathi revealed this during the Third Africa Biennial Biosciences Communication Symposium (ABBC), which took place in Pretoria South Africa, 29-30 August.

Tripathi said, "We are using genome editing to develop disease resistant banana and plantain. Plantain will be resistant to Brown Streak Virus (BSV) and will benefit Nigerian farmers who grow the crop widely." Other crops that are being improved using genome editing are cooking and dessert bananas. Her Kenya-based lab is working on bananas resistant to bacterial wilt and fusarium wilt.



Dr Leena Tripathi giving a presentation at the ABBC meeting.

Tripathi is excited about genome editing just like a number of other research scientists, because it is a more powerful and efficient tool for crop improvement. "Since there is no foreign gene being introduced into the plant, we hope products of genome editing will not be regulated." Asked why she and other researchers are wary of regulation, she said it was a long and expensive process to the disadvantage of Africa's farmers. These farmers continue to lose 50–70% of their crop while legislation drags on and delays access to seeds of improved varieties.

Dr Margaret Karembu, Director, International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) AfriCenter, and co-Convener of the Conference called upon all stakeholders to "rise early and start proactively communicating about genome editing so that it is received better by the public, unlike GMOs that faced a tough time." However, the African Union representative, Prof Gasama Yaye, reiterated the need for fair regulation for genome edited crops. "Regulation does not mean stifling progress. Africa's farmers need seeds that are high yielding, disease resistant, and tolerant to the vagaries of climate change, and genome editing can provide this."