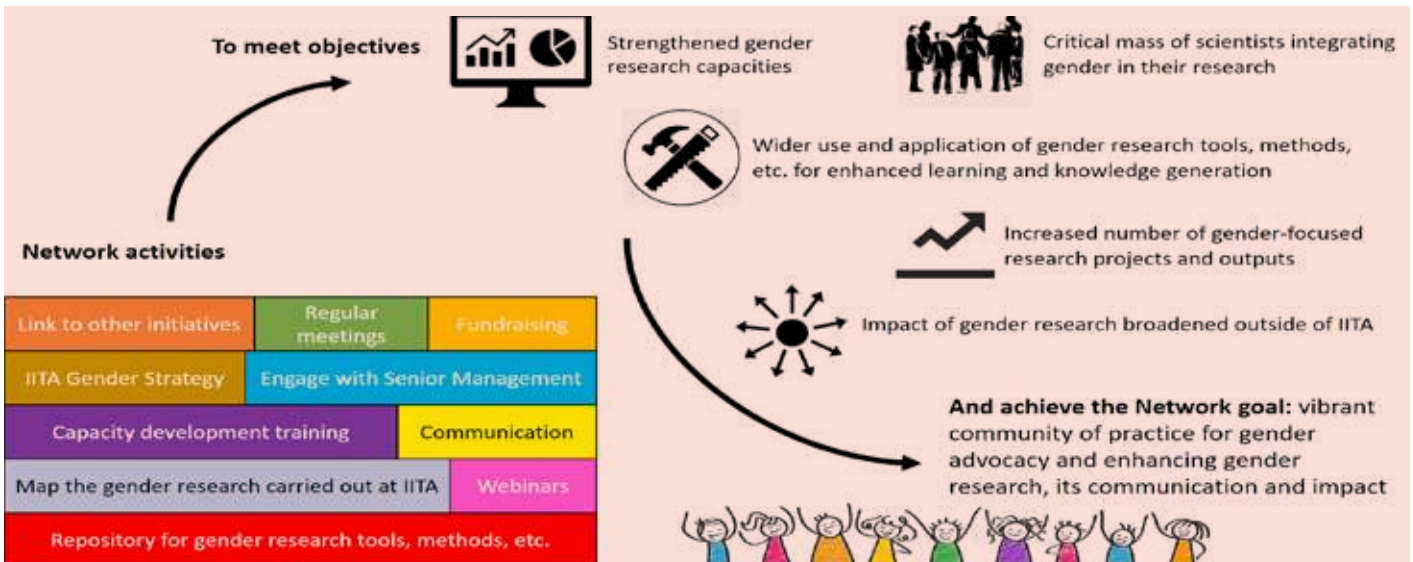


Network makes headway in strengthening gender research at IITA

The gender science network at [CGIAR-IITA](#) is making significant progress in its efforts to enhance gender research at the Institute. The network, which comprises IITA social and biophysical scientists, youth program technical experts, and staff from other units, has finalized its working strategy that articulates how it will operate in 2020 and beyond to help strengthen gender research at IITA.

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The strategy's theory of change showing the different components.

Influential yam producer visits YIFSWA-II for mass propagation of seed yam

The Chief Executive Officer of Napetsa Farms, Joseph Adewale Fosudo, has been growing yam for decades in Epe, Lagos, and in northern Nigeria. The yam producer, considered a top commercial farmer, visited [CGIAR-IITA](#) on 4 August to learn about using single-vine seedlings from high ratio propagation technologies (HRPTs) for seed yam tuber production.



YIFSWA-II Project Leader Norbert Maroya showing the feeding system and the established roots and tubers of yam plants in the aeroponic system.

"I came to IITA because I am particularly interested in using vine seedlings derived from technologies like the aeroponics system (AS) for seed yam tuber production. I supply yam to well-known food outlets in Nigeria and major processors who export frozen yam chips and cubes to the west for consumption by Africans in diaspora. Demand for yam is growing, but the availability of inputs like seed yam is not keeping up with demand. But IITA, like in the past—for many other situations—has a solution. That is why I am here," Fosudo said.

[YIIFSWA-II](#) Project Leader [Norbert Maroya](#) received Fosudo and took him around the campus to showcase HRPTs. They visited the aeroponics and the hydroponics systems (HS), and the single-node vine cuttings nursery to

see how yam seedlings are produced using the novel technologies. Fosudo saw how vines cut from the aeroponics system are propagated in a nursery screenhouse before being transplanted to the field. On the field, he saw AS-derived vine seedlings growing under rainfed conditions thriving in dense populations (up to 100,000 plants/ha).

"This entire exercise of going through the production facilities in screen houses, and on the field, showing how one can generate many nodes in one plant to multiply seed for farmers and direct cropping, was astounding. Also, the density of the plant population in the field is very impressive. And this is why I think your slogan about making people rich quickly (yams for livelihoods) is true because I have seen, practically, that it is possible to

have a few hectares and produce huge amounts," Fosudo said.

"I used to be worried about African agriculture. Researchers do a lot of work, developing technologies and best practices only to keep them on the shelves. Both government and farmers allow research results to remain on the shelves. We need to find a systematic way of relating with research organizations like IITA so that this mission to produce for Africa, Africa feeding Africans, and maintaining strategic food reserves would be a reality," he continued.

Speaking on the yam industry, he said, "Yam is green gold waiting for exploitation. So much can be derived from it if we put resources towards the development of the sector. Look at your improved variety Kpamyo, "the wealth-making yam"; it is already making waves in the market. There are so many varieties that need to be assessed for value addition. The variety that I supply to a well-known food outlet is a water yam that tastes like potato but is filling like yam. Let us make yams do for Africa what potatoes are doing for western countries."

At the end of his visit, Fosudo received 500 single-node vine seedlings for kick-starting his seed production. He indicated that he was going to replicate what was on the field to optimize its use.

Watch [this video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oi5ZQ-6yfCY) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oi5ZQ-6yfCY>) for more info on his field visit.



Top: Napetsa Farms CEO Joseph Adewale Fosudo receiving healthy yam AS vine seedlings.
Bottom: Fosudo in the field observing plants and the trailing practices of YIIFSWA-II.



You are invited!

The Tenth Annual Summit of the African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) will be held virtually on 8–11 September 2020 and will be co-hosted by the Government of Rwanda and the AGRF Partners Group.

Participation is free. Please register ASAP using this link: <https://agrforum.org/summit-2020>. IITA and partners are organizing two partner events on 7 September: the launch of the Excellence in Agronomy 2030 platform, 3-4:45 pm; and Agriculture Technologies for Feeding Cities (TAAT), 5-6:30 pm, Rwanda time (UTC +2).

Network makes headway in strengthening gender research at IITA Continued from page 1

The Gender team envisions having an innovative and diverse network of scientists in IITA to strengthen the quality and visibility of gender research at IITA through dialogue, cooperation, and influencing the delivery agenda of the Institute. Its goal is to be a vibrant community of practice for gender advocacy and enhancing gender research, its communication, and its impact.

The network has five main objectives: (1) To strengthen gender research capacities of network members; (2) develop and share gender research tools, methods, and analyses for wider application in projects and larger research programs and for enhanced learning by network members; (3) mobilize a diverse and larger membership within IITA to create a critical mass of scientists integrating gender in their research, (4) increase the number of gender-focused research projects in and outputs produced by IITA, and, (5) engage outside the network to broaden the impact of gender research, including with national partners.

Linked to these objectives, the network has identified 10 activities starting this year. These include organizing quarterly online and one face-to-face meeting for knowledge sharing and learning; developing a repository to share a wide variety of gender research tools, analysis strategies, key reading materials and publications, webinars, etc.; promoting gender focus and integration in research; creating awareness and understanding of gender research; and conducting gender research capacity development activities.

This strengthened gender research at IITA is expected to contribute to the Institute's vision of transforming Africa's agriculture.

"Gender is very important at IITA because we deal with issues related to improving the livelihoods of the society. We cannot achieve this goal in the presence of inequality and marginalized and vulnerable groups. Gender transformative approaches are needed to evolve towards an egalitarian society. The gender network is the engine that IITA has developed to guide the Institute and its members in that direction. In the last quarter, the network has made tremendous progress by attracting the interest of the IITA community, as shown by the large participation of staff from different disciplines and backgrounds. The new gender expert is the centerpiece contributing to that progress," explained [Victor Manyong](#), IITA Director for the Eastern Africa hub.



A female farmer taking part in a participatory variety evaluation as part the Africa RISING project.

"Our use of a participatory approach when designing the gender science network with IITA staff from different technical backgrounds will help ensure that the network is delivering an important service at IITA and enhancing the overall gender research at the institute," said [Steven Cole](#), IITA Gender Coordinator.

"Being a part of the gender network will improve our scope of work. The Youth in Agribusiness office emphasizes the importance of equal participation and opportunities for all, especially women. Gender-related components need to be part and parcel of every development project and this platform will help us to fine-tune our gender strategy and advocate for active involvement of all stakeholders," expounded [Evelyne Ohanwusi](#), Coordinator, Young Africa Works Project and IITA's Youth in Agribusiness Office.

According to [Bela Teeken](#), IITA Associate Social and Gender Scientist, "The gender network is essential in concretely integrating gender into the biophysical and socioeconomic sciences of IITA because gender aspects are crucial in designing and delivering technologies and institutional innovations in a socially inclusive way. A large part of IITA's target group comprises

smallholder crop producers, processors, and marketers and, especially in Africa, much crop-related work is organized around gender roles."

He adds, "We have just started the network and the interest from people working in various disciplines is very encouraging. The gender network is an important hub for a problem-focused interdisciplinary approach looking at a socially inclusive outcome and impact on improving the living conditions of people and reducing poverty."

The current network builds on past efforts aimed at bringing IITA scientists together as a community of practice for learning and knowledge sharing. In November 2019, the members met to determine how the network could open up to include additional IITA staff members. A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis was carried out to help inform the new direction of the network. IITA staff were then invited to attend a meeting about the network to help chart its vision, goal, objectives, and key activities. After that, the network strategy was developed in early 2020, which guides implementation efforts.

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.gha@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.



Tanzania spotlights its first-ever matooke hybrids at the 2020 national farmers' exhibition "Nane Nane"

The East Africa Highland cooking banana, matooke, is a hugely popular food in Tanzania. With the impending release of the first-ever high-yielding hybrids of matooke on the horizon, researchers took the opportunity to exhibit them at this year's annual agricultural show "Nane Nane" in Tanzania.

The new hybrids created much excitement among the attending farming community, and they look set to score well with farmers who have been helplessly watching as their banana plants are ravaged by pests and diseases, threatening their income and food security.

One such farmer, Anacret Rweyemamu from Katoma village who visited the banana demonstration plot at the Nane Nane grounds in Bukoba, Kagera Region, was excited to hear about the NARITA hybrids. He learned that they were developed from and tasted just as good as their traditional "matooke" varieties such as Mbwazirume and Nshakara and that they are resistant to the deadly nematodes and weevils.

"If what I have heard about the NARITA hybrids is true, then this is very good news for farmers in Kagera Region as, finally, we will have a "Mulokozi" for our traditional "Matooke", Anacret said. "Mulokozi" means savior in the local Haya language spoken in Kagera Region.

"Our plantations have suffered a lot because of nematodes and weevils. We have lost many plants during strong winds, and as a result, our plantations are now dominated by FHIA, and Yangambi Km 5. I, therefore, cannot wait until these new matooke hybrids are officially released," he added as he also requested some of the planting materials of the hybrid to start planting on his farm.

The hybrids were developed jointly by [CGIAR-IITA](#) and Uganda's National Agriculture Research Organisation (NARO), over 18 years. Breeding new bananas is particularly difficult and takes a long time. To reflect the combined involvement of both organizations in this effort, NARO and IITA, they have been named NARITA.

IITA, together with the Tanzania Agriculture Research Institute (TARI), NARO, and Bioversity International, has been evaluating these new hybrids in Tanzania since 2015, to establish which ones are the most suitable for the growing conditions and which are most acceptable to farmers as well as consumers.

The improved matooke varieties most preferred by farmers and consumers were



Mbongo Daud Batson explaining the qualities of the new matooke varieties, called NARITA, during the Nane Nane at Mbeya-Uyole.

exhibited at the annual agricultural shows at Simiyu, Mbeya, Kagera, and Arusha regions, by the TARI banana breeding team between 1 and 10 August 2020.

Under the direction of the National Coordinator for banana research in Tanzania, Dr Mpoki Shimwela, based at TARI-Maruku in Kagera Region, 29 NARITA hybrids were evaluated for yield, resistance to major pests and diseases, and for their taste in Mbeya, Kagera, and Kilimanjaro regions. These are among the most important banana growing and consuming areas in the country.

"From the trials, we have selected 10 varieties that are yielding 30% higher than farmers are currently getting and which have good resistance to major pests and diseases. These have been identified for future release in Tanzania through the Tanzania Official Seed Certification Institute (TOSCI)," Mpoki said while speaking to the media at the national exhibition at Nyakabindi ground in Simiyu Region.

In Tanzania, cooking bananas are essential as a staple food crop, providing carbohydrates for about a third of the population. However, their production is substantially low, at just 10% of their true potential, due to attacks by pests and diseases, drought, and other factors.

The evaluation of the NARITA in Tanzania, and also in Uganda, is supported by the IITA-led Accelerated [Breeding Better Banana](#) project. Together, these two countries account for more than half of the Eastern Africa Highland bananas grown in Africa, valued at around US\$4.3 billion. However, access to improved varieties has, to date, not been possible, as they have not been available. Due to the complicated and lengthy process of breeding bananas, it has taken time to develop and evaluate these varieties. The release of these new high yielding varieties, with good resistance to pests and diseases, therefore, creates a historic milestone for banana research and banana agriculture in the region.

And the good news does not end there. The Accelerated [Breeding Better Banana](#) project is focused on increasing the speed and efficiency of breeding new, better, higher-yielding bananas for the region, to deliver more improved varieties of cooking banana to farmers faster.

Other related stories in the media

<https://allafrica.com/stories/202008100645.html>

<https://www.dailynews.co.tz/news/2020-08-105f311b288473b.aspx>

ICT adoption can increase crop productivity among young farmers in Tanzania!

Studies have shown that the involvement of Africa's youth in rural development and agriculture will not only boost food security on the continent but also strategically provide solutions to the prevailing problem of unemployment plaguing African societies. However, youth participation in these areas in most African countries is very low. Many factors are responsible for this, including the amount of physical exertion, lack of infrastructure, low financial returns, and lack of access to improved seed varieties.

Until recently, many in Africa viewed agriculture as a sector meant for the aged and least educated. This perception increased the apathy of youth to engage professionally in agriculture.

A major factor that can influence the involvement of youth in agriculture by driving participatory communication

is the adoption of information and communication technologies (ICTs). A recent study carried out in Tanzania reveals that one of the problems facing young farmers in the country is the limited access to research-extension processes that can help with productivity.

According to Sylvester Jotta, a researcher under the [Enhancing Capacity to Apply Research Evidence \(CARE\) in Policy for Youth Engagement in Agribusiness and Rural Economic Activities in Africa](#) project, research-extension dissemination with the use of ICTs is key to the delivery of services in rural Tanzania. The study also showed young farmers have limited interaction with important actors, such as agricultural training and research institutes, seed agencies, and financial institutions.

Despite the high rate of economic growth in Tanzania in recent years, according

to the International Labour Organization (ILO), this has not had an encouraging effect on employment opportunities for the growing youth population. With many of the rural youth in Tanzania faced with turning to agriculture as a means of employment and livelihood, ICTs are providing help with crop productivity by expanding communication, cooperation, and ultimately innovation. According to Jotta, ICTs such as mobile phones and computers are driving participatory communication as organizations are using them to deliver services to larger numbers of rural people than they could reach before.

The study, which focused on the adoption of ICTs in crop productivity by young farmers in rural Tanzania, recommends that to enhance crop productivity among young farmers, facilitating interactions among key stakeholders such as farmers, researchers, extension agents, input suppliers, traders, processors, and policymakers should be a priority in government intervention programs and policies.

The results from Jotta's study also indicate that adopters of ICTs had higher crop yields compared to non-adopters. This signifies that promoting crop productivity among young farmers in Tanzania requires access to related information and knowledge, which can be adequately disseminated with ICT facilities like phones and computers.

This research is one of several studies carried out by young Africans under the [IITA](#)-implemented CARE project, which the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) sponsors across 10 countries. CARE is proffering solutions to issues around youth engagement in rural economic activities and addresses the interrelated issues of implementing quality research and disseminating the results to stakeholders, which include policymakers in Africa.



Female youth agripreneurs in the field, gathering data on pearl millet.

Take responsibility! Stop the spread of COVID-19!

Wash your hands regularly with soap and water; practice physical and social distancing; wear face masks; avoid crowds and public places; keep a 2-meter distance from the next person; practice general sanitation and hygiene.