

IITA DG Nteranya Sanginga appointed AFAP Chairman

The African Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership (AFAP) has appointed [IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga](#) as its new chairman following the announced retirement of current chairman Namanga Ngongi. AFAP has been under the leadership of its founding chairman, Ngongi, since its inception in 2012. AFAP provides ingenious solutions to public and private enterprises through investments in agricultural inputs, agribusiness value chains, market-driven business solutions, and innovative outputs.



The retiring Namanga Ngongi is the AFAP founding chairman.



Newly appointed AFAP Chairman, DG Nteranya Sanginga.

Under Ngongi's leadership, AFAP grew into a household brand in sub-Saharan African fertilizer agribusiness, contributing to increased agricultural productivity in the continent.

Dr Sanginga brings over 35 years of experience in international agricultural research and development, research administration and management, and resource mobilization to drive the fulfillment of the AFAP's goals.

Dr Sanginga, in his current capacity as DG of IITA, contributes immensely to the development of entrepreneurial and agribusiness solutions in youth mentorship and capacity building, partnerships for delivery, resource generation and mobilization, and scientific innovations— driving development solutions to agricultural challenges and food insecurity across various regions in sub-Saharan Africa.

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DTCA partners with IITA in promoting agriculture in Africa

[IITA](#) partners with other CGIAR centers, national research centers, private institutions, and governments to promote agricultural activities that will improve livelihoods and create employment opportunities in Africa. IITA initiates partnerships and is also open to suggested partnerships, and establishes formal collaborative agreements where possible.



Ambassador Dagari touring the Genetic Resources Center where seeds are preserved.

IITA welcomed Ambassador Rabiu Dagari, Director General, Directorate of Technical Cooperation in Africa (DTCA), who visited on 15 August. The purpose of his visit was to identify areas where DTCA and IITA can partner. DTCA, an arm of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has similar responsibilities as IITA, focusing on Africa. Hence, the DTCA DG saw the need to partner with IITA to promote agricultural activities in Africa.

In a meeting, IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) welcomed and appreciated the ambassador for his visit. DG Sanginga highlighted IITA's activities and the technologies available at the Institute. He also talked about the contributions of the Nigerian government to IITA, which include the land on which IITA headquarters stands. "We are grateful to the government of Nigeria for allowing this Institution to be based here," he said. In line with the DG's remarks, [Kenton Dashiell](#), Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery, expressed his joy to have the ambassador in the Institute and hoped that IITA and DTCA would establish a solid partnership.

Ambassador Dagari said that agriculture must be put at the center of things for Africa to make meaningful development. This would form the basis for placing industrialization and other strategies for development. "I came to see what IITA has achieved and how we can collaborate to take things further," he said.

After the meeting, Ambassador Dagari was taken on a tour of the Institute's facilities and premises. He visited the Virology and Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory, Genetic Resources Center, Bioscience Laboratory, Semi-Autotropic Hydroponics, Business Incubation Platform, and Youth in Agribusiness Building. He also visited the IITA Lake and the youth tilapia reservoir.



Ambassador Dagari at the youth tilapia reservoir.



Dr Alejandro Ortega-Beltran, Plant Pathologist, explaining the importance of Aflasafe to the Ambassador.

Ambassador Dagari expressed excitement after the tour, stating that it was beyond his expectation, especially the expertise and sophisticated laboratory equipment in the Institute. He added that IITA's approach to agriculture, especially youth engagement, is the right way and indicates a bright future. "I can see that the youth program in IITA is a huge success and the commitment of youth to the program shows that there is hope," he said.

Ambassador Dagari further highlighted areas he identified for collaboration focusing on afforestation, youth entrepreneurship, Aflasafe, and machine fabrication. "DTCA will analyze these areas and look at what we have the capacity for to propose a partnership. We would also work towards having an MOU to define the nature of our cooperation and relationship," he said.

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Dr Ngongi, expressing his pleasure at handing over the leadership of AFAP to Dr Sanginga, said, "I am deeply proud but humbled by what AFAP has become. I am also happy and reassured that I am passing the baton to a professional colleague, Nteranya Sanginga, a man I

have profound regard and respect for. I am confident that the new leadership will steer the organization to greater heights. God bless AFAP."

Dr Sanginga, who received the honor of serving as Chairman of the AFAP

Board of Trustees, acknowledged the huge role open for him to fill. He promised to do his best to "advance the course and mandate of AFAP of bringing access and availability of yield-enhancing production inputs to smallholder farmers."

Youth group seeks collaboration on agricultural sustainability

On 24 September, the Releaf Group—a team of youth—visited [IITA](#) headquarters. Releaf is led by Ikenna Nzewi, operating the technology value chains of crops, including cassava, oil palm, soybean, maize, and cashew. The visit was to request support and explore possible areas of partnership with the Institute for agricultural sustainability on oil palm production.

The organization started in 2017 as an agricultural technology company that develops proprietary hardware and software solutions to drive the industrialization of food processing in Africa, starting with Nigeria's \$3 billion vegetable oil market.

Their proprietary hardware (Kraken) increases the availability and quality of raw materials for food factories, while the sourcing software connects them directly to 2,000 plus smallholder farmers. Releaf also uses digital technologies, including USSD and open banking, to work seamlessly with its network of smallholder farmers, who have supplied over 10 million kilograms of quality palm kernel nuts to food factories.

The group was received by IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#), BASICS II Project Manager [Prof. Lateef Sanni](#), CEO of IITA BIP [Frederick Schreurs](#), IITA Post-Harvest Engineer Engr. Diallo Thierno, and members of IITA Youth in Agribusiness (IYA). In the opening meeting, Sanginga recalled his first encounter with the youth in 2015 and the remarkable agricultural advancement they have made in a short while. He was impressed that they made good use of the mentorship they had received from IITA.

Schreurs gave an overview of oil palm plantation management, advised on necessary management practices and



Engr Thierno explains the importance of mechanization in harvesting, production, and processing.



Prof. Sanni (right) speaking with the Releaf team, led by Ikenna Nzewi (left).



Releaf Group with the IITA team members.

using the right management practices to ensure proper fertilization. “We would give support in consultancy of soil fertility analysis, facilities, oil palm management, and leaf analysis for good productivity,” he said.

Furthermore, he explained that insect waste could be recycled into organic waste, which will serve as a medium to grow oil palm or a source of protein and feed for livestock.

The Releaf Group Co-Founder, Nzewi, gave an update on the group's activities, including trading crops from farmers to companies to prevent postharvest loss. He explained their expectations from the partnership with IITA: to learn how to increase yield, find out the best intercropping mechanism for oil palm plantation, and linkage to fabrication and mechanization experts.

Thierno and Peter Iluebey, International Trials Manager, IITA Cassava Processing, Utilization, and Mechanization Unit, spoke about machines and their importance in harvesting, production, and processing. Thierno added that the first step is to see

the machines and how they operate to get more fabricators. They showed them some of the facilities and equipment used in IITA.

Responding to the questions about crops that can complement oil palm production, Prof. Sanni listed crops such as soybean, cassava, and maize. Nzewi added that the value chains attached to soybean would lead to greater productivity.

It was a pleasant reunion between Releaf and the IITA youth group. Releaf shared their experience so far and learned about new approaches to getting more youth involved in agribusiness, including the Start Them Early Program (STEP) strategy.

Discussing the next steps, Nzewi suggested that West African Training Investment Company (WATIC) invest in research and development in the aquaculture value chain. “If we can find a way to create a platform to make this discussion move forward, it would be a great advantage for everyone,” he said.

Root and tuber society strategize on how to fight hunger and poverty in Africa

The International Society for Tropical Root Crops (ISTRC) held the 14th edition of its symposium on 20-24 September. Zambia was the host country. The virtual symposium assembled professionals of root and tuber crops to reflect on the progress made over the years in advancing root and tuber crops, despite challenges faced and plan on jointly fighting hunger and poverty. [IITA](#) Digital Extension & Advisory Services Specialist [Godwin Atser](#) and Mark Muchinga anchored the event.

[Richardson Okechukwu](#), ISTRC-AB President and Cassava Commodity Specialist at IITA, gave the welcome address. He recognized the presence of representatives from the various institutes, students, researchers, and farmers working on root and tuber crops. Okechukwu stated that the theme “Exploring climate-smart nutritious and healthy root and tuber crops for African business solutions” was chosen because of the challenges of climate change and changes in pest and disease dynamics. Hence, the need to present and discuss new ideas to proffer solutions to these challenges and plan for the future.

Director of the Zambia Agricultural Institute, Mr Mukuka Ivor, represented the Minister of Agriculture, Hon Reuben Muntoro and officially opened the conference. He expressed his joy that the theme of the symposium is in line with the Zambian government’s aspirations towards enhanced food

and nutrition security and increased income for farmers, “hence this is highly supported,” he said.

Dr Martin Chiona, Chairperson of the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) in Zambia, also gave his address. He mentioned that the value of tropical root and tuber crops in diets and their contributions to uplifting the standard of living of the African people is underestimated. Hence, the LOC hopes that the symposium will change the African people’s perception of these crops and rekindle the passion for creating change in various economies using the root and tuber crops. “Thanks to ISTRC and IITA for selecting Zambia to host this meeting,” he said.

Mr Vincent Akamandisa, a representative of root and tuber farmers from Zambia, in his goodwill message, communicated his hope that the great innovative research and development papers presented at the symposium would find their way to the root and tuber farmers in remote areas so that they could adopt the improved technologies for enhanced productivity. “This will help farmers to supply food to their households and sell their crops to the market,” he said. Representatives of CIP and the National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI) also gave their goodwill messages.

[Prof. Lateef Sanni](#), President of ISTRC global and BASICS II Project Manager at IITA, explained that the discussion is focused on the root and tuber crops as a game-changer because of the ways climate change and variability have affected many farms globally. “Let us all work together to achieve sustainable development in the world,” he said.

Representing IITA Director General [Dr Nteranya Sanginga](#), [Michael Abberton](#), Director of IITA West Africa Hub, shared how IITA and ISTRC have been partners for years. IITA has played a major role in root and tuber research in its 54 years of existence. “IITA is leading several new initiatives and we are assuring that there will be a strong presence of root and tuber crops within the work in One CGIAR in Africa,” he said.



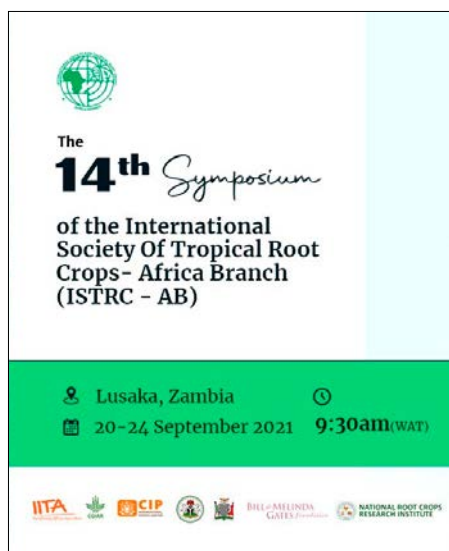
IITA West Africa Hub Director Michael Abberton representing the IITA Director General



ISTRC-AB President and IITA Cassava Commodity Specialist, Richardson Okechukwu, welcoming participants.

[Robert Asiedu](#), Emeritus Director of IITA-West Africa, represented Dr Graham Thiele and Michael Friedmann in presenting the keynote speech. He highlighted areas where the root and tubers program is making an impact, including climate adaptation; gender equality, youth and social inclusion; poverty reduction, livelihood, and job creation; and nutrition, health, and food security. Asiedu also talked about the toolbox known as the RTB golden egg, which was created for the root and tuber seed system. “It houses 11 tools and a glossary and was launched recently,” he said.

Ruth Kambalakoko, a LOC Zambia member, gave the vote of thanks. She summarized the discussion, highlighting the value of roots and tubers to the daily diet and the economic impact on farmers, especially having disposable income. Exhibitions, paper presentations, poster sessions and award presentations wrapped up the event.



Youth-in-agribusiness initiatives key to solving youth unemployment

Despite the introduction of several intervention programs to reduce or eradicate youth unemployment, creating jobs to reduce unemployment has been a major and trending issue across most developing and less developed countries in the world.

However, the increasing unemployment rate in Nigeria among the youth within the age bracket of 25–35 remains a challenge to social and economic stability. This has been attributed to insufficient basic and social infrastructure, among other factors. For example, the erratic power supply affects the economy, especially the manufacturing and agriculture sectors.

With about 1.6 million youth graduating annually from tertiary institutions in Nigeria, the labor supply outgrows the demand, and there are limited job opportunities for the growing workforce. While agriculture can solve the unemployment challenge, it can also create jobs for other youth. However, a minority of youth have entrepreneurial skills in agribusiness or other businesses as they are primarily dependent on white-collar jobs.

There have been various intervention initiatives in Nigeria to address youth unemployment, such as Youth Empowerment Agricultural Program (YEAP), the FADAMA youth program, and Ogun Women and Youth Empowerment Scheme (OGW-YES).

Findings of a study conducted by Olalekan Bello under the IFAD-funded [IITA-CARE](#) project suggest that participation in Youth-In-Agribusiness (YIA) programs could increase youth employment opportunities, especially in entrepreneurship.



IITA-CARE researcher, Bello, with a respondent during field survey in Nigeria.

Bello also revealed that some differences among the participants and non-participants of YIA programs include more productive assets and monthly income for participants than non-participants. The factors influencing participation in these programs include education, training, farming experience, membership in a youth organization, productive assets, access to credit and extension services.

The study shows that participants of YIA programs are more likely to be gainfully employed in several agribusiness enterprises ranging from maize production to catfish farming.

Bello, who carried out the study on two YIA programs (FADAMA and OGW-YES) in two states in Nigeria, Ondo and Ogun, said, “these programs involved the training and setting up of businesses for youths in different fields of agriculture such as crop and animal production.”

He recommends vocational and capacity building training to be considered by stakeholders, donors, government or non-governmental organizations, as it will help improve the skills of youths in agribusiness.

“There is also a need for policy directed towards strengthening both private and governmental institutions in providing credits to empower youths,” he added.

With IFAD funding research by young scientists across 10 countries in Africa, under the IITA-CARE project, the study carried out by Bello explores the impact of youth-in-agribusiness programs on creating gainful employment in Nigeria. According to Bello, the extension service system ought to be upgraded to one which can operate not only physically but through media such as the internet, radio, and television. Through this media, programs on prospects in agriculture could also increase awareness and participation in YIA programs, eventually creating gainful employment for youth.

Take responsibility! Stop the spread of COVID-19!

Always clean your hands; practice physical and social distancing; wear face masks properly; avoid crowds and public places; keep a 2-meter distance from the next person; and practice general sanitation and hygiene.

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.

