

Nigerian government grants internet and community radio licenses to IITA

The Federal Government of Nigeria has approved two radio licenses for IITA—an Internet radio license and a community radio broadcast license for Radio IITA in the past three months.

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) disclosed the approval of the community radio license in a press release from the NBC Director-General Balarabe Shehu Ilelah. Radio IITA received the license to operate at a License Accreditation Ceremony held in the NBC Board Room in Abuja on 4 October.



Jubilant IITA delegation with the NBC Director-General; L-R: Godwin Atser, Beatrice Aighewi, NBC DG Balarabe Shehu Ilelah, Ezinne Ibe, Temgu Abur.

IITA was among several operators that received 159 radio and television licenses as approved by President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria. The license allows Radio IITA to broadcast

locally from Ibadan, up to 2.5-kilowatt coverage.

Speaking at the accreditation ceremony, the NBC DG Ilelah congratulated all

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Tackling the Fall Armyworm in Northern Nigeria

Scientists from the IITA Fall Armyworm (FAW) task force—Host Plant Resistance Entomologist [Abou Togola](#), TAAT FAW compact Leader [Peter Chinwada](#), and IITA Kano Station Representative [Alpha Kamara](#)—have piloted an ambitious training program on FAW management in Kano and Kaduna states in Northern Nigeria. They carried this out under a GIZ-IITA project titled “Support the development of the maize, cassava and yam value chains in Kaduna, Kano, Ogun, and Oyo states in Nigeria”.

The program aimed to train 200 or more trainers from the agricultural



Dr Abou Togola building extension agents' capacity on FAW IPM.

extension agents (EAs) in the two states. The training covered topics such as FAW identification tips, FAW biology and ecology, field scouting practices and deciding the action threshold, components of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), treatment windows for proper chemical application, recommendations for avoiding insecticide resistance in the pest, calibration of sprayers, and personal protective measures.

Theoretical and practical sessions were held in March for Kaduna EAs and in April 2021 for Kano EAs. The training participants were split into batches of 40 to 45 people per session because of COVID-19 safety regulations.

In the end, a total of 300 EAs attended the training, with each EA tasked to transfer the knowledge to at least 20 farmers through a step-down training. Each farmer was encouraged to share the knowledge with their neighbor or a friend.

Two WhatsApp groups (one for each state) were created to connect the stakeholders (scientists, EAs, and farmers). Through this platform, all the beneficiaries highlighted the success of the training and recognized the benefits they gained.



Digital Extension and Advisory Services Specialist Godwin Atser highlighting the purpose of Radio IITA.

Moreover, the WhatsApp groups have served as a discussion forum where participants shared their impressions and experiences. More importantly, the forum provided a medium for asking questions that were addressed promptly by the IITA expert trainer. The training is expected to significantly impact maize production in Kano and Kaduna states this season.

“According to farmers, the impact on this year’s maize production is incredible compared to the previous year,” said Togola.

This innovative training approach will be reproduced in other parts of Nigeria and other countries to increase the resilience of smallholder farmers against the invasive fall armyworm *Spodoptera frugiperda*.



Dr Togola training extension agents on practical FAW field scouting in IITA_GIZ FAW IPM demo plot.

recipients of the licenses, saying this conveyed the trust reposed on all the licensees to “promote unity in a diverse nation, create jobs, and abide by the NBC code of conduct.” He noted that these licenses were approved from about 300 applications submitted to the Ministry of Information. Some applications were rejected outrightly, with the approval for several others still pending.

Representing the IITA Radio Committee, and Chair [Alfred Dixon](#), IITA Digital Extension and Advisory Services Specialist [Godwin Atser](#) thanked the President for another opportunity to contribute to creating “the prosperous Nigeria of our dreams”. He said the Institute hoped to use the Radio IITA platform to disseminate the research products from institutes in Nigeria.

“For IITA, we know that one of the things confronting Nigeria and Africa as a whole is the issue of food security. That is the reason why we felt that we should have a radio station that we will dedicate to agriculture; that will give farmers the information, the tools, the power to improve their productivity, increase their incomes, and create job opportunities,” said Atser.

Other members of the IITA delegation at the accreditation ceremony were the IITA Abuja Station Head [Beatrice Aighewi](#), Cassava Projects Administrator Ezinne Ibe, and Marketing and Visitors Services Officer Terngu Abur.

Meanwhile, the internet radio broadcast license, approved on 6 July, will ensure that IITA’s objective to provide subsistence farmers with information



Participants at the accreditation ceremony.



Digital Extension and Advisory Services Specialist Godwin Atser highlighting the purpose of Radio IITA.

on good agricultural practices and farmers’ productivity is strengthened the best tools to increase smallholder using digital means.

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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-Tanzania hosts Member of Parliament

A Special Seats Member of Parliament, Hon. Neema Lungangira, visited [IITA](#) at its Eastern Africa regional headquarters in Dar es salaam, Tanzania, on 26 September, at the invitation of [Leena Tripathi](#), the Eastern Africa Hub Director.

The Honorable MP was received by Tripathi and senior members of IITA staff and Amos Omere, the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) representative for Eastern and Southern Africa housed at IITA-Tanzania.

The team held a brief meeting to identify mutual areas of interest for collaboration. These included addressing food safety, malnutrition, and stunting in the country—major areas of concern for the MP.

"I fail to understand how Tanzania, which is food self-sufficient, also has very high levels of malnutrition and stunting in children. This means while we are food secure, we are definitely not nutrition secure. My concern then is how to promote nutrition-sensitive agriculture," Hon. Lugangira said.

Lungangira said she is addressing this challenge through her organization Agri Thamani Foundation, which she founded two years ago. Hon. Mzingo Pinda, Tanzania's former Prime Minister, chairs the Foundation.

Lungangira also chairs the parliamentary caucus on food safety that she founded in this parliamentary session to champion issues around food safety. She is also a national champion for food systems.

The IITA team highlighted the Institute's effort to tackle food safety and nutrition through the breeding of biofortified crops, promoting legumes, introducing new nutritious recipes, and addressing aflatoxin contamination.

Amos also shared ILRI's research to increase milk production as a sure way to address malnutrition in the country.

The MP was impressed with the range of research going on at IITA and requested support in building the



Hon Neema Lugangira (in white) with IITA and ILRI staff.

capacity of the parliamentary caucus on food safety.

"IITA has many years of working experience on food security and food safety, and building capacity is a key aspect of our work. Therefore, we look forward to working together to build the capacity of the caucus, and we welcome them to our offices here in Dar es Salaam," Tripathi said.

Tripathi also thanked the MP for creating time even on a Sunday to visit the Institute and said the discussions would continue to cement the collaboration between the MP,

Agri-Thamani Foundation, and the parliamentary caucus on food safety.

Lungangira toured the research facilities at the hub, including the molecular and plant pathology labs, where research on cassava virus disease and aflatoxin is ongoing. In the food science lab, she was introduced to some of IITA's work on postharvest and nutrition through the [Africa RISING](#) project in the soil lab, and the Afya soil kits that the labs produce to make soil testing affordable.

The visit is part of efforts by the hub director to increase the visibility of the institution in the region to partners.



Rudolph Shirima (second from right) explaining IITA's research on cassava virus diseases to Hon Neema Lungangira (right) on her tour of the molecular lab.

IITA Forest Center biodiversity watch: **The African House Snake**

One of the vast benefits of the [IITA](#) forest reserve is the diversity of creatures the forest supports and protects from poaching and extinction. The [IITA Forest Center](#) carries out biodiversity monitoring, tree propagation, and other environmental protection activities. The Forest Center staff observe and record plant phenology and animals during occasional walks and regular scientific data collection.

During one of the recent biodiversity conservation walks, Field Supervisor Ademola Ajayi spotted an African House Snake (*Boaedon fuliginosus*). This snake is non-venomous and harmless to humans. It has aglyphus teeth—simple round, uniform teeth that are solid and have no grooves or specialized venom-injecting fangs.

The African House Snake is widely distributed across sub-Saharan

Africa, exploiting different habitats, including gardens, forests, scrubland, woodland, savanna, and montane regions. The snake is widely kept and bred as a pet by reptile and amphibian lovers because of its small size, placid demeanor, and preference for rodents, small lizards, and birds. The African House Snake is sexually dimorphic, meaning males and females can be distinctly differentiated.

Snake bites are well-known occupational hazards among farmers, field workers, and home gardeners. While there are about 3,000 snake species worldwide, only 15% are considered dangerous to humans. Most snakes only try to bite when they are cornered or frightened. They are generally more scared of humans than humans are of them.

While the African House Snake is harmless, Ajayi promotes general

safety guidelines to protect oneself from snake bites. He says, “When walking along bush paths, tap ahead with a walking stick to scare them off. And wear long trousers and boots.”

In the event of unforeseen snake bites, he urges, “Do not cut the bitten area or try to suck the venom out of the wound.” He advises against using a tourniquet or trying to catch the snake. “Calm the patient down and ask them not to move. Then use a pressure bandage or cloth to apply pressure without stopping the blood supply to the limb,” he continues.

“Call for an ambulance, record the time of the bite and when the bandage was applied. Stay with the victim to ensure blood keeps circulating in the victim until the ambulance arrives,” he concludes.



An African House Snake sighted in the IITA Forest Reserve, Ibadan. Photo: A. Ajayi