

C. Woermann Nigeria and IITA-BIP collaborate to launch a showroom of yield-improving agricultural tools

On 22 October, C. Woermann Nigeria and STIHL Company in Germany partnered with IITA's [Business Incubation Platform \(BIP\)](#) and Agribusiness Mechanization Unit to launch a showroom of their agricultural tools at [IITA](#). The event showcased agricultural tools such as the mist blower, earth auger, tiller, pole pruner, chainsaw, etc., to improve agricultural management practices and productivity of the smallholder farmers. Training Manager Bolanle Olorode moderated the session.

Representing IITA-BIP CEO Frederick Schreurs, Victoria Ayeni spoke about how IITA-BIP has been promoting the STIHL machines through IITA's Agribusiness Mechanization Unit. She said African farmers have found the tools helpful in enabling them to multi-task on their farms with ease, higher productivity, and efficiency. "We have also assisted in facilitating the sale of these tools to farmers and IITA projects through the IITA Post-Harvest Unit," she said.

The Head of C. Woermann Nigeria Machinery Department, Olubunmi Cole, gave an overview of STIHL and products, appreciating their partners at the same time. He described the agricultural tools and their uses, stating that the tools would lead to more yield for the farmers.

In an interview, Ayeni said the partners would sensitize farmers on the benefits of using the tools, their operation, affordability, and ease of use to enhance smallholder farmers' productivity.

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Mr Olubunmi Cole giving a description and uses of the agricultural tools.

International, multi-stakeholder alliance continue to tackle banana bunchy top disease in Africa

Up to 16 African countries have now experienced the banana bunchy top disease (BBTD), caused by the banana bunchy top virus (BBTV), which threatens the livelihoods of 70 million vulnerable banana farmers. The virus is also endangering the diversity of banana varieties grown by these farmers. The [CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas \(RTB\)](#) is combating the virus through the [Alliance for Banana Bunchy Top Disease Control in Africa](#).

The BBTD Alliance convened international, multi-stakeholder teams fostering cutting-edge research for development (R4D) to establish practical solutions so farmers can once again produce bananas for food and income. The Alliance has collaborated with national programs, building their capacity to detect, surveil, and control BBTD.

This disease stunts the plant, stopping fruit production, sometimes causing total crop loss in a single season. Farmers are advised to eliminate infected banana mats and replace them with healthy suckers. However, smallholders hesitate to destroy large parts of their banana gardens, especially if some of their plants still bear bunches.

BBTD increases the demand for clean planting material but makes it more challenging to find the seed of local landraces, threatening the [diversity of well-adapted landraces](#). Farmers need to act collectively to prevent the disease from spreading to their community or reinfesting after replanting.

Since the disease was first reported in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the 1960s, the virus has invaded several countries across sub-Saharan Africa, spreading through planting material and an insect vector—the banana aphid.

Because BBTD can easily cross borders, management requires international cooperation. In 2011, RTB set up the BBTD Alliance, coordinated by [IITA](#), the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, CIRAD, and national research partners in Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, DRC, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, and Zambia. Other partners include the FAO, the Inter-African Phytosanitary Council (IAPSC), and research partners from Australia (University of Queensland), Asia, Europe, India, Kenya, UK (University of Cambridge), and the USA.

The BBTD Alliance develops new knowledge and management technologies, facilitates training and information exchange, and supports national partners and farmer organizations. Seed entrepreneurs, extension agents, farmers, and plant health inspectors are learning to diagnose the disease in the field, identify rogue infected plants, and



Top: Fresh banana plants exhibiting subtle Bunchy top symptoms. (Photo: L. Kumar/IITA).

Bottom: Getting ready for surveillance and eradication of BBTV-infected banana plants. (Photo: L. Kumar/IITA).

produce clean planting material. In 2020, RTB developed an online training course on disease recognition and eradication.

Trials conducted in Benin, Burundi, and Malawi have effectively maintained BBTD levels below 1%, supporting the production of low-risk seed for expansion. Farmers learned to multiply clean seed and were linked to tissue culture and other sources of healthy planting material.

Early detection of BBTD and the virus's eradication in Togo is the first case for halting the spread of an invasive virus in sub-Saharan Africa. Demonstrations and hands-on training helped Togolese partners eliminate the disease. Farmers, extension workers, policymakers, and

donors also saw how BBTD was managed in Benin, Cameroon, Malawi, and Nigeria.

BBTD Alliance studies also examined gendered access to information and resources in Benin, Cameroon, and Nigeria. In [Cameroon](#), men had more influence in decision-making over farm resources and information services, even when women were more involved in actual seed and site selection. Men also had greater access to clean seed than women. "Getting healthy planting material is crucial for managing bunchy top, and if women cannot access clean seed, they are at a disadvantage. Projects across Africa will have to ensure that women have equal access to healthy planting material," said [Lava Kumar](#), Virologist and Head of IITA's Germplasm Health Unit.

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.

Also, the tools would be extended to IITA hubs and projects.

Speaking to the media, STIHL Marketing Manager Onome Ayide said, “The partnership was done with IITA to get closer to the farmers to facilitate access to modern agricultural tools.”

STIHL representative Victor Aliyu assured the launch attendees of the durability and effectiveness of the tools. He said through IITA, “we will find a way to harmonize and make these tools available to young farmers.”

Some attendees gave testimonies on the efficiency and effectiveness of the tools used in their farms.



The showroom of agricultural tools at IITA.

IITA Forest Center biodiversity watch: African Black Walnut

The [IITA](#) Ibadan campus is a globally acclaimed biodiversity conservation area and is home to various wildlife. About five years ago, the [IITA Forest Center](#) established the Tree Heritage Park (THP) within the campus as an arboretum to conserve threatened tree species.

With sponsorship from the Mohammed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund and the A.G. Leventis Foundation, the THP successfully planted the first set of threatened tree species for conservation. During a June 2016 Tree Conservation Workshop, participants interested in tree conservation and forests planted seedlings of important indigenous tree species, including the African Black Walnut (*Mansonia altissima*).

The African Black Walnut seedlings (about 0.3 m tall) were sourced locally and donated by the IITA Forest Center Field Supervisor, Olukunle Olasupo. The workshop attendees also brought seedlings sourced from universities and forest institutes in southwest Nigeria to be planted for conservation. Seedlings were of Sapele *Entandrophragma cylindricum*, Dry Zone Mahogany *Khaya senegalensis*, White Mahogany *Khaya anthotheca*, and Black Afara *Terminalia ivorensis*.



First fruiting of planted African Black Walnuts.

The African Black Walnut was propagated from seeds sourced from the Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria but were originally from the Queens Forest Reserve in Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria. Nine plants of the 12 seedlings planted on plot 16A in the THP have survived. The surviving trees are now producing their first fruits.

The successful conservation of the African Black Walnut provides seeds for future propagation and integration

in agroforestry and other reforestation practices across the African continent. The African Black Walnut is a rich source of brown wood; it is resistant to termites, insects, and decay and is suitable for outdoor use due to its good weathering properties. It is also useful for veneer, furniture making, and boat building.

Today, the THP conserves about 50 threatened tree species making it a saving “ark” for plant species on the brink of extinction.

ENABLE-TAAT facilitating youth access to credit through partnerships

Budding youth-led enterprises often find it challenging to raise capital. In many cases, such enterprises begin with personal savings or financial support from families and acquaintances, which may not sufficiently cater to the business plan. In other cases, the youth may form a cluster and combine their financial strengths to build the enterprise.

To bridge this gap, the youth compact of [Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation \(TAAT\)](#), ENABLE-TAAT, has established a relationship with Equity Bank to support new and growing enterprises of beneficiary youth in the entire East

Africa region. ENABLE-TAAT is one of the 15 compacts of the African Development Bank (AfDB)-funded TAAT.

In Uganda, about 200 trained youth are benefiting from ENABLE-TAAT's partnership with Equity Bank by receiving loan packages to start or expand their businesses. This is like a dream come true for them because their agribusiness career can now materialize. The team in Uganda is working to secure partnerships with other banks and developmental organizations that have special offers for agribusiness development for youth.

This momentum is being sustained in Kenya and Tanzania, where Equity Bank has agreed to fund trained youth after receiving and reviewing their business plans. While the funding process is ongoing, ENABLE-TAAT continues to provide backstopping to the youth for effective use of funds.

According to ENABLE-TAAT Compact Leader Noel Mulinganya, "We are establishing a structure by which youth can have sure access to capital immediately after training, thereby increasing the number of youth-led enterprises in Africa with a high success rate."



Beneficiaries of Equity Bank loan packages in Uganda.

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.

