

## IITA-supported project reduces COVID-19 impact on smallholder farmers in Tanzania

IITA, in collaboration with the Alliance Bioversity International – CIAT, launched a project in partnership with Tanzania's Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The project aims to restore and increase the productivity and profitability of key food and oilseed crops and enhance market access for rural women and young farmers in Tanzania to address the negative impact of COVID-19 and enhance resilience. The launch was held on 14 April at Rafiki Hotel, Dodoma, Tanzania.



Guest of Honor, Mr Eleuter Kihwele speaking at the project launch. Photo: H.Rashid/IITA

The two-year project will benefit at least 20,000 smallholder farmers (women and youth) by strengthening the value chains of cassava, sunflower, and beans in five regions: Dodoma, Geita, Manyara, Morogoro, and Mwanza. [to page 3](#)

## ATA-DRC commences with huge anticipation

The Democratic Republic of Congo Minister of Agriculture, His Excellency Désiré M'zinga Birihanze, has announced the commencement of the eagerly anticipated Agenda for the Transformation of Agriculture in the Democratic Republic of Congo (ATA-DRC) Program. He disclosed this while speaking with national and international media at a press conference co-organized with the ATA-DRC implementing partner, IITA. HE Birihanze highlighted the actions, which will be carried out within the framework of this initiative.



Addressing the media, (L-R) ATA-DRC Deputy Coordinator Mignouna Jacob, IITA Central Africa Hub Deputy Director Zoumana Bamba, and DRC Minister of Agriculture His Excellency Désiré M'zinga Birihanze.

IITA Deputy Director, Central Africa Hub [Zoumana Bamba](#) explained the role of the Institute in the first phase of the program (2022–2023) to the journalists. ATA-DRC is structured around priority areas to enable immediate impact. This includes the revival of the cassava, corn, rice, soybean, and bean seed sectors and capacity building for agricultural authorities set up by the Agricultural Voluntary Program (PVA) under the coordination of MINAGRI managed by the company (Bio Agronomic Business) (BAB). This capacity building aims to improve the production of seeds and high-quality cassava flour (HQCF).

The Minister said, “We chose IITA because we want to get the results, and we rely on their expertise.” Bamba also highlighted different projects implemented by IITA in DRC with the support of national partners and donors like USAID, IFAD, World Bank, African Development Bank, and UNWOMEN.

IITA projects cover several activities, including seed production (like SISCA),

high-quality cassava flour and fermented flour promotion, management of cassava diseases like CBSD, and youth and women empowerment such as PEJAB, UNWOMEN technical assistance, and the National Agriculture Development Program of

World Bank. The ATA-DRC program could capitalize on these efforts, leading to the effective transformation of the sector because of the availability of quality agricultural products and the creation of wealth and jobs.  
*Contributed Michele Kimpwene*



*Bamba highlighting IITA activities in the region.*

## Making a millionaire out of a local farmer

Forty-five-year-old Rebecca Ezekiel is a farmer in the Song Local Government Area (LGA) of Adamawa State in North-East Nigeria. A wife of a farmer and mother of 10, Rebecca grows rice, soybean, maize, and groundnut, but she is not a mere farmer.

Having been trained in good agricultural practices (GAP) by the USAID-funded Feed-the-Future Nigeria Integrated Agriculture Activity (IAA), Rebecca put the training to good use in cultivating these crops. She paid particular attention to all GAP conventions, including using IAA's improved seed varieties, correct fertilizer application, and spacing—a technique she was unfamiliar with.

“I have a big portion of land. I harvested so little whenever I planted, and I kept wondering what was wrong. IAA taught me how effective spacing would improve my yield. I was in the dark like many others, but IAA showed us the light. I tried all they taught us and was so surprised by how many bags I made,” Rebecca narrated.

Rebecca harvested about 80 bags of rice, 20 bags of soybean, and five bags of groundnut. The total sale from the harvest amounted to about NGN2 million (US\$4,800), with which Rebecca was able to purchase a piece of land and build a house, one with a spacious compound just like she had always wanted. She has also been able to pay her children's school fees, especially those in higher institutions.

The [IITA](#)-implemented IAA continues to inspire economic recovery in

North-East Nigeria following the devastation caused by the ongoing insurgency in the region. The Activity supports vulnerable populations in 12 LGAs of Adamawa and Borno states to re-engage in basic farming activities. IAA also aims to advance the objectives of inclusive and sustainable agriculture-led economic growth, strengthened resilience among people and systems, and a well-nourished population, especially among women and children.

*Contributed by Joke Fayemi*



*Rebecca posing beside her manure processing tank.*

In his opening remarks, the IITA Eastern Africa Director representative, [Frederick Baijukya](#), noted that the project would empower farmers by giving them quality seed to enhance crop production and strengthen market opportunities. Engaging youth in agriculture and processing and linking them to the market, government, and the private sector, is one of the project's priorities.

"We all know that COVID-19 has negatively impacted the agriculture sector, destroying the entire global supply chain of inputs like fertilizer, chemicals, and seed. They became less available and were sold at a higher price to farmers. For such reasons, this project was designed to help farmers increase income to tackle COVID-19 impacts. IITA commits to ensuring that this project succeeds," said Baijukya.

Director of Planning and Budget representing the Secretary-General of

the Prime Minister's Office, Mr Eleuter Kihwele, admitted that the project would serve as a catalyst for increased productivity revitalizing Tanzania's industrial sector because quality seed production remains low and does not meet current market demand.

"I'm grateful for these efforts, but also we need to keep researching to ensure that farmers have access to high-quality seed through this synergy. I hope that the project's execution will greatly help increase food security, strengthen nutrition, and grow the agriculture and fisheries sectors," Eleuter added.

CIAT Country Coordinator representative, Adeguna Kessy, thanked IFAD for the funds and stressed the importance of selected crops in domestic and external trade development, particularly employment opportunities. He said, "I anticipate that enormous outcomes will be achieved after project implementation, resulting

in a stable society with good health and sufficient revenue."

Abdallah Ali (33), a sunflower oil processor from the Manyara region, noted that this project would open doors for cooperative associations since it has brought new technology in sunflower milling to assist in commercializing farmers' products.

To implement the project, IITA will lead in close collaboration with the Alliance Bioversity International-CIAT. Tanzanians will lead implementation, working closely with IFAD country representation and supported by teams from IITA and CIAT.

The launched project contributes to two out of four major impact areas highlighted in the Ministry of Agriculture COVID-19 Response Plan for Agriculture and Food Security (CORPAF). *Contributed by Glorian Ndibalema*



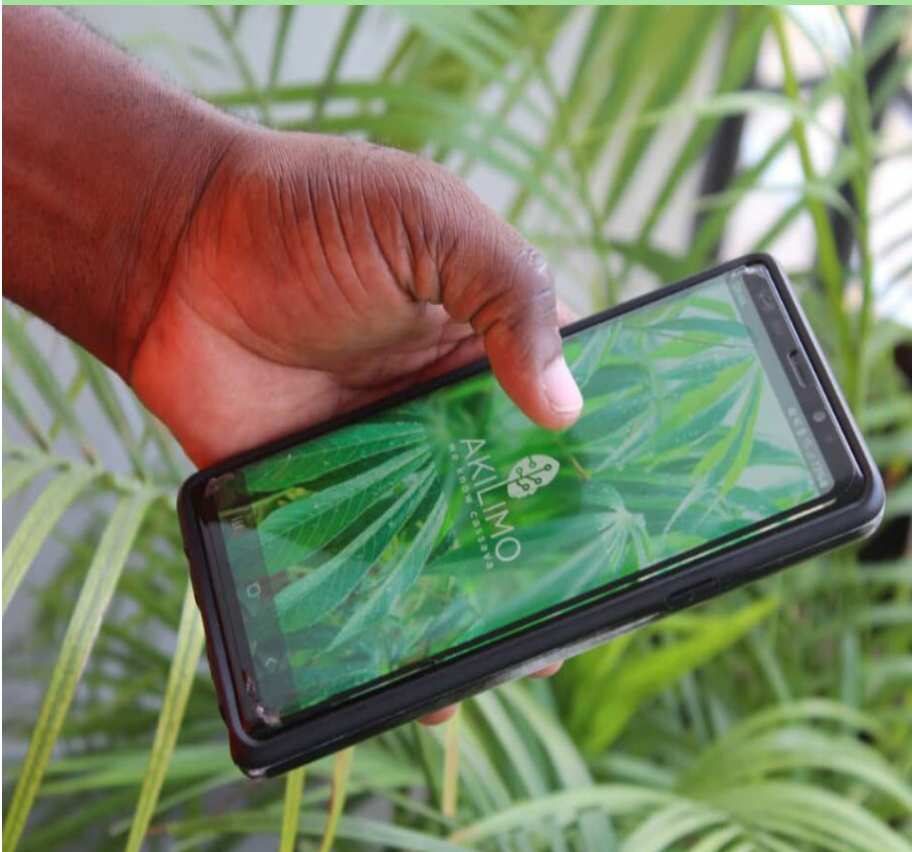
Participants at the project launch. Photo: H.Rashid/IITA

### **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.

# AKILIMO app plays critical role in supporting Tanzanian cassava farmers

The Research and Innovation Coordinator at Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI) Ukiriguru Center, Dr Deusdedit Peter Mlay, has emphasized the significance of the AKILIMO app in improving crop yields. He described how cassava farmers could use it to make informed decisions on the type and amount of fertilizer to apply in their fields to increase productivity. Mlay revealed this to Tanzania's Deputy Minister of Agriculture Hon. Anthony Peter Mavunde (MP) and other guests during a visit to TARI Ukiriguru in Mwanza.



The AKILIMO app supports farmers in getting agronomic recommendations and advice.

Mlay noted that farmers must produce more cassava to fulfill the demands of processing industries. They also need to follow good agricultural practices, including proper fertilizer application to enhance plant nutrients, restore soil fertility, and increase crop productivity.

According to Mlay, the AKILIMO App was designed to address the shortage of extension agents (EAs) in the cassava value chain. It was challenging for EAs to reach many farmers when disseminating farming technologies and training them on how to improve their farms to earn a higher income due to their relative scarcity. Thus, the AKILIMO App came in to support the critical function previously provided by EAs, particularly in assisting farmers in getting agronomic recommendations and advice.

The increased use of AKILIMO among cassava farmers contributes immensely to simplifying cassava growers' lives. Many of them are benefiting from this digital service which has increased efficiency in production. The [African Cassava Agronomy Initiative \(ACAI\)](#) developed the app to provide site-specific recommendations for best planting practices, including intercropping and planting and harvest schedules.

"We advise farmers to use the AKILIMO app because, although a farmer can get all agronomic recommendations and advice, they will be able to know the yield quantity achieved since the app provides yield predictions," Mlay said.

The app is available in the Google Play Store, where farmers can access it freely. Hon. Mavunde stressed the need to also have this app on the Apple App Store to allow all smartphone users to enjoy its benefits. *Contributed by Hadi Rashid*

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