



DG Sanginga leads CGIAR delegates to AfDB's Feed Africa planning meeting

IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) led a [CGIAR](#) delegation comprising other DGs from AfricaRice, the International Livestock Research Institute, and the International Food Policy Research Institute, to a planning meeting on 21–22 January in Abidjan. The meeting was convened by the African Development Bank ([AfDB](#)) to discuss resolutions from [AfDB's High Level Conference on African Agricultural Transformation](#), which underscored the need for Africa to “execute a bold plan to achieve rapid agricultural transformation by raising agricultural productivity.” Other attendees included representatives from the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), Dalberg Global Development Advisor, and Africa Harvest.

During his [inaugural remarks](#) as President of [AfDB](#), Akinwumi Adesina highlighted the Bank's focus on five priority areas to achieve the much anticipated advancement in Africa's transformation agenda: light up and power Africa, feed Africa, integrate Africa, industrialize Africa, and improve the quality of life for the people of Africa.

Speaking on the principles for raising Africa's agricultural productivity by 2025, DG Sanginga enjoined participants to work towards identifying and eradicating

all obstacles preventing agriculture on the continent from becoming a thriving business venture, and said that milestones achieved in the initiative must be presented in clear and measurable terms.

“The end result of interventions in the Feeding Africa initiative should be thriving small, medium, and large-scale agribusinesses in every segment of key value chains on the continent... We must resolve how to tackle production constraints such as land tenure and lack of expertise, for instance... After the development of a technology and outreach plan, we need to determine what CGIAR can do to enable interventions; for example: improved technologies such as new varieties, seed systems, natural resource management practices, processing, incubation of agribusinesses along the value chain, to attract private sector investment/interest,” he said.

CGIAR centers were particularly enlisted to drive the Feeding Africa initiative because of their long years of groundbreaking and innovative agricultural research. It is anticipated that this joint effort will speed up the continent's move towards achieving food security and also equip future generations with new knowledge to sustain Africa's agricultural advancement.



DG Sanginga and AfDB President Adesina.

Looking forward, the Bank plans to partner with CGIAR and [FARA](#), with IITA taking the lead, to revitalize and transform agriculture with the goal of Feeding Africa within the shortest possible time.

As a first step, IITA will be organizing a Program Identification and Preparation Workshop in its Ibadan campus, on 22–26 February. Directors General of the various CGIAR centers and African NARS who have expressed interest in the program have been invited to join an AfDB Program Mission team to the workshop, during which crucial steps to move the Initiative towards full proposal development will be discussed. The implementation of the Feeding Africa Program is expected to effectively start by 1 January 2017.

IITA clarifies position on 3.2 million Kshs received from the National Irrigation Board (NIB)

Recently a daily newspaper in Kenya wrote two articles that put IITA in a negative light in relation to monies paid to the institute by the National Irrigation Board of Kenya. The Institute wrote a [right of reply](#) to provide more details on the payment which was

published on 27 January 2016. Below is an excerpt from the statement from IITA.

In the articles “[Anxiety as cartels eye Galana project cash](#)” and “[Anxiety grips NIB offices over looming staff](#)

[audit](#)” published by the *People's Daily* on 4 January 2016 and 12 January 2016, respectively, the writer, Kinyuru Munuhe, claims that the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) had been awarded a “questionable” tender of Kshs 3.2 million by the

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African Cassava Agronomy Initiative to change the fortunes of cassava farmers

The African Cassava Agronomy Initiative (ACAI) project kicked off on 27 January, with plans to improve the livelihoods and incomes of cassava farmers in Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda, and DR Congo through research and tapping into and implementing best-bet agronomic practices.

The project, which is led by [IITA](#) with funding support from the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), will specifically improve cassava yields, root quality, supply to the processing sector, and fertilizer sales, thereby engaging over 100,000 households in Nigeria and Tanzania, and facilitating the engagement of at least 30% women farmers.

“The value of benefits from this project in Nigeria and Tanzania is projected to be over US\$27 million. Furthermore, through engagement of households in Ghana, Uganda, and DRC and through interest generated in the products developed by the project, these figures are expected to increase for at least 150,000 households and a value of at least \$40 million created within the 5-year time frame of the project,” explained [Bernard Vanlauwe](#), IITA R4D Director for Central Africa.

In sub-Saharan Africa, cassava productivity has marginally increased to around 10–11 tons per hectare, well below attainable yields of over 30 tons per hectare. With the need for intensifying cassava production in areas where population densities have reduced access to fallow land and with cassava roots becoming important raw material for the processing sector, this yield gap needs to be reduced.

Nigeria’s Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Audu Ogbe, said the current yield of less than 15 tons per hectare makes Nigerian farmers uncompetitive in the cassava sector.



L-R: Jacob Mignouna, Program Officer, Gates Foundation; Comfort Awe, representative of Nigeria’s Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development; Abdulai Jalloh, Coordinator, ACAI; and Bernard Vanlauwe, Director, Central Africa, IITA at the first ACAI Meeting in Ibadan.

“This initiative should find a solution to the issue of low productivity,” said Ogbe who was represented by Comfort Awe.

The ACAI initiative is placed within the context of intensification of cassava-based systems with a focus on the development of cassava agronomy recommendations to improve the productivity and quality of cassava roots in Nigeria, Tanzania, Ghana, and Uganda, major cassava-producing countries in West and East Africa, and some spillover into East DR Congo. The project will be in phases, starting in Nigeria and Tanzania in years 1 and 2, and will expand to the other countries from year 3 onwards.

[Nteranya Sanginga](#), IITA DG, said agronomy would provide the key to unlocking the potential of cassava in Africa.

“If we want to increase the productivity of cassava, we must breed new varieties, and improve the agronomy and value addition. We have done a lot in the area of breeding; what we need to do now is to capitalize on the agronomy,” DG Sanginga said.

The ACAI project will harness African and international expertise, and follows a demand-driven approach whereby its interventions respond to specific agronomy-related needs by partners already actively engaged in cassava dissemination and value chain activities in the target countries.

ACAI aims to deliver the necessary knowledge base and tools for making this knowledge accessible to cassava scaling partners and ultimately farmers in the target countries while ensuring the build-up of necessary capacity and skills for national system scientists to engage in “transformative” cassava agronomy.

“The ultimate goal is to improve the productivity per unit area,” Abdulai Jalloh, Project Coordinator for ACAI, said.

The initiative is expected to build the capacity of national partners to sustain the technology development pipeline, deliver continuous improvements in cassava agronomy technologies, as well as address new constraints.

IITA appoints deputy directors

Three IITA scientists have been appointed to provide administrative support for the Research for Development (R4D) Directors in the East, Southern, and West Africa Hubs: **Leena Tripathi**, Plant Biotechnologist and country representative, Kenya for East Africa; **Stephen Boahen**, Legume System Agronomist and country representative for Mozambique for Southern Africa; and **Michael Abberton**, Head, Genetic Resources Center, for West Africa. The appointments took effect on 1 January 2016, and were announced recently in an email last week by Ylva Hillbur, IITA’s Deputy Director General for Research.



Leena Stephen Michael

Tanzania farmers save on labor and cut food losses

For 56-year old Yohana Isaya, a farmer from Ndurungumi village in Kongwa District, central Tanzania, maize farming was always a losing game: a stressful, but extremely important subsistence venture. He has to do something or how else would he feed his family?

To begin with, shelling the maize harvest from his 5-acre plot was a back-breaking job which he, together with his wife and their five children couldn't do on their own. They needed the help of at least eight extra pairs of hands to finish the job in three days. Isaya would then use the traditional "Kilindo", a small cylindrical traditional bin made from peeled miombo tree barks, to store his maize to be used sparingly for feeding his family. Most of the time, nearly half the stored maize would be moldy and inedible.

What he didn't know then was that there was a better way. There were new and efficient postharvest technologies developed by IITA's [AfricaRISING Project](#) that could change the zero sum game that maize farming and storage had become to a winning one.

"Before joining [the Africa RISING-NAFAKA-TUBORESHE CHAKULA scaling project](#) activities and training, I was using a raised wood platform



Farmers shelling maize at Yohana Isaya's farm during the postharvest training organized by the Africa RISING-NAFAKA scaling project in Ndurugumi village.

for shelling maize. Usually it took me up to three days to shell 700 kilograms. We sometimes had to ask for help from our neighbors whom we'd have to compensate by providing food, local brew, and sometimes cash. But, after the project trained us on using simple and affordable machines like the motorized maize sheller, the same kind of work now takes only 30 minutes," explained Yohana.

But it is not only the maize shelling machines that the farmers have been introduced to. The postharvest training have also focused on a complete package of technologies including collapsible drier cases capable of drying 400 kg maize in five hours in the sun, and storage using hermetic bags. As a result, farmers have been able to reduce the amount of time spent on crop processing, reduced food losses, and improved food security in their households.

The Africa RISING-NAFAKA-TUBORESHE CHAKULA scaling project aims to scale the use of postharvest technologies among 47,000 Tanzanian smallholder farmers.

Recent studies in the semi-arid areas of northern and central Tanzania have shown that 20–40% of grains and legumes are usually lost during harvesting; a further 5% is lost during shelling—even when the amount of grains shelled per day was very small due to drudgery and the lack of improved shelling technologies; a further 15–25% is lost during storage.

Practices like drying crops on the bare floor also often lead to contamination and storage when the moisture content is high leading to deterioration. These challenges are what drove the project to introduce postharvest technologies to the Tanzanian farmers.



Farmers at Ndurungumi use PICS bag for maize storage.

Got a story to share? Please email it with photos and captions every Wednesday to Katherine Lopez (k.lopez@cgiar.org), Jeffrey T. Oliver (j.oliver@cgiar.org), Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org), or Adaobi Umeokoro (a.umeokoro@cgiar.org).

Former IITA staff member gets prestigious pan-African award

NewAfrican—Pan-Africa's best selling magazine has named John Godson, a former IITA staff member, one of the [100 most influential Africans in 2015](#). Godson was recognized for his laudable efforts to change Polish attitudes about Africa.

The magazine wrote:

The Nigerian has managed to accomplish one of the most interesting feats in the Diaspora. He became the first black member of the Polish Parliament as part of the Polish People's

Party. He managed to accomplish this at the height of racial tensions in the country. Since he won his seat, he has devoted a large part of his time to trying to change Polish attitudes to Africa and black people.

"I've always said and still underline, that in my opinion there is no racism in Poland. There is, however, something that I call low intercultural competencies. And this can be changed by more contact between different cultures and societal groups. No law can change the mentality of people."



John Godson

Last week, IITA signed an MoU with his organization, the African Institute, Poland (AI), under which both parties agreed to establish a link to foster cooperation for the development and implementation of collaborative programs, especially in the areas of biotechnology and agribusiness.

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[National Irrigation Board \(NIB\)](#).

The articles further insinuate that IITA was among a cartel of organizations that were benefiting unfairly from the Galana irrigation project.

IITA is dismayed that in both articles, the journalist did not contact IITA to get more details on the payments as should have been done for fair and balanced reporting as provided for in the Code of Ethics for Practice of Journalism in Kenya (Second Schedule of the Media Council Act 2013).

[IITA](#) is an international non-profit research organization whose mission is to prevent hunger, poverty, and malnutrition in Africa by developing science-based, sustainable solutions to the challenges facing agriculture in Africa. We are a member of [CGIAR](#).

We work in over 14 countries in sub-Saharan Africa together with a wide range of partners to develop technologies using public funds for the public good and shared freely with any country in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. We are an honest, credible, fair, and trustworthy institution with a 50-year track record of working for African farmers. We are audited annually by reputable external auditors.

One of IITA's objectives is to ensure that countries in Africa not only produce

enough food but that the food is safe. One of the threats to food safety in many parts of the world is aflatoxin, which is a serious problem in Kenya. For instance, in 2004, the country reported the worst fatality from aflatoxin poisoning in the world with over a hundred people dying immediately after eating maize that was contaminated by aflatoxin.

IITA continues to lead efforts in developing an effective solution to the problem using an all-natural biological control technology, [Aflasafe](#). In Kenya, the highly effective biological product is registered as Aflasafe KE01 by the Pest Control Products Board (PCPB). Currently, the Aflasafe factory in Nigeria is the sole producer of the product in the world.

To ensure that logistical and production costs are brought to a minimum, IITA, in partnership with the Kenya Agriculture and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) and the [United States Department of Agriculture—Agricultural Research Service \(USDA—ARS\)](#) are constructing a plant at KALRO's research station at Katumani, Machakos, to produce Aflasafe KE01 locally.

Early in 2015, NIB ordered 8.2 tons of Aflasafe KE01 to help deal with

aflatoxin contamination in maize, which has been a major issue in some of the irrigation schemes. The World Food Program (WFP), for example, has found it difficult to purchase maize from Hola and Bura since it has been found to be contaminated with aflatoxin that is beyond the permissible limit in most years. The 3.2 million Kshs received from NIB covered the costs to manufacture and airfreight the Aflasafe KE01 from IITA-Nigeria to Kenya.

In addition to supplying the Aflasafe KE01, IITA and KALRO researchers trained NIB field workers and farmers in the schemes on how to apply the product and have since been monitoring the levels of aflatoxins in the maize at no cost.

The choice of treating maize fields in the schemes with Aflasafe KE01 has contributed significantly in ensuring that the levels of aflatoxin are reduced. In Galana, all the maize harvested so far from the Aflasafe-treated fields was found to have a contamination level of less than 4 parts per billion aflatoxin—meeting both the Kenyan regulatory thresholds for aflatoxin in maize and even the stringent European Union standards. It is therefore not only safe for human and livestock consumption but can also be traded in any part of the world.