



Africa: it's possible!

A real option to tackle food security challenges

If the global community is looking at food security or reducing hunger in a sustainable way, rather than through food aid, then there is a real option that has worked and can be shown to work elsewhere. This approach has benefited an estimated 100 million consumers and over 8 million farmers countrywide in Nigeria.

When good leadership is backed up with relevant technologies and effective approaches, good things happen. The food crisis has abated somewhat, but not before it demonstrated the limitations of the world's food system. Africa can supplement and stabilise the global food system with small-farmer production in unprecedented ways. African leaders appreciate the need to accelerate food production and availability. Their challenge is how best to go about it.

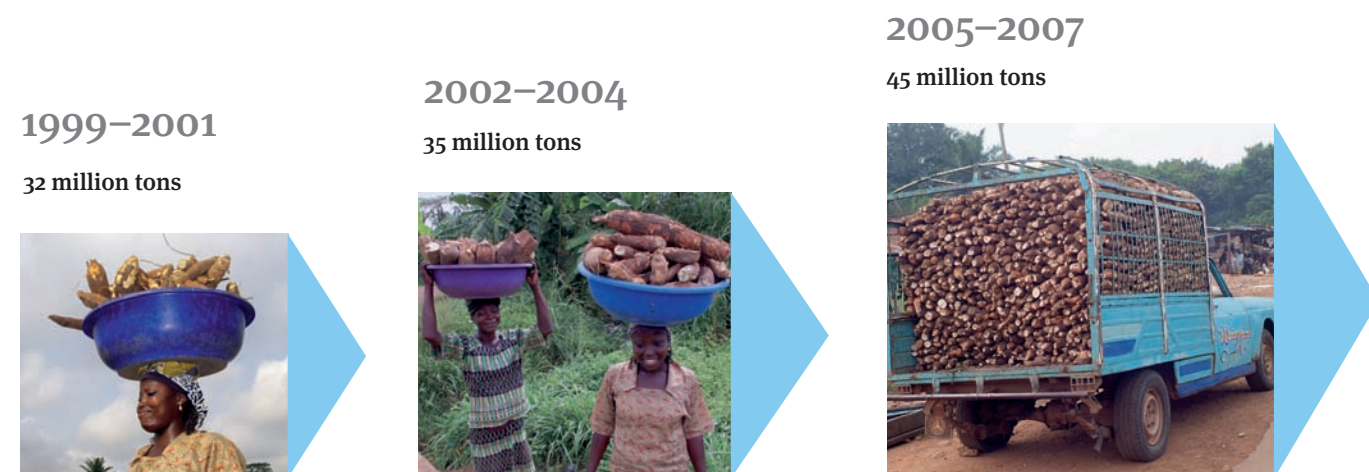
The specific responses to this question vary by country. However, in all cases it means putting into greater use Africa's

immense assets – arable lands, numerous ecologies, crop yield gaps, and its people. This assumes concurrent national efforts in improving energy, transport facilities, and regulatory standards.

The Nigerian case we present here focuses on the huge impact of the country's cassava initiative in tandem with IITA's research-for-development (R4D) model. The former President, in an effort to address the food security challenges, decided to revitalise the country's food sector. He launched a Presidential Initiative on key food crops. One, cassava, is a major food crop in much of sub-Saharan Africa with an estimated 90 million producers and 450 million consumers with a trade value estimated at more than US\$ 1.72 billion (FAOStat 2008). Public and private sector development and research partners worked together to reduce producer and consumer risks, enhance crop quality and productivity, and generate wealth from cassava production, processing, and trade.

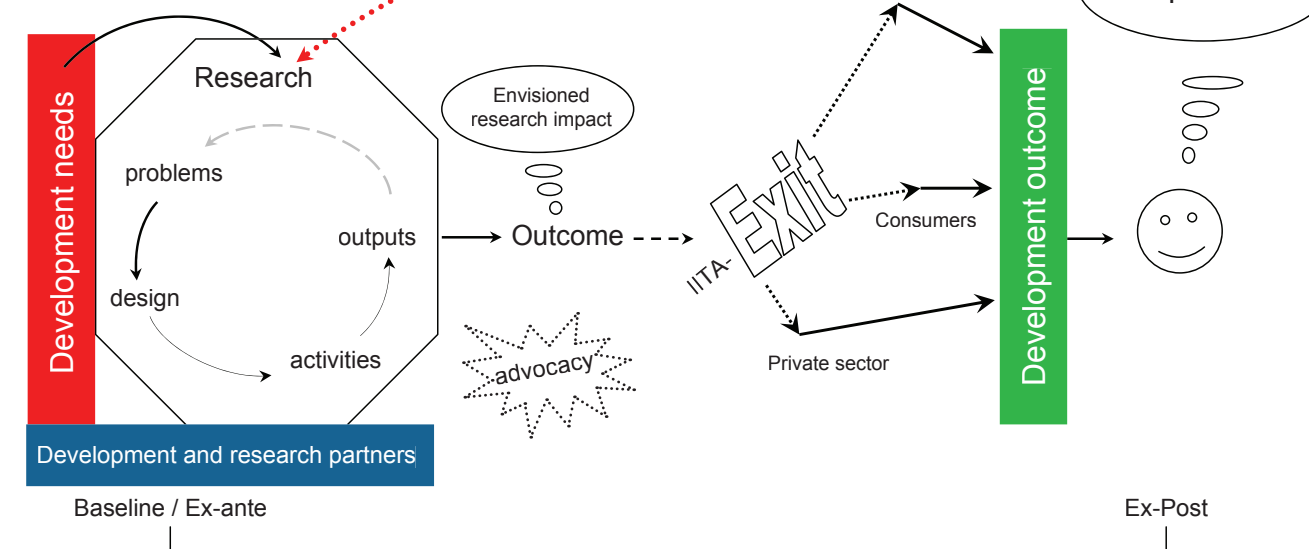
Figure 1: Cassava production, Nigeria, 1999–2007

Adapted from FAOStat 2008



IITA R4D Model

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Credible IMPACT

- Development needs:** Identifies societal, producer and consumer needs that require addressing. Guarantees research relevance.
- Research design:** Specifies research problems that can be addressed by IITA with advanced research institutes and national partners. The design demands envisioning the potential impact.
- Outcome:** Defines scalable research outcomes and any advocacy activities required. A successful outcome entices partners to adoption.
- Exit:** Once the outcome is embraced by national/regional partners IITA exits implementation and changes role to monitoring the research outcomes.
- Success/Development impact:** Ex-post evaluations are carried out and compared to baseline information to measure the impact on the ultimate beneficiaries.
- Further work:** Development impact creates new challenges which are referred back to development needs.

“Over 8 million Nigerian farmers benefited and the availability of more cassava and cassava products served about 100 million customers”

In four years, yields went up and the area farmed with cassava increased substantially in Nigeria. The quantity of cassava produced increased by 10 million tons according to FAO statistics (see Figure 1). More remarkable is that the farm gate price did not drop due to moving the fresh produce into processed food products and livestock feed. Over 8 million Nigerian farmers benefited and the availability of more cassava and cassava products reached an estimated 100 million consumers.

IITA's R4D model provided a framework that guided appropriate technologies and propelled them with targeted advocacy. A key difference was the delivery of the research impact or outcome. The scale enticed and attracted the private sector, which ultimately was responsible for delivering on the greater development impact.

Powerful lessons emerged from this undertaking:

- Leadership:** This was crucial. There was an accurate and clear view of the needs, why something had to be done, and what that something was. The President of Nigeria kept up the message at every occasion with the media.

- Private sector (including farmers):** There would have been no success without the involvement of the private sector. They were the target group. The effort brought together farmers, bankers, transporters, and food processors.
- Technologies:** Appropriate technologies are essential. The pace of success was not possible if IITA, for example, had not had the relevant research in the pipeline. But technologies alone are not sufficient. They have to be 'guided' and be part of a comprehensive model.
- Effective models:** Having a comprehensive view of the undertaking and its components is necessary. IITA's R4D model proved critical to success.

While problems exist and higher-order constraints of infrastructure – energy, transport, standards – remain, the model demonstrated the possible and changed minds and attitudes across Africa.

Several African governments are attempting to replicate the model and launched similar Presidential initiatives, which would benefit from the support of the G8 in obtaining similar success.

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