



Oyo state government holds consultation with key agric stakeholders at IITA

The Oyo state government held a consultative forum with major stakeholders in the agricultural sector yesterday at IITA. The meeting explored opportunities in the agriculture sector available to the state for implementation of the Oyo State Agricultural Initiative Programme (OYSAI).

The government seeks to use the state's comparative advantages notably land, knowledge, and human resources to reposition Oyo state as the food basket of the South West to generate income, jobs, and ensure food security in the region.

Despite the short notice, IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) welcomed the guests to the Institute and set the tone for discussion highlighting the plight of rural communities, in particular the aging farming population as well as high youth unemployment in urban areas.

"... When you go to Fasola village, north of Oyo, you see only old people and small children—which you can observe all over Africa. You don't find people between these ages. There is nobody to do agriculture. We need to start thinking seriously, in 10 years or in 15 years' time, who is going to do agriculture?" Sanginga said.

"We have a serious problem in Africa. The second point is, here at IITA we recruit casual workers to weed and plant crops on the field.

We have about 300 hectares. Most of the people who come looking for a job are graduates with qualification in computer sciences, mass communication, or law; this is the trend in Nigeria, Congo, and all over Africa. That's why you see our young people risking their lives to cross the Mediterranean Sea to go to Europe. So there is a contradiction in what we have been saying about the potential of agriculture in the world being in Africa. About 60% of arable land is in Africa but we have a young generation that is not interested in agriculture. At IITA we've designed a program showcasing youth in agriculture irrespective of what they have studied. We are changing the mindset of these young people and are training them to involve them in agriculture." Sanginga added.

In his keynote address Senator Ajimobi also called for a "change of attitude" by the indigenes towards development and agriculture.

"During the initial years of the Republic of Nigeria, Oyo was regarded as the pace setter state even in agriculture, but that isn't the case today. Coco House, once the tallest building in Nigeria, was built from the proceeds of cocoa. We need to reposition ourselves for that to be possible again. We need investors to establish businesses here to generate income for the state... the type of systems we find ourselves in impoverish us. The culture of entitlement needs to change for development to occur." Senator Ajimobi said.



DG Nteranya Sanginga (left) welcomes IITA host, Oyo State Governor Abiola Ajimobi.

Representatives from research institutes, private organizations, government parastatals and agricultural associations presented on resources and potential opportunities, and pledged to support the state in the implementation of the initiative.

After the forum, the governor called for the establishment of a committee that will meet regularly for implementation purposes.

"From what I have heard, a lot of varieties have been released. Communication between the institutes and the state needs to improve. We will need to include the research institutes in our forum to tell us what they have that is available for deployment. We need to make all the technologies, facilities, and schemes known to people who will use them," Senator Ajimobi concluded.

AgResults conducts induction workshop for new implementers

To provide safe crops, better health, and higher income, the [Agresult Aflasafe™ pilot](#) project recently held its third annual induction workshop for 16 new implementers that will facilitate the adoption of [Aflasafe](#) and work with smallholder farmers to increase the productivity and profitability of their aflasafe-treated maize. The workshop was held 16-18 March at the Conference Center, IITA-Ibadan.

The project is experiencing an exponential increase in the buy-in of implementers and the adoption of [Aflasafe](#) by farmers in Nigeria. During the first year, 1,000 farmers participated and over 2,000 tons of aflasafe-treated maize were aggregated—meaning, maize brought to collection points by project participants. In the second year over 6,000 farmers participated,



AgResults implementers visit the aflasafe plant in IITA, Ibadan.

and 9,000 tons of aflasafe-treated maize were aggregated. By the third year, nearly 35,000 participating farmers are expected to produce 100,000 tons of high-Aflasafe™ maize—maize that is free from aflatoxin contamination.

Moreover, the number of implementers or aggregators working with these smallholders to improve the quality and quantity of maize produced has increased from 4 at the initial stage to 16 implementers last year; now the project is inducting 16 new companies. The numbers are expected to grow in the coming years.

A new implementer, Femi Osunraye of Business Support Academy, commented: “When we saw the advertisement in the newspaper, we decided to apply for the program because it’s in line with what we do business-wise... Financially, the incentives are lucrative and can be shared between our organization and farmers. Secondly, as a business, we believe it’s part of our social responsibility to provide safe food for Nigerians as well as help farmers improve their livelihoods.”

The project exploits the principles of the “[pull mechanism](#)” to successfully promote and disseminate Aflasafe. The project encourages private sector-driven and profit-oriented agriculture and provides smallholders with economic incentives for adopting Aflasafe™. The structure of the pull mechanism features per-unit payments for performance that is tied to the number of kilograms of maize treated with aflasafe™ collected from maize aggregators.

Tolu Owolabi, a representative from the [Babban Gona](#) farmers’ group, said: “One of the project’s greatest benefits is that it has added value to the maize that we produce in Nigeria especially for our farmers. Right now agriculture is again becoming a key economic driver in Nigeria, and there is a need for our farmers to be encouraged to be able to get more money for their products.



Group photo of AgResults workshop participants.

Through the project, we’ve been able to improve the quality of our maize and encourage export; this can increase the value for our farmers. Currently, our farmers are beginning to have so much pride in knowing that what they produce has value... they earn three times more for their produce. They now have more money in their pockets; they are free to achieve more dreams, they are free to dream more dreams.”

“It isn’t business as usual with AgResults. It is a market-oriented and profit-driven project where the implementers and the smallholder farmers jointly drive the project as a business to create the required sustainability within the value chain,” explained [Debo Akande](#), AgResults Project Manager. “To achieve such sustainability requires a paradigm shift on the part of farmers and implementers; we are seeing that already. In this workshop, the new inductees have been taken through processes of understanding what it means to conduct agriculture as a business. They’ve learned what agribusiness is all about. They now know the difference between doing agriculture as subsistence and producing for business,” he concluded.

Another key milestone for the project was the active participation of representatives from

major financial institutions in Nigeria at the workshop. Access to credit is a major concern for farmers and was addressed during the meeting. “One lesson we’ve learned is that access to finance is a key problem for most smallholders and organizations that are working with them. This year, we invited representatives from seven leading banks in Nigeria to promote their banking services on agribusiness financing. They’ve developed precise financial loan packages for implementers on the project,” Akande further explained.

Ayo Shola, a representative from Ecobank, commenting on providing loans to farmers and agribusiness organizations, said: “Crops are high-risk products. We have to consider all aspects of the request to mitigate risk... For example, traditionally the farmer only harvests 1 ton of maize per hectare; but with what we have seen and heard in this workshop, farmers can actually produce about 5 tons per hectare. With such knowledge from IITA on the available technologies for boosting production, financial institutions will be willing to invest in farmers who use such technologies because we know that the farmer’s business is now based on what the research says he or she will get and the markets available. It’s all about mitigating risks.”

IITA research fellow participates in science forum

IITA Research Fellow [Dapo Adediji](#) participated in the recently held Next Einstein Forum Global Gathering 2016 with the theme “Connecting Science to Humanity”. The invitation-only event was held in Dakar, Senegal, and was organized by the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS). It brought together Africa’s top young scientists to connect them with stakeholders from the rest of the world. The meeting was designed to spur the younger generation into developing novel ideas that are meant to evolve into the “next big thing” just like the great Albert Einstein.

As a PhD Student in the Virology and Molecular Diagnostics Unit under the leadership of IITA scientist Lava Kumar, Dapo was invited by the forum organizers. Both the virology unit and the Capacity Development Office supported his participation at the event.

Presidents Macky Sall of Senegal and Paul Kagame of Rwanda opened the forum which had over 1000 participants from over 100 countries. This was made up of leading African and international scientists, policymakers, entrepreneurs, industry and multinational corporations, journalists, and civil-society representatives to highlight breakthrough discoveries and catalyze scientific collaboration for human development.

Among the themes that were discussed were Agriculture and agribusiness, Big data, Climate change, Energy, Knowledge-based economy, Science education, and Research. Parts of the interactions were on sowing the seed for Africa’s “green revolution”, the food–energy–waste–water nexus, and developing a proper science strategy for



RF Dapo Adediji

Africa. The Forum is scheduled every two years and the next edition will be held in 2018 in Rwanda.

International and national partners convene to discuss AfDB's initiative to transform African agriculture

More than 200 research and development partners and experts will meet at IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, in a three-day workshop to discuss a new initiative known as "Africa Feeding Africa", or the Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) program. The TAAT program is a critical strategy for transforming agriculture on the continent that would ensure that Africa is able to feed itself through agriculture.

The program aims to eliminate extreme poverty, end hunger and malnutrition, achieve food sufficiency, and turn Africa into a net food exporter as well as set Africa in step with global commodity and agricultural value chains.

To carry out these objectives, AfDB, working with IITA and other partners, has identified eight priority agricultural value chains relating to rice sufficiency, cassava intensification, Sahelian food security, savannas as breadbaskets, restoring tree plantations, expanding horticulture, increasing wheat production, and expanded fish farming.

The Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and the CGIAR Consortium and 12 of its 15 international agricultural centers active in Africa support this initiative by the Bank and the co-sponsors to revitalize and transform agriculture through the TAAT program within the shortest possible time.

IITA is organizing the 12–14 April workshop in partnership with the Support to Agricultural Research for Development of Strategic Crops (SARD-SC) project for the African Development Bank, which is funding this mega initiative.

The identification and preparation workshop will execute a bold plan to achieve rapid agricultural transformation across Africa and raise agricultural productivity.

This initiative will be led by IITA, the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), CGIAR, national agricultural research systems, and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA). This will involve close partnerships among AfDB, the World Bank, and major development partners to ensure increased funding for agricultural



TAAT is focused on ensuring that Africa is able to feed itself through agricultural transformation.

research and development along the value chains in Africa. CGIAR, FARA, The World Vegetable Center (AVRDC), Africa Harvest, and other partners will provide the technical and developmental support for the Bank's quest of widespread agricultural transformation.

IITA cassava breeders mull new strategy to step up efforts and embrace technology for quicker delivery

All the IITA cassava breeders convened at the Institute's Eastern Africa hub in Dar es Salaam to develop a strategy to guide and shape IITA's efforts to develop improved cassava varieties suited to mechanized production that are high yielding and resistant to the major diseases and pests affecting the crop's production in sub-Saharan Africa in the next five years.

This is part of the ongoing alignment of IITA's activities to enable the institute to deliver on its refreshed strategy whose goal is to move 11.5

million people out of poverty and to rehabilitate 7.5 million hectares of degraded land.

The joint strategy for cassava breeding will also harmonize ongoing cassava breeding work in all the different hubs to ensure that the breeding programs are aimed towards similar goals by a cohesive breeding team.

Speaking at the meeting, Peter Kulakow, head of cassava breeding at IITA, said this was a critical and timely meeting for the team to agree on how to modernize cassava breeding operations and to define priorities for the next five years.

"Our goal is to improve communication and collaboration among breeders to increase efficiency in production of elite germplasm," he said.

During the meeting, the breeders shared the progress they have made in the different subregions of Africa—East, Central, Southern, and West, identifying common goals as well as specific hub niches.

The breeders agreed that the breeding efforts will be driven by strategic product pipelines based on key end-uses of cassava such as varieties with high starch content for industrial use, sweet varieties for consumption of fresh

roots, and also yellow-fleshed cassava with high pro-vitamin A to improve nutrition.

They also agreed to pilot test the use of marker-assisted selection in at least two hubs for improvement of cassava mosaic disease resistance, cassava brown streak disease resistance, and enhanced beta-carotene for biofortification. This will capitalize on the advances in cassava genomics and the marker-trait associations that have been discovered in work led by molecular breeders Morag Ferguson and Ismail Rabbi.

The breeders also agreed to work closely together with the data management team based in Ibadan to mainstream the use of Cassavabase in each hub and to improve data analysis to help communicate the results of IITA cassava breeding research.

In addition, the breeders shared the major challenges they face and explored ways to address them. Some major challenges identified included lack of necessary infrastructure such as the lack of a tissue culture lab at the East Africa hub; and dwindling operational funds for core breeding operations which in turn has limited breeding activities in the different hubs. The teams agreed to make efforts to raise funds by developing joint proposals.



Cassava breeders in East Africa hub.

IITA, Ekimiks conduct training on Agripreneurial and Business Management

The 2nd phase of the Agripreneurial and Business Management in Agribusiness training workshop was held from 29 March to 2 April, for the IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA). The training, tagged “Developing Strategic Skills in Agribusiness,” was sponsored by Ekimiks Nigeria Limited, in collaboration with IITA and LA Consult.

The workshop, held at the Conference Center, IITA-Ibadan was attended by about 50 youth Agripreneurs who have embraced agriculture as a business.

The participants, who were drawn from various locations including Port Harcourt, Ogun, Ondo, Abuja, Oyo, and Kano, were taken through a series of sessions to enhance their strategic skills in agribusiness.

Stakeholders from the private and public sectors provided lessons, experiences, and support to the youth Agripreneurs.

Speaking about the IITA Youth Agripreneurs initiative, Ekiyor Tope Miriki, Managing Director, Ekimiks Ltd, said the IYA initiative was a means of ensuring that youth see the vast opportunity embedded in the agricultural value chain.

“We decided to organize this second training based on the responses and success of the first one which we organized last year. The training has actually brought out some sense of responsibility in our organization. We want to be part of great initiatives like this one and IITA has taken a giant stride in ensuring that the youth have the necessary resources to embrace agriculture as a business,” he said.

IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga, also speaking at the training, said that the



Youth Agripreneurs undergo training in agribusiness management in IITA.

IYA initiative started at point zero, but will now be adopted in 27 states across Nigeria and also in some countries in sub-Saharan Africa under the ENABLE YOUTH program.

He added that under the ENABLE Youth program which will be funded by the African Development Bank (AfDB) the youth will learn how to make agriculture a business.

“Agriculture is more than just taking the cutlass and hoe. It is a complex activity which involves a vast value chain like transportation, value addition, middlemen, etc. You will have access to loans under this program after developing a business plan for a bankable project and Ekimiks here will teach you how to do that,” he said.

Delivering a motivational speech, the Managing Director of Durante Fish Industries, Dr Tomi Asuni, encouraged the youth to maximize the opportunity of

being in the workshop. He said the recent dwindling price of crude oil in the world market is a sign of the fact that many countries will fall back on agriculture.

The Executive Director of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), Dr Yemi Akinbami, and a representative of the AfDB team who were present at the training workshop advised the youth to be proactive in their business dealings and emphasized the significance of private sector interventions in the promotion of agribusiness in Africa.

The youth were taken through a series of sessions that covered Risk management and business continuity planning, Effective sales and marketing strategies, Achieving operational excellence, Writing a winning business plan for agribusiness, Fundamentals of business accounting, and much more.

Announcements

- **CGIAR/AfDB Workshop on Feeding Africa** (Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation), IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, 11-15 April 2016
- **Science Forum 2016: Agricultural research for rural prosperity: Rethinking the pathways**, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 12-14 April 2016
- **ENABLE** (Empowering Novel AgriBusiness-Led Employment) **Youth Program Workshop**, Abuja, Nigeria, 21-22 April 2016
- **Training of Trainers (ToT) on ITC's Trade Intelligence Tools** (Market Access Map, Standards Map, Trade Map), 10-13 May 2016, IITA Ibadan. For more enquires, contact info@ieom-ng.org; op.akande@gmail.com; IITA-TrainingUnit@cgiar.org.
- **7th International Nitrogen Initiative Conference**, Melbourne, Australia, 4-8 December 2016. More details on the conference are available [here](#).

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).