



2016 is the Year of E-Research and Open Access in IITA!

IITA management has declared 2016 the year of E-Research and [Open Access](#) (OA). This was highlighted in the new year [messages](#) of Management in last week's issue of the IITA Bulletin.

This move will see scientific papers and articles from the Institute's research becoming fully published online, unrestricted, and available for free reuse, albeit with due acknowledgement, by the general public.

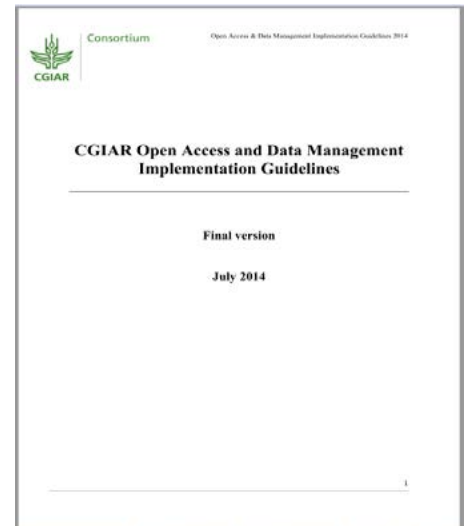
Although the structure of how this transition will pan out is still being finalized, IITA scientists are already keen on using the new tools which show promise in fully unlocking research potentials and giving their research efforts more visibility.

[E-Research](#) for instance provides a forum for researchers to network, collaborate, and share ideas and research findings. [OA](#), on the other hand, provides online repositories that can harvest data from

very distributed sources, making such data much more discoverable and more easily accessible to the public.

[Martin Mueller](#), IITA's E-Research Coordinator, said that the idea of the OA year was conceived because of the ambitious agenda of the Institute in implementing the overall OA plan, research data management action work plan, and the general E-Research plan with its priority issues.

As part of this move, the Institute had earlier switched to OA on [CGSpace](#) last year. At the moment, the "space" already hosts nearly 50,000 documented agricultural research outputs and results produced by the CGIAR centers and their partners. A set of OA and data management implementation [guidelines](#) and [policy](#) have also been developed by CGIAR. Other plans in this regard also include the launch of procedural guidelines in information and data management, SharePoint deployment,



risk assessment, and setting up an information and data management unit.

Other changes and events earmarked in celebration of the year will be announced as they unfold. For more information about E-Research and Open Access, visit Sharepoint [here](#).

IITA improved cassava varieties reduce food insecurity in Eastern DR Congo

A recent assessment on [IITA](#) improved cassava varieties released in the Moba region of DR Congo has shown that the crop contributes significantly to food



A happy cassava farmer shows off his field planted to IITA improved varieties.

security for households in the region. The varieties were introduced in 2010 during the first phase of the [USAID](#)-funded Development Food Assistance Program (DFAP) implemented by IITA and [Food for the Hungry International \(FH\)](#).

Prior to the introduction of the improved varieties, Moba residents had battled food insecurity for more than four months every year. In addition to ensuring constant food on the table of Moba households, the new cassava varieties have also increased average root yield from a paltry 2 tons/hectare to about 20 tons/hectare since 2010.

Kande Matungulu, IITA scientist based in DR Congo, said the breakthrough was a result of novel agro-technologies developed by IITA. He also added that

"IITA and FH efforts succeeded in reducing food insecurity in the former Moba region, now known as Tanganyika Province."

Paul Dontsop, IITA Impact Economist based in DRC, said "During the first phase of DFAP, IITA and FH did a very good job both in North Katanga (Kalemie and Moba) and South Kivu (Walungu). More than 30,000 households were directly involved in project implementation. If we consider the fact that the average household size in those areas is about six, we are talking about 180, 000 people helped directly by the project."

To further spread the gains from this breakthrough, proposal development for a second DFAP phase, built on the good results and the lessons learned from phase one is ongoing.



Agricultural challenge: where ICT plays a role

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in agriculture has been identified as one of the best ways to enhance access to finance for smallholder farmers and transform unproductive farming activities in Africa into sustainable means of livelihood.

Rita Kimani, the co-founder of [FarmDrive](#), said this on 12 January during a seminar organized by the IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA) on ICT and Agriculture at the IITA headquarters in Ibadan, Nigeria.

FarmDrive is a Kenya-based ICT company which helps smallholder farmers access loans through a technology platform used in collecting data on farmers. The data is used to link farmers with sources of credit, increasing their income by 300% in the process. Speaking at the seminar titled “ICT meets Agriculture,” Rita stressed that some of the challenges faced by smallholder farmers in Africa include access to finance, a huge information gap between the farmers and lenders, and operational risks involved in agriculture. She added that the use of the latest technology and data is the only means of helping the smallholder farmers address these challenges.

Highlighting the importance of the use of ICT in this regard, Rita added that ICT can be used by smallholder farmers in carrying out soil tests on their farm before planting. She stated that through the use of mobile phone applications, ICT can help farmers share knowledge with extension services, consult with experts, have access to inputs, enhance marketing skills especially in the areas of determining market



Rita Kimani, co-founder of FarmDrive (Kenya) spoke on the importance of using ICT in agriculture.

prices, understand market demand, and establish a trading platform between the smallholder farmers and the consumers.

Sharing her experiences on the use of ICT in helping smallholder farmers in Kenya, Rita said that FarmDrive, which is currently working with over a thousand farmers in the country, uses a platform to collect self-reported farm-level data from farmers, value chain players, and satellite data for smallholder farmers.

IYA panelists at the seminar—Tomiwa Adesanya, Bunmi Ajilore, Damola Adewole, and Rita—all agreed that the use of ICT can help change the perception on agriculture

and emphasize its new role as a transformative driver of the economy.

Speaking at the end of the seminar, IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) urged the youth to take the issue of ICT in agriculture seriously as it provides numerous opportunities for youth involvement.

He emphasized that with the government move to embrace agriculture in generating income for the country, the youth will play a major role in reviving the economy through agriculture. He said that the only way to make the agricultural practice distinct from the way it was being practiced is to treat it as a business and introduce attractive technologies.



Group photo of participants at the seminar.

IFAD/ IITA/HQCF value chain project organizes farmers' field day...

The IFAD/IITA HQCF Value chain project organized a field day at Ijoga-Orile on 8 December 2015, bringing together [HQCF master bakers](#), extension agents, farmers, financial institutions, input suppliers, local machine fabricators, marketers, nutritionists, processors, researchers, transporters, youth, and students. The event was hosted by project partner Open Door International Ltd.

More than 120 project and non-project farmers participated in the field day. The field day aimed to allow project farmers and non-project farmers to participate and witness the harvesting of the demo farm planted at Ijoga-Orile; bring together all actors in the value chain at Ijoga-Orile and foster a business-oriented sustainable platform; and finally say thank you to the community for welcoming the project and Open Door to Ijoga-Orile.

"The result of profitable cassava production is what we are witnessing

today," said Alhaji Aderemi Mohammed, CEO and Director of Open Door International, who encouraged other farmers within the environs of Ijoga-Orile to work with the project and his processing factory. He said he is ready to procure all cassava roots that the farmers produce.

Various farm inputs were on display, such as herbicides and improved cassava stems; also 10% HQCF/wheat bread was given to participants.

During the feedback session, community representatives called for more field days and expressed thanks to IITA for introducing a cassava variety that was able to withstand the dry season conditions and produce a bumper harvest, which they witnessed. One of the youth and a project beneficiary, who spoke on behalf of the other youths, appreciated the effort of the Project for the training they acquired on mechanical planting, farm management, and weed control.

Kehinde Adegbola, a non-project farmer, expressed his surprise at the cassava varieties the project introduced and the bountiful yield. He said he wondered if cassava can be easily harvested irrespective of the dry season. "I can say categorically that the cassava business has been made easy and is now more profitable than before."

The IFAD/IITA/HQCF Value Chain Project Coordinator, Alenkhe Bamidele, in his closing remarks thanked the community for their warm acceptance of the project and advised all participants to take advantage of all the useful products that the project had introduced within the 12 months of working in Ijoga-Orile. He also urged all actors along the value chain to work together, exploiting existing business opportunities that can be generated within the platform as members of the Ijoga-Orile innovation platform.



Gregory Nwaoliwe of HQCF Project gives 10% HQCF-wheat bread to participants during the field day.

...and provides Kwara farmers with a weeding machine



IITA's Uchenna Ene demonstrates the use of the cassava weeding machine to training participants.

Young cassava farmers and outgrowers of Arogunjo Farm Limited, in Kwara State, Nigeria, were given a cassava weeding machine last December 2015 to ease the back-breaking work of removing weeds from their fields. The machine was donated by the [IFAD/IITA High Quality Cassava Flour \(HQCF\) Project](#) in collaboration with the IITA [Cassava Weeds Management Project](#).

During the presentation of the machine, over 20 youths and outgrowers including women, were trained on how to use the machine. Bamidele Alenkhe, IFAD/IITA HQCF Project coordinator, advised the youth to maintain the machine properly and also tasked the recipients to appoint a custodian of the machine.

The training highlighted the efficiency, maintenance, and guidelines in the use of the weeder to avoid destroying cassava stems. IITA weed management

technician Uchenna Ifeanyi Ene skillfully demonstrated the use of the weeder to uproot the weeds without harming the cassava, and let the training participants try using the machine.

The participants expressed awe at seeing such a machine that could remove weeds growing between cassava plants.

Abdul-Rasaque Alabi, one of the youths, said that the machine was easy to handle. "This machine is very easy to use. If I have the opportunity of buying one, I can plant more cassava on my farm and get very good yields at harvest time, because I know from experience that weeds disturb the root quality of our cassava."

Another youth, Sadu Jimoh, said that IITA should provide more machines and create further awareness about the weeder because it makes farming easier for the farmers. "If farmers like

me can be given this machine for free, and combined with the training that IITA has given me on land preparation and the use of improved cassava varieties, then my productivity will increase year in, year out.

The training and demonstration did not hinder women from participating, Catherine Imola and Mariam Olaoye also tried their hand using the machine. After the demonstration Imola said "I like the machine. I handled it easily, without stress; with this women's participation in farming will increase and we will not wait for men to help us uproot weeds in our farm again." On the other hand, Olaoye said the machine was a little heavy for her to handle. "Manufacturers should make provision for smaller or lighter machines. If I see something that is a little smaller; I will be fine with it," she said.

Announcement

Training of Trainers (ToT) on ITC's Trade Intelligence Tools

(Market Access Map, Standards Map, Trade Map), 8-11 March, 2016, IITA Ibadan

For more enquires, contact info@ieom-ng.org; op.akande@gmail.com; IITA-TrainingUnit@cgiar.org. [View announcement](#)

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).