

ENABLE Youth: Ensuring the success of youth in agribusiness

The [African Development Bank](#) (AfDB) in collaboration with IITA organized the ENABLE (Empowering Novel Agri-Business-Led Employment) Youth Program Design Workshop on 21–22 April in Abuja, Nigeria. The workshop featured key speakers including IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#); Mme. Abimbola Adebakin, Tony Elumelu Foundation; Mark Kofi Fynn, African Union Commission, and Ministers/State Ministers of Agriculture/Youth and Employment from 10 African countries.

The ENABLE Youth Program Design Workshop aimed to bring all key stakeholders from interested governments across the continent, international development partners, agribusiness companies, finance institutions, women and youth groups on the same page by building a well-grounded evidence-based understanding of the program concept.

In his video address shown during the opening session, AfDB President [Akin Adesina](#) talked about his vision: “The future of African agriculture lies in agriculture as a business and the creation of a new generation of young farmers and agribusiness owners.”

During the two-day workshop, participants shared their experiences and lessons learned in promoting youth employment in agriculture on the continent. Several of the speakers were young people who shared inspiring first-hand accounts of how they set up their agribusinesses and some of their challenges and successful experiences. This will help fine-tune the ENABLE Youth program design through incorporation of proven Africa-wide best practices.



DG N Sanginga (IITA) (in the middle), talking about the importance of engaging the youth in agribusiness.

About 240 participants, including over 70 young people from more than 30 countries attended the workshop. Many African governments have already expressed keen interest to work with the AfDB in collaboration with IITA and other relevant partners to develop and roll out country-specific ENABLE youth programs designed to sustainably tackle youth unemployment and promote food security.

The workshop consisted of an opening session with key presentations that set the stage; panel sessions on agribusiness value chains, incubation platform, financing, marketing, and impact assessment; a break-out session to discuss creation of an enabling environment for the program implementation arrangements, and exit

strategy; and a closing session that synthesized findings.

Many of the speakers agreed that “the ENABLE Youth program is a powerful mechanism for getting youth employed in agribusiness.”

The AfDB president, in an email after the meeting, later said “I am delighted the meetings went well. Great job by the DG of IITA and his team—and all the Agripreneurs! I cannot wait to see the ENABLE Youth program enabled financially now, to push it all across Africa.”

This landmark initiative to get Africa Feeding Africa is expected to unleash the vast potentials of Africa’s youth and help the continent in its bid to become self-sufficient in food production.

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).

Solid participation of IITA at GCARD3

IITA had a strong presence at the recently concluded third [Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development](#) (GCARD3), which took place in Johannesburg (South Africa), 5-8 April. The event was a global multi-stakeholder consultative dialogue with over 500 delegates from 83 different countries, which included representatives from development agencies, governments, civil society, and scientists, among others.

IITA was represented at GCARD3 by [Ylva Hillbur](#), Deputy Director for Research and Development; [Kwesi Atta-Krah](#), Director of the CGIAR Research Program on Integrated Agricultural Systems for the Humid Tropics; [Regina Kapinga](#), Head of Advocacy and Resource Mobilization; and [Kristina Roing-de Nowina](#), Head of the Proposal Development Office.

The event was organized around five main themes: Scaling-up: from research to impact, Showcasing results and demonstrating impact, Sustaining the business of farming, Ensuring better rural futures, and Keeping science relevant and future focused.

In reference to this last theme, Hillbur said that the ongoing CGIAR site integration will work towards ensuring that the science is kept relevant and future focused: "The site integration process will allow us to coordinate better our efforts at national level but also to align better with national priorities within requests from stakeholders to

ensure that we keep science relevant", she said.

With the main theme "No One Left Behind: Agri-Food Innovation and Research for a Sustainable World", the GCARD3 global event also put youth at the center with a youth representation in the themes and panel discussions.

As Atta-Krah discussed in a [CNBC Africa interview \(see below\)](#), "One key aspect of GCARD3 and which has been most revealing and exciting is the potential that is inherent in the young people (...) the time when we used to consider youth as leaders of tomorrow is dead and buried. We now have to get to the point of realizing that it is our responsibility to engage the youth, involve them in

all this business so that they can see themselves as leaders of now."

Among the 14 youth delegates at GCARD3, two were from IITA: Mariola Acosta, PhD Research Fellow at IITA-Uganda and Herve Bondonga, an IITA-DRC youth agripreneur. Apart from being the voice of the youth during the conference, the youth delegates attended a three-day intensive social media training and acted as social reporters giving a live coverage of the event through social media platforms, [blogs](#), [videos](#) and [podcasts](#).

IITA was also part of the CGIAR collective exhibition that featured the various centers and research programs/themes.



Announcements

- **Sustainable Weed Management Technologies for Cassava Systems in Nigeria**, Conference Center, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, 25-26 April.
- **Research Innovations and Sustainable Entrepreneurship for Food Security and Growth. 19th annual symposium of the International Association of Research Scholars and Fellows (IARSAF)**, IITA Conference Center, Ibadan, Nigeria, 27-28 April.
- **First Meeting, Nigeria Zero Hunger Strategic Planning Committee**, Conference Center, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, 29 April.
- **East Africa Banana Breeding Project Annual Meeting**, Nelson Mandela-African Institution of Science and Technology, Arusha, Tanzania, 1-5 May.
- **IITA Board Meeting**, IITA, Kalambo, Bukavu, DR Congo, 12-14 May.
- **7th African Soil Science Society ASSS conference**, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 29 May - 1 June.
- **7th Africa Agricultural Science Week and FARA General Assembly**, Kigali, Rwanda, 12-17 June. More information available at <http://www.faraafrica.org/aasw7/>.
- **3rd All Africa Horticultural Congress, Theme: "Horticultural for Improved Livelihoods"**, Conference Center, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, 7-12 August.
- **7th International Nitrogen Initiative Conference**, Melbourne, Australia, 4-8 December. More details on the conference are available [here](#).

Science Forum 2016 looks at R4D priorities of CGIAR centers

The agricultural research-for-development priorities of [CGIAR](#) centers received attention during a panel discussion held on the last morning of a three-day (12–14 April) [Science Forum](#) organized by the [CGIAR Independent Science and Partnerships Council](#) (ISPC) in Addis Ababa-Ethiopia. Addressing the question: What exactly is needed to fulfil on CGIAR's mission to reduce poverty, hunger and environmental degradation through agricultural research for development?, the team of five panelists who included [IITA's](#) Director for Eastern Africa Hub and leader of Social Science Group, [Victor Manyong](#), served up interesting insights and thought-provoking ideas on how CGIAR can more effectively contribute to rural prosperity.

First to speak was Jimmy Smith, Director General of the [International Livestock Research Institute](#) (ILRI). He noted that while the CGIAR's main research priorities are already set, the main contention remained on how it will deliver "the goods" with regard to enhanced food and nutritional security, poverty alleviation, and sustainable use of natural resources.

"We like to think CGIAR—with its 10,000 staff and 1 billion dollar annual budget—is big and important. But we are relatively small. We get, for instance, less than 10% of the resources invested in global agricultural research and our staffing strength cannot match that of others, such as the Indian Council of Agricultural Research for example; which, with 200,000 staff, is 20 times greater," noted Smith as he set the tone for the discussions by the panel.

"So we need to be strategic about what we do. And we can do this by designing our work to be catalytic, facilitatory and to establish effective partnerships through careful selection," he added.

Taking the cue from Smith's opening remarks, IITA's Victor Manyong went ahead to focus the discussions on what change of orientation is necessary if the impact of CGIAR is to be felt and made more visible.

"I see prosperity as multidimensional and encompassing. If we want greater rural prosperity in the world, no one discipline, no single intervention or institution is going to take us there," noted Manyong.

"It is a long way to go from when research is initiated to the final outcome



The panel, from left to right: Peter Carberry (ICRISAT), Jimmy Smith (ILRI), Doug Gollin (University of Oxford), Florence Wambugu (Africa Harvest), Oscar Ortiz (CIP), and Victor Manyong (IITA).

aimed for, which is rural prosperity. There are so many boxes in between and many actors need to be involved. So establishing effective partnerships along the whole value chain is key," he explained.

Manyong further proffered six areas that he believes will help agricultural research contribute to rural prosperity by increasing agricultural productivity. (1) Shifting focus on whole farm families rather than just smallholder farmers, (2) Addressing biotic stresses, such as the new diseases that have arisen in the last decade attacking East Africa's three staple crops: maize, cassava, and banana, (3) Addressing abiotic stresses, such as climate change and soil quality, (4) Supporting enabling markets, policies and institutions, (5) Focusing on enhancing nutrition, and (6) Keeping a gender focus.

Also speaking during the panel session was Oscar Ortiz, Deputy Director General for research and development at the [International Potato Center](#) (CIP). He looked toward the exciting times ahead noting that CGIAR's big data is set to contribute in a major way to rural prosperity. "With big data, it will soon be possible to link the trait preferences in the staple foods of our target beneficiary stakeholder groups with the genes and markers for those desired traits," he said.

The issue of having an "end-user oriented" focus to research was also flagged by the CEO of [Africa Harvest Biotech Foundation International](#), Florence Wambugu. "The CGIAR centers need to think about starting with a clear demand identified by farmers. It is important to ask who needs what we are producing. Next, think about the economics of scale (How will our products be scaled up? Who will do the scaling?)," advised Wambugu. Her thoughts were echoed by Peter Carberry, Deputy Director for research at the [International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics](#) (ICRISAT).

"We have to focus on what our beneficiaries need. An example: Many of Africa's livestock are kept on lands where crops are grown. The residues of these staple crops are fed to the animals. We must pay attention to the whole farm environment. Another example is the significant rising market demand for red meat in West Africa: We should be investigating how the lands that support our crops can support this," noted Carberry to round up the panel discussion.

The panel was chaired by Prof. Doug Gollin, a development economist at the University of Oxford and member of the CGIAR ISPC and Chair of the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA).

The Science Forum (SF) is a flagship event that was initiated by the ISPC in 2009 as a means to reach out to scientists and scientific communities largely external to CGIAR, but who could make important contributions to the CGIAR research portfolio and its objectives of reducing poverty, improving food security, human nutrition and health, and environmental sustainability.



Work along value chains: Victor Manyong on research pathways and priorities for rural prosperity

IITA DG: Move from jobless youths to agribusiness leaders

IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga assured young people that the idea behind the soon-to-be launched ENABLE Youth Program is to move young graduates from joblessness to affluence. He made this known in Abuja while welcoming young people from over 20 African countries that had come to participate in the ENABLE Youth Design Workshop.

"We do not want you to earn salaries from others, but to create salaries for others," Sanginga said.

The ENABLE Youth Program aims to create business opportunities and decent employment for young women and men along priority agricultural value chains and is expected to take off later in the year. The program aims to ensure that young jobless graduates enrolled in it who undergo incubation and in the end get starter packs can start their own agricultural businesses and employ other jobless youths.



Group photo with DG Sanginga, IITA staff, and youth representatives from various countries attending the ENABLE Youth Design Workshop in Abuja.

The visibly excited youth expressed appreciation to the DG and said that they would take full advantage of this program to become assets to themselves and Africa.

Other IITA staff at the interaction meeting were Alfred Dixon, Head, Partnership Coordination; Gbassey Tarawali, Head, Abuja Station, and Paul Woomeer, technical adviser to youth Agripreneurs in Kenya.

IITA-Kalambo hosts French delegation in DRC

Last 29 March, a 3-person delegation from the French Embassy in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Rector of the [Catholic University of Bukavu](#) (UCB) visited the IITA Kalambo Station, South Kivu Province, DRC. The purpose of the visit was to familiarize themselves with the research-for-development activities of IITA in South Kivu as part of a build up to commissioning a French Institute in Bukavu. The Institute will, among others, facilitate processing of visa application to France and other Schengen countries. The delegation was led by Prof Paul Kadudu, the Rector of UCB.

The delegation was received by Dr [Chris Okafor](#), the Officer-in-Charge of the Station. In his welcome remarks, he outlined the research for development activities of the Station in collaboration with various national and international partners. In particular, he commended UCB for its support to and close collaboration with the Station. A guided tour of the Station was conducted for the visitors during which they saw the Institute's laboratory facilities and agro-processing activities. They interacted with staff and the Agripreneurs in the course of the tour. They were impressed with the modern equipment

for advanced analysis in soil, molecular biology, and rhizobiology.

The IITA laboratories, which serve the entire Great Lakes region (Rwanda, Burundi, and Congo) especially on cassava diseases, are among the best in DRC and in the region.

Impressed by what they saw and heard, members of the delegation expressed their willingness to support strong collaboration between IITA-Kalambo and the [University of Montpellier](#). The delegation also had an exciting tour of the processing facilities run by the

youth agripreneurs and enjoyed their cassava and soybean cookies.

In his parting comments, G.H. de Cawdolle, a member of the delegation, invited IITA to visit the French Institute that will be commissioned in Bukavu for the North and South Kivu Provinces to explore areas of collaboration. Cawdolle left the following comment in the visitors' book, "Heureux de découvrir un centre aussi exceptionnel sur les terres de mon enfance" which means in English "very glad to discover a very exceptional center on the land of my childhood."



French Embassy delegates in a group photo with IITA Kalambo scientists, IITA Agripreneurs, and the rector of UCB and some UCB teachers.

YIIFSWA facilitates a second farmer exchange visit to Illushi seed yam market

The foremost constraint of yam farmers is the unavailability and affordability of quality seed tubers.

To promote seed yam production and commercialization in Ghana and Nigeria, the Yam Improvement for Income and Food Security in West Africa (YIIFSWA) project facilitated its second farmer exchange visit to illushi seed yam market in Edo state on 14 April. The first visit was during the production season. This second visit focused on the marketing season and provided yam farmers and extension agents from Ghana and Nigeria the opportunity to see the vibrancy of the Illushi seed yam market and engage with local traders on seed yam production and commercialization.

The one-day visit began with a short opening forum followed by interaction with traders at the market. The visiting farmers were sensitized on production and marketing procedures as well as on the profitability of seed yam commercialization.

Illustrating the profitability of seed yam, Mr Amos, a seasoned producer and trader said: "Seed yam is a very profitable business. Last year I planted two hectares of seed yam with a production cost of around N500,000 (~\$2,500). I have sold almost all the seeds I intended to sell for about N950,000. I recovered my cost of production and made a profit of N450,000 (~\$2,250). In addition, I have reserved enough seed to plant the next crop."

During the market tour, the visiting farmers noticed that traders sold seed tubers sorted by size and variety. The best tubers were well-shaped weighing about 500 g or more and sold for N40,000–N60,000 (\$200–300) per set of 400. The lowest grade in terms of size weighing 20–50 g are sold for about N4000–N6,000 (\$20–30).

Commenting on the seed sizes at the market, a farmer from Salaga, Ghana, said: "It was surprising to find seed tubers as small as stones in the market; we usually give them to our children to play with or roast and eat because we consider them to be of no value. But in this market every size has value. A trader was selling them for N8000! (\$400 per 400 tubers)."

Some of the visiting farmers were from communities where the production of small sized tubers is ridiculed and the sale of seed yam in their community markets

prohibited by tradition. A farmer from the northern part of the yam belt of Nigeria, opined that yam is revered as a symbol of fertility and wealth in his community, therefore the size of yam tubers matters to the producers. A farmer who produces small tuber is subject to ridicule and is not considered as a real farmer.

The farmers from Salaga, Northern Ghana, attested that the sale of seed yam in the marketplace was not encouraged in their community. Farmers were also discouraged from buying seed tubers from markets because they believe that buying seed tubers from the market translates to buying another man's 'bad luck'.

According to Yam Seed System Specialist [Beatrice Aighewi](#), "There is some truth in the misconception as seed tubers sold in markets are often of poor quality. Where mostly farmer-saved seed is used, farmers select the best out of their harvest to plant their field and the left-over which is sold is usually of lower quality, and will result in poor yields. Farmers who buy such seed tubers are disgruntled when they don't get value for money, hence the misconception. We are trying to correct this by sensitizing farmers on using the minisett technique for quality seed production and the viability of seed yam marketing to address smallholder farmers' access to seed yam.

"This exchange visit was organized because we recognize the fact that farmers learn best from each other. Illushi seed market is one of its kind; there is no other market in the region that is dedicated to seed yam marketing, and nothing but seed yam is sold at the market. Bringing farmers to Illushi to see the market and interact with traders helps to promote

the production and commercialization of good quality seed yam."

The YIIFSWA Country Manager in Ghana, Dr Haruna Braimah, implored the farmers from Ghana to note the important role played by women who were the majority of traders at the market. He said in some communities, it is forbidden for women to handle seed yam.

Enthused by what they saw, the visiting farmers pledged to try out seed production using the minisett technique in their various communities this coming season and at marketing their produce. Speaking on the impact that YIIFSWA has made in his life, Mr Joy Ogunbiyi from Igbeti, Oyo State said, "YIIFSWA has changed my life for good. When YIIFSWA came to my community, I was skeptical of their intervention and I wasn't interested in yam farming. I was invited for the yam open day at IITA, Ibadan, and from there my interest in cultivating yam grew. Last year I also attended the first farmer exchange visit to Illushi, Idah, and Abuja. We visited the field of a woman who started her yam farm by cutting and reserving for planting all the head portions of yam tubers that she used to prepare meals for her family. Now she has about two hectares of yam which would not have been possible due to the high cost of seed yam.

"I instructed my wife to set aside every head of yam tuber she prepares for food. I have planted about 3000 heaps today. Because of my interest in yam production, I have been selected to represent yam farmers at the commodity board in Oyo State, and I am confident that I can do the job with the knowledge that YIIFSWA has given me. For that I can only say thank you, YIIFSWA."



Yam farmers selling bad quality yam roots.