

China seeks to deepen relations with Africa in agricultural development

China has stepped up efforts to deepen collaboration with Africa in the area of agricultural development with the exploration of cooperation with IITA.

China's Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (CATAS), the agency that is promoting the collaboration with IITA, sees the partnership as a win-win situation for both China and Africa, as the latter seeks ways to improve food security and create jobs for the growing youth population.

Under the proposed framework for CATAS and IITA collaboration, both parties agree to work together on crop improvement especially cassava, banana/plantain, spices, vegetables and cocoa. The framework will also see Africa-China student and researcher exchange programs that will engender learning and capacity development.

Other areas include but are not limited to germplasm exchange and upstream research such as the development of molecular markers, genomics, mechanization, and breeding of cassava resistant to cassava mosaic disease and cold tolerant cassava varieties.

The IITA-CATAS collaboration is part of IITA's strategy to deepen partnership between the North and South.



IITA's Alfred Dixon (in hat) briefing the CATAS delegation from China.

Receiving a delegation from CATAS in IITA on Thursday, Alfred Dixon, representing DG Nteranya Sanginga, said the proposal for joint cooperation was a step in the right direction.

"We are excited over this development and we want to work with you," he said.

Sanginga pledged IITA's commitment to work with CATAS to help China fight the scourge of crop pests such as cassava mosaic disease that is economically important to both China and Africa.

The leader of the Chinese delegation, Wang Jiabao, a Deputy Secretary-General of CATAS said his organization was excited to visit IITA and proposed that both IITA and CATAS initiate joint proposal development in areas of mutual interest that would attract international funding

from China and elsewhere for agricultural development.

"We hope this cooperation will benefit both IITA and CATAS," Jiabao said.

Jiabao was accompanied by Ou Wenjun, an expert in cassava cultivation from CATAS' cassava center; Dang Xuanmin, an expert in vegetable breeding and cultivation from CATAS' tropical vegetable center; and John Wen, Manager of the marketing department of Green Agriculture West Africa Ltd (GAWAL).

In Nigeria, IITA and CATAS will be working with GAWAL—a private Chinese agricultural firm—on several agricultural issues. GAWAL has also offered to serve as a link between IITA and other Chinese agricultural solution providers.

AfDB delegation visits new IITA-Zambia research facility

On 11 March, a delegation from the African Development Bank (AfDB) led by Dr Chiji Ojukwu, Director of Agriculture and Agro-Industry, conducted a site visit to IITA-Zambia's new regional hub office and research facility at its Southern Africa Research and Administration Hub (SARAH) campus in Kabangwe, Chongwe District in Lusaka Province, some 15 km north of Lusaka City center. AfDB provided funds for the construction of the new IITA-Zambia facility through its Support to Agricultural Research for Development of Strategic Crops in Africa (SARD-SC) project that IITA is implementing across 24 African countries including Zambia.



David Chikoye (right) briefing Chiji Ojukwu (AfDB) as they walk around the SARAH campus.

The AfDB team was taken on a tour around the SARAH campus by David Chikoye, IITA Southern Africa Regional Director. They were accompanied by IITA staff Pheneas Ntawuruhunga, cassava breeder; Godfrey Chigeza, soybean breeder; Emmanuel Alamu, food technology specialist; Clare Ruhweza, Regional Facilities Maintenance Manager; Jonsen Malama, IITA-Zambia Facilities Maintenance Officer; and Jeffrey Oliver, Regional Communication Officer, as well as contractor representatives.

Aside from visiting the main building that houses the scientists' and administration offices and a laboratory, the AfDB delegation were also taken on a tour of the machinery fabrication workshop, the farming equipment shed, and the cassava and soybean demonstration and trial plots. At each of these places, the AfDB delegation was briefed about how the facilities will be used to expedite IITA's mission and vision in Southern Africa and how these will contribute towards attaining the objectives set out by the SARD-SC project.

On briefing the AfDB team, Chikoye said, "The biggest challenge that we had before was that we lacked our own research facilities, which curtailed our research-for-development work in the region. With these new facilities that AfDB helped us build, this will not be a problem anymore."

"Specifically, now we would be able to better do research to reduce the drudgery of work usually associated with agriculture, develop and test high-yielding crop varieties attuned to the conditions of the region, and bring in African youths into agricultural entrepreneurship," Chikoye added. For the latter, Chikoye was referring to plans of using the campus as hands-on training ground for youth-in-agriculture programs that AfDB is championing.

"I am very impressed with what you have here, but I am even more impressed about your plans and the potential of this research campus," said Ojukwu. "I am extremely

proud that AfDB will be able to help IITA realize its mission and vision in the southern African region."

"And yes, there are still some things that need to be ironed out, but teething problems are expected of new buildings and facilities. I am sure these will be sorted out in due time," he added.

During the visit, Ojukwu especially pointed out trials being carried out by IITA-Zambia on developing improved varieties of cassava, a focus crop under SARD-SC. He also expressed interest in the agricultural machinery shown to the group, as well as the soybean variety trial work.

"However, what I will be intently watching out for are your plans for bringing in Zambian youths into agribusiness, with this campus as training platform. AfDB will be very interested in how you will be bringing this plan into fruition," he emphasized.

Cassava commercialization project launched in Malawi

In its unceasing efforts to support Malawi to improve rural livelihoods IITA launched a new cassava project "Promoting cassava commercialization for increased income, employment and food security in Malawi" on 8 March in Lilongwe.

The project, which is funded by the [German Society for International Cooperation](#) (GIZ)-Malawi, focuses on (1) Facilitating the development of strong associations between producers and agroprocessors along the cassava value chain; (2) Promoting cassava processing and strengthening the capacity of farmer groups and individual entrepreneurs to plan, implement, and manage value-addition for improved market access and incomes; (3) Promoting the adoption of improved technologies and practices through participatory approaches for increased productivity, competitiveness, and profitability of cassava production; and (4) Strengthening the capacity of farmers' groups and individual entrepreneurs to produce and market their cassava products.

The launch also provided an opportunity to orient the stakeholders with the project activities, update them on the progress made so far, discuss the annual work plan, and establish the necessary collaborative arrangements for the implementation of the project. The launch was opened by the Assistant Director of the Department of Agricultural Research Services, Elisa Mazuma. In his speech Mazuma commended the existing partnership among stakeholders and called for its continuity for the benefit of



Group photo of participants.

all players along the cassava value chain in the country.

Speaking at the same function, the IITA-Malawi Country Representative, [Arega Alene](#), thanked the Malawi government for its long-standing support to IITA work in Malawi and for its commitment to increase cassava production and commercialization as part of a larger effort aimed at crop diversification.

"In IITA, we believe in projects that benefit the country as a whole, but more specifically farmers. We are looking at cassava not only as a major food security crop but also as a significant source of income and employment, so our aim is to help African countries to develop varieties with dual resistance to both [cassava mosaic](#) and [cassava brown streak](#) diseases, drought tolerance, yellow-flesh (rich in pro-Vitamin A), and end-user preferred traits as part of a larger effort aimed at promoting cassava commercialization and value chains," said Arega.

In his welcoming remarks the Regional Cassava Breeder who is also the Coordinator for the project, [Pheneas Ntawuruhunga](#), described the significant progress IITA has made in cassava research as both ground breaking and beneficial to farmers. "The key issue constraining increased cassava production is lack of market opportunities. This project will work with all stakeholders from variety development to value addition to increase cassava production to meet increasing market demand and for commercialization," Ntawuruhunga said.

A total of 35 participants (30 men and 5 women) from the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development (Departments of Agricultural Research Services and Agricultural Extension Services), the manufacturing industry, small and medium processors, Cassava: Adding Value in Africa (C:AVA), GIZ, IITA, CIP, and the farming community attended.

IITA and Ekimiks organize agribusiness training for youths

IITA in collaboration with Ekimiks Nigeria Limited and L.A. Consult are organizing a 5-day agribusiness training for youth in Nigeria and other African countries under the framework of the IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA).

The training is a follow-up to the first phase of training on Agripreneurial and Business Management organized by Ekimiks Nigeria Limited for IYA in 2015.

The training is part of efforts by IITA and partners to engage youths in agriculture as several countries on the continent are turning to agriculture because of the burst in commodity prices especially crude oil.

Tagged 'Developing Strategic Skills for Agribusiness,' the training will commence on 29 March, at the Conference Center of IITA in Ibadan, Nigeria.

The training aims to sharpen the skills of young Agripreneurs to excel as business owners and effectively equip them for business proficiencies along the agricultural value chain. It will draw participants from all Nigerian states and other

African countries like Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The five-day training will take the participants through several sessions including Building a Financially Viable Business, Critical and Strategic Thinking in Agribusiness, Identifying Opportunities within the Agribusiness, Effective Planning for Sustainable Farming Business, Fundamentals of Business Accounting, Business Performance Ratios, Business Accounting Practice, Self-Management, and Managing Manpower for High Productivity.

Participants will also be trained on Essential Business Skills in Farm Management, Effective Sales and Marketing Strategies, Achieving Operational Excellence, Risks Management and Business Continuity Planning, Writing a Winning Business Plan for Agribusiness, and Public Speaking and Presentation Skills.

Successful entrepreneurs will also be present to share practical case studies and motivational talks with the aspiring Agripreneurs.



Youth Agripreneurs training fellow youths.

The IITA Youth Agripreneurs is a group of young graduates which was established in 2012 to engage unemployed youths in agriculture. The group is spread across states like Kano, Port Harcourt, Abuja and other African countries such as DRC, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia, is actively engaging youths in agribusiness.

SARD-SC PMU retreat held amid applause for laudable achievements

The SARD-SC Project Management unit held the 2016 annual retreat recently in Abuja, with staff of all the implementing centers—ICARDA, AfricaRice, IITA, and IFPRI—in attendance. The retreat assessed what was done in the previous year and planned ahead for the new year. Project Coordinator Chrys Akem said the meeting was a critical one because the project is at its winding down phase. Discussions at the meeting focused on project issues while solutions were sought to seemingly knotty issues.



Chris Akem flanked by Commodity Specialists Sidi Sanyang and Solomon Assefa.

In his preamble, Akem urged the Commodity Specialists to ensure the completion of the Project Completion Report submission by the end of the year. He commented on the African Development Bank's commendation of the project as "one of the best managed projects with over 80% disbursement rate. AfDB is happy the project is on track."

The tone of the meeting was set with the review and adoption of the minutes of the last retreat held October, in Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire in 2015. Thereafter, Akem conducted a reviewed status of action points from the Abidjan retreat and checked for implementation by the house. The status of the implementation of the Mid-Term Review recommendations were critically examined point by point especially relating to outscaling/disseminating technologies and youth engagement by all the commodity groups: wheat, cassava, maize, and rice.

Several presentations were made by all representatives of the participating centers. Reports from the Monitoring and Evaluation and Socioeconomic meeting were presented by Issaka Amadou and Paul Dontsop on cassava and maize value chain impact plans. Somado Attiogbevi Kafu and Yameogo Ouambi, both M & E Specialists for rice and wheat commodities, respectively, presented their impact plans, while Tanguy Bernard presented IFPRI's plans on farmers' groups and impact. Steve Kiingi, Project

Agricultural Business Specialist, gave an update on market linkages. Zulfawu Yahaya, Procurement Specialist, presented on the status of commodity procurement plans for cassava and maize commodities while those of rice and wheat were presented by Abdou Mohammed and Anis Boukadida, respectively. Seyi Fashokun, Project Accountant, gave financial updates on commodity budgets for cassava and maize value chains while Cheikh Abdella and Wahid Zakhama gave presentations on rice and wheat, respectively.

Akem advised the PMU and the Commodity Specialists on the need to prepare for the upcoming Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting taking place end March, addressing the recommendations from the last meeting in Dakar. Another important area of focus at the retreat was how the project could earn a second phase, hence working group sessions and discussions were held on commodity focus areas by the Commodity Specialists and other members of the team. To foster intrainstitutional collaboration, networking and team building, group discussions were held on various topics across implementing centers of the project.

Among the attendees were the four Commodity Specialists: Sam Ajala (maize), Marie Yomeni (cassava), Solomon Assefa (wheat), and Sidi Sanyang (rice).

IITA-Bukavu and Kinshasa stations host premier web2fordev training workshop

IITA-Central Africa Hub in partnership with the Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) has successfully organized its first training on Web2forDev and social media in DR Congo. The training was held at Kalambo on 22–26 February and in Kinshasa on 29 February–4 March.

The beneficiaries consisted of 52 participants comprising staff from policymaking bodies, IITA Youth Agripreneurs, IITA Kalambo and Kinshasa staff, value chain actors, and civil society groups active in the domains of agriculture and rural development, natural resources, and climate change adaptation.

The training was facilitated by CTA's Raugland Anky and also attended by high functionaries of local government agencies namely the Provincial Minister for Tourism and Communication, Jacques Rukeba and the Head of the Provincial Division of Posts, Telephones and Telecommunications, Paul Kablingwa.

During the opening, His Excellency, Jacques Rukeba, the guest of honor declared "We are happy about this training for development. We appreciate IITA for championing the initiative to train actors of development and further empower them through telecommunications, media coverage, and agricultural extension services. With the technology revolution today, everything happens through social media and therefore a good knowledge of this is a key factor for any meaningful development," he said.

This initiative has provided results in the adoption, institutionalization, and further dissemination of appropriate, low cost, simple and replicable Web 2.0 and social media applications for stakeholders identified as priority targets within CTA Regional Business



Participants during the training session.

Plan for Central Africa within the CTA. It has also improved the skills and increased awareness among development actors on Web 2.0 applications and social media learning opportunities replication.

During the welcome remarks, [Nzola Mahungu](#), IITA DR Congo Country Representative and [Chris Okafor](#), Officer-in-Charge of IITA-Kalambo Station, invited all participants to actively and intensively participate in the training, and take advantage of the opportunity being offered by IITA and CTA. They also congratulated Mireille N'simire, ICT Specialist based in IITA-Kalambo for coordinating these training series and for getting involved in ICT4Dev.

Paul Musafiri, a participant and lecturer at Institut Supérieur d'Etude Agronomique (ISEA) said, "The training on web2fordev was wonderful. It allowed me to discover many useful tips to browse on the Internet in a professional manner. As a PhD student and

lecturer, advanced Google search, the use of flow aggregators, online mapping by Google maps and the ability to store, manage, and share data on Google Drive will be of great help to me."

Another participant Claudia Iragi, in charge of Research and Statistics Department at the Centre of Support to Sustainable Development and Peace (CADP) in Bukavu, said: "The facilitator was competent, thorough, and professional. I found the training very interesting and very useful."

IITA Researcher Antoine Frangoie took the advantage of the training to create a [blog](#) for the Projet de Recherche pour l'Innovation Agricole (PRIA), where the local government and IITA team can read about the impact of PRIA. Gloria Mangoni also from the DR Congo Prime Minister Agricultural consul created a [blog](#) to showcase the activities of local government related to small-scale farming.

Announcements

- **Research Innovations and Sustainable Entrepreneurship for Food Security and Growth**, 19th annual symposium of the International Association of Research Scholars and Fellows (IARSAF), 30–31 March, IITA Conference Center, Ibadan, Nigeria.
- **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).