



IITA DG wins debate on engaging youth in agribusiness

Africa's statistics on youth unemployment can be overwhelming but to a visionary it is an untapped resource with the potential of changing the status quo of poverty and hunger which are often synonymous with the continent. The great challenge of youth unemployment can also be seen as an opportunity for them to become the engine spearheading the 'green revolution' in the continent.

This was the argument which clinched the keenly contested debate at the [Young Africa Works](#) summit on "Agriculture as a sector of economic opportunity for youth in sub-Saharan Africa" in favor of IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#).

The debate was organized by [MasterCard Foundation](#) at the Old Harbour Conference Centre, Westin Hotel, Cape Town, South Africa on 29 October. Sanginga went up against [Jim Sumberg](#) of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK. The debate was moderated by Eleni Gabre-Madhin, Co-founder and CEO, Eleni.

About 300 thought leaders from NGOs, government, donor agencies, and the private sector committed to developing sustainable youth employment strategies in Africa congregated to discuss best practices and effective approaches for preparing young people for employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in agriculture.

During the contest, Sanginga emphasized the plight of employable youth in Africa. He stated that every year 10-12 million young people seek to enter the continent's workforce but without success. Despite the opportunities in agriculture, African youths lack access to arable land, credit, improved technologies, practical skills and fair markets as well as other logistics and services necessary for succeeding in agribusiness. Even with opportunities opening up, most educated youth are skeptical about opportunities in agriculture.

However, using [IITA's Youth Agripreneurs](#) initiative as an example, Sanginga effectively

argued that agribusiness can be profitable for youth if they are given the right skills. He indicated that steering rural enterprise along commodity value chains within the context of professional agriculture can have a huge influence on both the livelihoods of the youth and the process of agricultural transformation. Following this approach, numerous agribusiness incubations have established many profitable enterprises including intensive vegetable production, marketing of new varieties of cereal and legume seed, fish farming and associated activities, and value-added processing of soybean and cassava.

Given opportunities and incentives, and mind-set change, rural youth can profitably be redirected toward agribusiness, service provision and market-oriented agriculture, with a huge impact upon their rural communities. Different models developed by [IITA](#), [AGRA](#), [FARA](#), and [CTA](#) offer stepwise approaches to strengthening the skills of youth in agribusiness and are ripe for expansion and integration.



DG Nteranya Sanginga (left) on the debate floor with Eleni Gabre-Madhin (moderator) and Jim Sumberg (right).

Sanginga therefore called for the development of a comprehensive program that forges widespread commitment and partnership, indicating that combining approaches in an effective manner would lead to delivering cost-effective opportunities to the youth for profitable agribusiness development. He specified that this sort of effort must not only extend well beyond reorientation and formal training; rather it must involve the development of detailed agribusiness plans and credit-worthy loan applications, leading to the establishment of a massive network of new business ventures and services across the entire agricultural value chain.

Former Burundi minister lauds IITA's significant support

To mark the end of her term in office, Hon. Kayitesi Odette, the immediate past Minister of Agriculture in Burundi visited [IITA](#), and thanked the Institute and staff for their support during her tenure. She

also urged the Institute to extend the same gesture to the new minister.

During the commendation visit on 25 September, Hon. Kayitesi noted that IITA's significant contribution to Burundi's banana seed systems, cassava, integrated pest

and natural resource management, and capacity development for staff, students, partners, and especially farmers, has made her proud.

According to her, these contributions have transformed the status quo of farmers'





Hon. Kayitesi (centre) during her visit to IITA-Burundi.

knowledge and practice. "As an example," she said "the banana subsector has become more vibrant and competitive; farmers now use tissue culture materials as part of field rehabilitation initiatives to control [Banana Xanthomonas wilt \(BXW\)](#), thereby stimulating private tissue culture labs to produce and provide more planting materials. This was certainly not the case in the past."

Banana is an important source of economic and social capital for the farming population in Burundi with an annual production estimated at 1.85 million tons on average. It is cultivated by more than 90% of the farming households in nearly all agroecological zones and it has high agronomic potential and multi-purpose uses.

With the emergence of [BXW](#), banana production dropped significantly, rendering farmers without alternative income sources to cater for school fees and health care, especially affecting the food security of smallholders who rely on banana for their livelihoods.

Hon. Kayitesi therefore commended IITA and partners for enhancing farmers' capacity and introducing innovative practices to sustainably [manage BXW](#).

On behalf of IITA and staff, [Emmanuel Njukwe](#), IITA Burundi country representative, received Hon. Kayitesi during her visit and pledged IITA's continual support to the Burundi government. He also reiterated the Institute's commitment to work closely with farmers to combat major diseases and in achieving food security.

Giving small-scale farmers in Burkina Faso options

The appropriate varieties of early-maturing cowpea for Burkina Faso ([AVEC-BF](#)) project organized a farmers' participatory varietal selection ([FPVS](#)) for 1,011 farmers from 14 villages in the north and south of Burkina Faso to promote the use of improved cowpea varieties by small-scale farmers. The AVEC-BF project aims to develop a large-scale dissemination system for improved cowpea jointly developed by IITA and the Institut de l'Environnement et de Recherches Agricoles de Burkina Faso ([INERA](#)).

[Haruki Ishikawa](#), AVEC-BF project leader, said, "We use the FPVS as an avenue to educate and demonstrate how to effectively use improved cowpea varieties for profitable returns. In this way, the project is able to acknowledge farmers' preferences, while enhancing the capacity of village and community members." After the selection, the farmers were interviewed to clarify their selection criteria.

Most farmers who participated in the FPVS are very interested in the improved cowpea variety and maintaining their interest is inbuilt into the scheme. "To sustain participants' interests, farmer schools (FS) have been planned after the harvest season for the same villages



Farmers selecting their favorite cowpea varieties.

where FPVS was conducted", Ishikawa added. "In this arrangement, cowpea farmers will be enrolled as students of the FS, where they will acquire more skills and knowledge needed for their production activities. This exposure will enhance farmers' understanding of improved cowpea varieties and also engage them even after harvest."

Issa Drabo, Cowpea Breeder at INERA Burkina Faso, further explained the distinctiveness of the AVEC-BF project approach. "The scheme is unique. Three different challenges coexist in the same

village: establishment of a seed production system, the need for FPVS to find acceptable varieties for farmers, and the FS for farmers' technology enhancement." He also added that the project's activities have provided an opportunity for training young technicians at INERA.

Ishiwaka concluded, "We are tackling the issue of how to deliver the achievements of IITA to small-scale farmers".

The AVEC-BF project is funded by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries ([MAFF](#)).

Announcements

- **Open Day, IITA Ibadan, Nigeria, 14 November**
- **R4D Week, IITA Ibadan, 22-28 November.**
- **7th International Conference of the Africa Soil Science Society;**

Theme: Critical soil solutions for sustainable development in Africa. 2 to 8 December, Salle de Banquets in Ouaga 2000, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

- **Joint World Cowpea and Pan-African Grain Legume Research Conference**

2016, co-organized by IITA and the Feed-the-Future Legume Innovation Lab, Livingstone, Zambia, 28 February to 4 March 2016. For more info, visit the conference [website](#) or download the conference [announcement](#).

YIIFSWA has two new Technical Advisory Committee members in Nigeria

The Yam Improvement for Income and Food Security in West Africa (YIIFSWA) project welcomed two new members: Prof E.A. Salako from the University of Abuja and Chief Tola Adepomola, Chair of the Root and Tuber Crops Subcommittee of the All Farmers Association of Nigeria, who was represented by Rev. J.O. Adeleye to its Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) during a visit to IITA Ibadan on 8 and 9 October.

They met with the [YIIFSWA project](#) team based in IITA-HQ; their visit included

a briefing session on the project and an excursion on project activities within Ibadan. The new TAC members were accompanied by the YIIFSWA Management Team composed of Project Leader [Norbert Maroya](#), Seed System Specialist, [Beatrice Aighewi](#), the Country Manager for Nigeria [John Ikeorgu](#), Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist [Djana Mignouna](#), Communication Specialist Owoja Odihi, Data Analyst Mikail Gbadegesin, Project Administration Assistant Emmanuel Paul, Seed Production Field

Officer Folake Erinfolami, and M&E Field Officer Bridget Akinribido.

The new TAC members praised the team for the project's work, in particular the novel technologies for high ratio propagation for seed yam production and the diagnostic tools for virus indexing, quality control, and certification of seed yam production. Prof Salako said: "...From what I have seen (at Ibadan) the Institute is well endowed with capable staff and infrastructure, and commendation should be made to the Institute".

The two new members were invited to the TAC in response to the recommendation from the 4th TAC meeting to increase Nigeria's representatives.

Every year TAC members meet after the annual project progress review and planning meeting to evaluate the achievements towards meeting the goal of increasing yam productivity by 40% for 200,000 smallholder farmers in Ghana and Nigeria, and deliver key research products that will contribute to improving yam productivity and the livelihoods of yam farmers.



Norbert Maroya (left) explaining project field trials to new TAC members as well as IITA YIIFSWA project team.

CARE-Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) undertakes project administration and financial management training

The [IITA](#) Project Administration Office (PAO) has just concluded a 3-day Project Administration and Financial Management Training for IITA and [Development Aid from People to People \(DAPP\)](#) project staff, under the [CARE-Scaling Up Nutrition \(SUN\) project](#). The training, which was facilitated by Kayode Awobajo, Project Resource Manager, and Femi Adewale, Project Administration Officer, had nine participants and was held at Cresta Golfview Hotel, Lusaka, Zambia, 13-15 October.

The main objective of this learning-by-doing training was to equip participants with a better understanding of the CARE reporting format, developing budgets, and proper tracking of expenditures and to improve communication among stakeholders. It was a follow-up to an earlier training conducted by PAO on 21-22 May.

Participants showed enthusiasm throughout the sessions, and the feedback was very encouraging with many of them expressing their confidence in applying the lessons learned to further improve their work.

The Project Manager, Therese Gondwe, in her closing remarks, thanked PAO for creating time to facilitate the training, which she believed would further strengthen the partnership between IITA and DAPP.



Group photograph of training participants and facilitators.

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).