IITA
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Former President Olusegun Obasanjo calls for investments in international agricultural research

Investors and policy makers at the rejuvenation forum in IITA-Ibadan

Former Nigerian President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo today called on the Nigerian government and African nations to invest in international agricultural research by supporting IITA and to tap into the opportunities offered by the vast arable lands in the continent.

"This is an important institution for us in Nigeria and Africa and we need to support it," says Obasanjo, who is also IITA's Ambassador for Africa, at an event that marks the 45th anniversary of the biggest international agricultural research center in the continent.

Food insecurity and poverty remain on top of the agenda of African governments but not many of them have been able to meet the Maputo declaration of allocating 10 percent of budgets to agriculture.

Obasanjo said that for Africa to maximize its full potential, the governments on the continent must support institutions such as IITA to acquire the technology and knowledge needed to create wealth.

He said, "Africa needs to think about the next generation as global population is expected to hit 9 billion by 2050."

"The point is that the tools used 45 years ago are likely to be obsolete, unless we rejuvenate," he said.

On the benefits of IITA to Nigeria in particular and Africa in general, Obasanjo said varieties from IITA helped save his farm and that of other farmers from the cassava mealybug pandemic in 1979.

"My farm was heavily infested until IITA brought cassava-resistant varieties," he said.

According to him, at the moment more that 70 percent of improved maize varieties grown in Nigeria today have come from IITA-developed varieties.

"We are lucky to have the largest research institute in our backyard and we should take advantage of it," he said.

The president of the All Farmers Association of Nigeria, Senator Abdullahi Adamu, called on Nigeria to meet its statutory financial obligation to IITA.

"As a Nigerian, I encourage the government henceforth to meet its financial obligation," he said.

He pledged to initiate laws that would support research activities in Nigeria, stressing that 'research is a component of the value chain that demands attention.'

IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga said rejuvenating the institution would be of benefit to Nigeria in particular and Africa in general.

He said that the battle of tomorrow will be food and water, explaining that IITA is well positioned to offer technologies that would improve agricultural productivity and create wealth.

Of the 60 percent arable land on the continent, only 33 percent has been cultivated.

Sanginga emphasized that investment in research for development was the only way forward for Africa.

Africa RISING team concludes Tanzanian project visit

Donor representatives and researchers working under the USAID Africa RISING project made field visits to selected project sites in Tanzania.

On the team were Eric Witte and Jerry Glover – USAID, Washington; Betty Maeda – USAID, Tanzania; Mateete Bekunda – IITA, Arusha; and Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon, IITA scientist who is coordinating the Africa RISING projects in West and Eastern/Southern Africa.

Donor representatives and researchers visit cassava field

The tour, held 17-21 June, started with a meeting with IITA's Regional Director, Dr. Victor Manyong, and his team at the IITA office in Daressalaam. The trip offered team members the opportunity to interact with current and potential partners across the country.

Stakeholders reappraised the implementation plan of the project in line with current realities and country priorities and also identified new strategic partners that could help towards the success of the project.

During the briefing, Witte and Glover said they wanted to interact with partners and visit some jump-start project sites for lessons that could contribute to shaping the transition from the jump-start phase to larger project activities.

At the end of the trip, Hoeschle-Zeledon said the findings from the field and the interactions with stakeholders provided lessons that would help in the successful implementation of the project.

The IITA Bulletin is produced by the Communication Office. For comments and/or contributions, please email: Jeffrey T. Oliver (o.jeffrey@cgiar.org), Godwin Atser (g.atser@cgiar.org), or Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org).

IITA and NARO to strengthen partnership for regional success

IITA and the Ugandan National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) have agreed to strengthen their collaboration to boost agriculture in the country and beyond following a meeting between the Directors General of the two institutes, IITA's Dr Nteranya Sanginga and NARO's Dr Emily Twinamasiko at NARO's headquarters in Entebbe.

Dr Sanginga noted that NARO was widely recognized for having one of the strongest banana and cassava research programs in Africa. IITA has not only been supporting these programs, but also benefitted tremendously from them to achieve its mission of fighting hunger and poverty in sub-Saharan Africa.

He said IITA was keen to work more strategically with NARO, tapping into its rich knowledge base and experienced staff, not only through joint projects, but also on the CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) such as the one on Roots, Tubers and Banana (RTB) and the IITA-led Humidtropics program.

He identified capacity building as one area that NARO can play a significant role in the region for the benefit of countries such as South Sudan.

"We need to work together better, carry out joint planning, and share credits for successful outputs. We need to share resources, frustrations, and successes," he said.

Sanginga (right) and Tushemereirwe in a banana plantation trial.

He observed that the two institutions were working very well in a joint program to develop transgenic bananas for resistance against Banana Xanthomonas Wilt (BXW). He informed his NARO counterpart that he had earlier met with the NARO banana program leader Dr Wilberforce Tushemereirwe who had briefed him on the progress made in the search for a sustainable solution to the bacterial disease that had greatly affected the production of the primary staple food crop in the region since 2003.

He invited both Drs Twinamasiko and Tushemereirwe to visit IITA-Ibadan later this year to further shape the collaboration. The two accepted the invitation and welcomed the proposal to strengthen collaborations with NARO.

In recent years, the two institutions have collaborated on coffee-based farming systems and climate change.

Beyond joint biotechnology work on banana and cassava, NARO and IITA have taken pride in having developed highland banana hybrids and resistant cassava varieties that have found their way to farmers' fields. The institutes' phytopathologists exported the Ugandan expertise to the larger region such as DR Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, and Kenya.

During his five-day visit to Uganda, Sanginga also met with ambassadors and senior officers in the donor community including a visit to the USAID Mission, Belgian Embassy, ASARECA, Dutch Embassy, European Union Head of Delegation, and aBi-Trust to strengthen collaboration with IITA.

He toured NARO and IITA's research facilities and fields to see the various on-going research activities.

Sanginga was accompanied by Victor Manyong, IITA Director for Eastern Africa, Piet Van Asten, the Uganda Country Representative, and some scientists: Jim Lorenzen, banana breeder; Danny Coyne, nematologist; and Fen Beed, plant pathologist, in many of the visits.

IITA welcomes new staff

Two newly recruited staff, Engr. Lawrence Kaptoge and Dr Mahamadi Dianda, have joined IITA.

Kaptoge joined the aflasafe™ team in IITA-Ibadan, Nigeria, as the Process Engineer – aflasafe™ Manufacturing Plant. He is a Kenyan and alumnus of Cranfield University (Silsoe), UK, where he obtained an MSc in Postharvest Technology in 1999 and the University of Nairobi, Kenya, where he got his BSc in Agricultural Engineering in 1991.

Lawrence has acquired over 19 years experience at various capacities in grain/seed technology – technical designing, construction, and handling of storage facilities. Prior to his appointment at IITA, he was an Assistant Lecturer at the Department of Mechanical and Production Engineering, Moi University, Kenya and an on-going D.Phil. candidate (Energy Studies). He worked with the Cereal Grain Services Ltd. as an engineer from January 2004 to September 2010. He also held the following positions: Processing Engineer Trainee and Factory

Kaptoge

Dianda

Manager to become the Seed Driers Complex Manager at the Kenya Seed Company Ltd. from July 1993 to January 2004.

Lawrence is a Practicing, Licenced Engineer registered with the Engineers Registration Board of Kenya (ERB), corporate member of the Institution of Engineers of Kenya (IEK), American Society of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineers (ASABE), European Society of Agricultural Engineers (IAgrE), and the Kenya Society of Agricultural Engineers (KSAE). Lawrence is married to Benedine Kurgat and has two children. He resides on the IITA campus.

Dianda, on the other hand has been appointed as the new Inoculant Delivery Specialist of the N2fixAfrica Project.

Prior to this appointment, he worked as a Senior Researcher at the Environmental and Agricultural Research Institute (I.N.E.R.A) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

He is based in IITA-Kano Station. He has an academic background in rural development (Forestry). He received a DEA in Plant Biology (1989) from the University of Check Anta Diop, Dakar, Senegal; and a Ph.D. in Plant Physiology (1993) from the University of Laval, Quebec.

He was a Forest Engineer (1988 to 2000), Researcher in Soil Biology (2001 – 2003), and Senior Researcher in Soil Microbiology (2003 to May 2012) at the Environmental and Agricultural Research Institute (I.N.E.R.A) in Ouagadougou.

Dianda, a Burkinabe, is married to Ouedraogo Habibou and has 3 children.