



IITA inaugurates Central African hub in DR Congo

IITA has inaugurated its Central African hub with the commissioning of an official building in Kinshasa that will cover the west provinces of DR Congo and an office in Bukavu, in South-Kivu that will serve the entire Great Lakes subregion.

The Central African hub is the fourth hub established by the Institute. The East African hub has its operations in Tanzania; Southern African hub in Lusaka, Zambia; while the West African hub is based in Nigeria. The West African hub also hosts the headquarters of the Institute in Ibadan.

The hub concept aims to accelerate the Institute's response to the different opportunities and threats to food security in sub-Saharan Africa.

At the inauguration of the hub, IITA Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga, said that the choice of DR Congo "is important because of the country's agricultural potential, which serves as a focal point for research for countries of the Central African region."

According to him, the inauguration of the building in Kinshasa is part of the Institute's strategy for efficient delivery of research outputs and to ensure more effectiveness.

In Central Africa, IITA will work with national agricultural research systems such as Institut National pour l'Etude et la Recherche Agronomique (INERA), universities,



The Principal Advisor to DRC's Head of State in charge of agriculture, Mr. Emmanuel Libendele, cuts the tape to inaugurate IITA's office in Kinshasa. Among the guests were members of national and international institutions, universities, local partners, and agencies working on or funding agricultural research and development programs in DRC.

nongovernmental organizations, farmers and the private sector.

Dr Sanginga said the establishment of the hub would also consolidate the long-time collaboration between IITA and partners in that region.

For instance, since 1974, IITA has been contributing in strengthening the capacity of INERA. Both institutions have been involved in the breeding of disease-resistant varieties of cassava against major diseases such as cassava mosaic virus. Such collaborations and many more will continue in the years ahead.

The Prime Minister of DR Congo, His Excellency Augustin Matata Ponyo, commended IITA for

establishing the hub in DR Congo. He expressed optimism that with research, DR Congo could tap its agricultural potential for economic growth and development, and could feed the entire sub-Saharan Africa.

In addition to improved varietal development, IITA and INERA research activities will focus on natural resource management to boost crop production and to improve livelihoods.

Dr Sanginga was accompanied by Prof. Paul Mafuka (INERA Director General and IITA Board member) and Dr Nzola Mahungu (IITA DRC Country representative).

IITA welcomes proposal development coordinator, Dr Kristina Roing de Nowina

Dr Kristina Roing de Nowina has joined IITA-Ibadan as Proposal Development Coordinator. Dr Roing de Nowina is a Swedish national. She has a Ph.D. in Soil Biology (2006) and an M.Sc. in Agriculture (1997) from the Swedish University of Agricultural Science, Uppsala.

Prior to her appointment, she was a Scientist/Project Manager at the same university, working on projects in Kenya and Nigeria in collaboration with CIAT-TSBF. She also worked as a Senior Program Officer at the international



secretariat of the same university in 2010. Dr Roing de Nowina is accompanied by her husband Paul and their son Christopher. She resides in No. 4, Africa Drive, IITA-Ibadan Campus.

She could be contacted on her office extension 2890.

Part 3

Risk management at IITA

Where are the risks?

- finance
- processes and systems
- infrastructure that supports our work
- technology we use

The more critical any of these are to us, the more likely that a risk to it could hinder us from accomplishing our goals if not attended to. This is why we must talk about risk.

Why talk about risk

The reality of life is that once in a while things will go wrong no matter how well we plan and prepare and no matter for how many years they have always gone right. It is also true that just as good things happen to good people and organizations, bad things also happen to them.

...To be continued

Barren soils threaten future of farming in Great Lakes region

Most of the soils in the Great Lakes region of Eastern Africa are poor with very little fertility left in them. This is one of the main reasons behind the low yields in the area, which has one of the lowest rates of fertilizer use in the world and a rapidly increasing population to feed, according to a recent study.

The barren soils are a result of years of mining and insufficient replacement of nutrients by small-holder farmers mostly practicing low-input agriculture. They remain a threat to the future of small-holder farming and the food and income of millions of people in the region if appropriate action is not taken.

The study, which sought to identify and rank the constraints faced by small-holder banana growers in the region, also measured the actual nutrient content left in the soils—in both the organic and mineral part—across different agroecoregions in Rwanda and Uganda.

This was after establishing that poor soil fertility was one of the main causes of the current low banana yield of 5-30 t/year against a potential yield of over 70 t/year. It accounted for up to 50% of the yield gap.

The study found that there was little fertility left in most soils and what was there was mostly due to the organic matter in the topsoil. Furthermore, while banana is a very important crop for the region, providing food and income for over 85% of the population, the use of external inputs such as fertilizers was virtually nonexistent and soil fertility



Banana plants growing on poor soils.

was mostly managed by recycling local organic residues.

The study was conducted from 2007 to 2011 in four agroecological regions in Rwanda (Butare, Kibungo, and Ruhengeri) and South-West Uganda (Ntungamo) and looked at the banana plants, various crop management practices, pests and diseases, and the chemical properties of soils.

It was undertaken by Séverine Delstanche as a Ph.D. student of the University of Louvain in Belgium and formed part of the Belgium (DGD)-funded project titled 'Sustainable and profitable banana-based systems for the African Great Lakes Region' led by IITA. It was also part of the Consortium for Improving Agriculture-based Livelihoods in Central Africa (CIALCA) project.

The study further established that soil fertility and banana productivity varied not only between the regions but also within regions, villages, and at the farm

level. The regional differences were due to differences in soils and their parental material whereas at the farm level, they were often the result of differential management practices.

The soils close to the homestead were more fertile due to kitchen wastes of ashes and organic residues.

Delstanche says that despite the acknowledgment by farmers and researchers of the importance of soil fertility in agricultural production, little research has been carried out to understand the current state of soils and the impact of past and present farming practices.

Therefore, she says, farmers are unaware of the nutritional status of their soil and how best to make use of the little resources available to them to increase production and productivity.

Dr Piet van Asten, IITA systems agronomist, says the findings of this research are very significant. "We knew that our soils were poor but we did not know just how poor. But now, we've calculated the nutrient stocks and have learned that very little nutrients are left. Moreover, the soil fertility almost entirely depends on the organic matter in the soil."

"The study therefore stresses the importance of recycling crop residues to improve soil fertility. Over 80% of the nutrients in the soil comes from the organic matter and not from the clay or sand itself."

IFAD President, Dr Kanayo Nwanze, to visit IITA

The President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Dr Kanayo Nwanze, will visit IITA in Ibadan on 20 and 21 August.

During the visit, the IFAD president will address scientists and stakeholders in the agricultural value chain including financial sector operators that have a bias for agricultural financing.



Archive: IFAD President, Dr Kanayo Nwanze (left) during a visit to IITA Cameroon. With him is IITA's Dr Rachid Hanna.

He will speak on the topic "Investing for and with the Youth: A Private-Public Partnership to Advance Participation of Youth in Agribusiness."

Joining the IFAD President will be Nigeria's Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr Akinwumi Adesina.

Nigeria's agriculture minister, Dr Adesina, has embarked on reforms aimed at transforming the nation's agricultural landscape. Dr Adesina hopes that the reforms will cut food import bills, improve food security, generate wealth, and create jobs for youths.

IITA Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga, said the visit of Dr Nwanze to IITA is significant for Africa's agricultural development.

Established in 1967, IITA became the first link of international agricultural research from Africa to the global network of agricultural research also known as CGIAR.

Cassava transformation team celebrates first anniversary

Stakeholders working on the Nigeria's cassava transformation will hold their first anniversary in IITA on 16 and 17 August.

Nigeria's Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr Akin Adesina, will talk about "Cassava transformation: the journey so far."

His presentation will highlight the milestones made by the team in improving cassava, and by extension the farmers who rely on the food crop for food security.

It will be recalled that, a year ago, Nigeria launched its agricultural transformation strategy in IITA.

Call for abstracts

The Nigeria Rural Sociological Association (NRSA) cordially invites IITA scientists, International Association of Research Scholars and Fellows (IARSAF), and the general public to the 21st annual national congress, that will be held at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria on 7-11 October.

The congress' theme is "Challenges and Approaches to Sustainable Rural Development in Sub-Saharan Africa." It has the following subthemes:

- Multidisciplinary interventions in rural development
- Sustainable rural infrastructure and environmental management
- Rural livelihoods, welfare, and poverty alleviation
- Leadership, governance, and policy for sustainable rural development
- Gender and generational issues in sustainable rural development
- Media and ICTs in sustainable rural development

The venue would be the Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry, University of Ibadan.

IITA will sponsor IARSAF members whose abstracts have been accepted.

For more information, visit: <http://www.ui.edu.ng/content/first-announcement-and-call-abstracts>.

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