



Osun State allocates 200 ha land to IITA to establish a Center of Excellence for agricultural research

On 7 July, Dr Charles 'Diji' Akinola, Head, Office of Economic Development and Partnerships (OEDP) and Coordinator Osun Rural Enterprise and Agricultural Program (O-REAP), led a seven-member team of representatives from O-REAP, OEDP, [Osun Ministry of Agriculture](#), and the Office of the Surveyor General to Ibadan. The visit was to begin the process of formalizing an agreement on the use of the 200 ha at Agba Ogun –one of the areas of high agricultural production allocated by the Osun State Government to [IITA](#) for the next 49 years.

The Osun State Government had allocated the land to IITA as part of efforts to ensure that the majority of Osun youth and farming families in the neighboring communities and farm settlements will be able to maximize crop yields and increase the productivity of their farms through certified seeds of high yielding improved varieties, best-bet agronomy, and crop protection practices. The farmland will be supervised partly by [O-REAP](#) which is energetically seeking to ensure mass production of food in the State.

Dr Akinola said that it was also part of Government's attempt to reduce dependence on crude oil and to shift to agriculture with the target of capturing 10% of the total food bill from neighboring Lagos State, currently estimated at USD 23 billion. "The State of Osun relies on IITA with over 45 years of award winning research to achieve this feat" Dr Akinola said. He added "In the

next couple of years, we expect to have a site in Osun where IITA can visibly show the practical impact of its research...We are also looking at a situation where IITA can have a positive impact on the lives of small-scale farmers occupying about 30,000 ha in 28 communities around the allocated site through research that will provide them with opportunities. We also expect IITA to develop creative ways of integrating [agroforestry](#) into the farming systems. We expect approaches that work in the State of Osun will be successful across southern Nigeria, especially focusing on crops such as cocoa, oil palm, plantain, maize, and cassava."

Dr [Kenton Dashiell](#), DDG Partnerships and Capacity Development, disclosed that IITA intends to conduct research directly relevant to address the needs of the farmers in the area whilst ensuring the long-term sustainability of the land. Specifically, IITA plans to deploy scientists to conduct research in the area and the [IITA Youth Agripreneurs](#) will start a project to multiply high quality and clean planting materials of plantain and cassava for surrounding communities in the next three years.

"One of the things fundamental to our work as a research institute is the long-term sustainability of the land," said Dr Dashiell. "We want to do our work in the State of Osun 100 times even better than we did in Ibadan, therefore we will focus on

preventing soil degradation ...we also do see a great need to work with established youth groups in Osun."

He added, "IITA sees this proposed innovative partnership as a big win for the people and the Osun State Government and believes that over the years it will grow into a very productive relationship for all concerned. It may become a model for how State Governments in Nigeria and all over Africa can partner with research organizations to make sure the research conducted is relevant and that the results are taken to the farmers as fast as possible."

Dr [Robert Asiedu](#), IITA Director West Africa, emphasized that IITA was committed to invest in the work planned in Osun to ensure top quality results, particularly in land use planning. "We hope to demonstrate that land can be used in a very sustainable fashion on this site over a long period," he said.

To push the agreement into real action, Dr [Stefan Hauser](#), Root and Tuber Systems Agronomist at IITA, and Ms [Sylvia Oyinlola](#), IITA Regional Administrator, will deploy the [GIS](#) team from IITA to map the entire area and open access roads along the boundaries. This will give IITA immediate access to set up trials, demonstrations, and multiplication fields to serve the farming community so they can start benefiting from IITA's expertise without delay, pending the signing of an MoU formalizing this partnership.



The delegates from the State of Osun (third-eighth and eleventh from left) flanked by IITA scientists and members of staff.

Ambassador of Finland visits IITA

Her Excellency Pirjo Suomela-Chowdhury, Ambassador of Finland to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, accompanied by Ms Emmi Mwanzagi, Deputy Head of Mission, paid a courtesy

visit to IITA on 9 July. They were received by Dr Kenton Dashiell, DDG Partnerships and Capacity Development, and Dr Robert Asiedu, R4D Director, IITA-West Africa. The visit also provided an avenue for Dr

Dashiell to express IITA's gratitude to the Finnish Government for promoting the growth of agricultural research in Africa through its financial contributions to IITA and other CG centers over the years.



Dr Dashiell (right) welcomes Ambassador Pirjo Suomela-Chowdhury (middle) and Ms Emmi Mwanzagi to Ibadan.



Dr Melaku Gedil, IITA's Molecular Geneticist and Head Bioscience Center (left) explains the activities of the Bioscience Unit of the institute to the visitors.



The guests with IITA's Dr Robert Asiedu (second left), Ms Toyin Oke (first from left), Dr Dashiell and Ms Adaobi Umeokoro (rightmost).



Dr Badara Gueye (right), Plant Tissue Culture and Conservation Specialist at IITA shows the visitors samples of germplasm conserved by the Genetic Resources Center of the institute.

Events

Mycotoxin Conference,
Conference Center Ibadan 12-15 July

AfricaRice/ICRAF Training Workshop,
Vigna Room 13-17 July

Soils Work Meeting,
Manihot Room 13-15 July

CG Centres' Auditors meeting,
Musa Room 13-17 July

[Africa RISING ESA Project Annual Review and Planning Meeting,](#)

Mangochi, Malawi,
14-16 July

Africa RISING ESA Project Steering Committee Meeting,
Mangochi, Malawi, 16 July

Tropentag 2015, Humboldt
Universitaet zu Berlin, Berlin,
Germany, 17-19 September

First World Congress on Root and Tuber Crops, Nanning, Guangxi province, southern China, 5-10 October

The 7th International Conference of the African Soil Science Society Announcement of Special Program: Soil Fertility Management for Sustainable Intensification in West and Central Africa, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 25 October - 1 November

Managing complex partnerships through the lens of a Chief Scientist from Africa RISING

Managing complex partnerships to deliver innovative integrated solutions to help smallholder farmers to increase their production and move out of hunger and poverty has not been as trouble-free as a walk in the park. It has been challenging with many lessons learned along the way but it is all for a good cause and a lot of progress has been made. [Dr Mateete Bekunda](#), Chief Scientist for [Africa RISING East and Southern Africa Project](#), was speaking at a seminar in IITA's Eastern Africa Hub, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 22 June 2015.

Dr Bekunda said one of his key tasks had been to guide scientists working on single components of complicated farming systems to work together to develop aggregated practical agricultural innovations to increase productivity, improve nutrition, and transform the lives of smallholder farmers.

He described three types of partnership under Africa RISING: "Type 1 partners conduct farmer-driven research and are mostly from [CGIAR](#) and National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS). Technology delivery and scaling drive Type 2 partnerships and therefore the number of target farmers increases dramatically. They include the public sector, private sector, media, extension programs, USAID-supported development projects, and schools. Type 3 partners are usually conducting activities that complement those of Africa RISING."



Dr Bekunda during his seminar presentation.

Identifying the partners

Dr Bekunda said that Africa RISING had started by supporting quick-win projects which brought scientists together to conduct mainly desktop and short survey studies that provided information for the design of subsequent research directions.

It is mainly from this pool of scientists that Type 1 partners were identified and given the task to develop joint project proposals to generate multidisciplinary integrated plans of action. This led to the formation of research teams working in three sites of Kongwa and Kiteto, Babati, and Malawi. These areas were selected based on their agro-ecological potentials

which necessitated the generation of targeted technologies.

Recently the program has moved to Zambia in partnership with a program with similar objectives of sustainable intensification, [Sustainable Intensification of Maize-Legume Systems for the Eastern Province of Zambia \(SIMLEZA\)](#).

"By the end of year II, the team members had more appreciation of disciplinary integration. The Babati team, for example, merged the original nine work packages into four research themes for better planning of activities that enhanced integrated research. The program has also been responsive and committed to tackling emerging challenges that would threaten integration. One example is the deadly Maize Lethal Necrosis Disease (MLND)," he said.

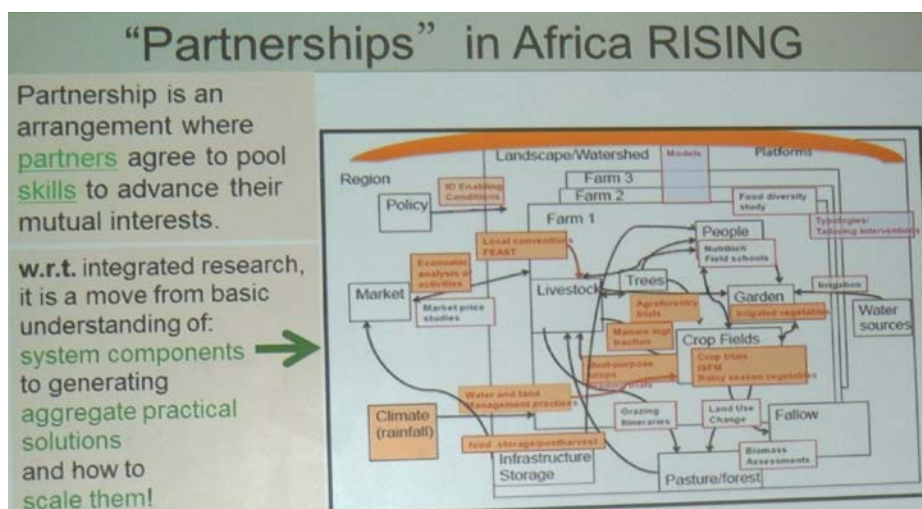
Challenges and lessons learned

Dr Bekunda summarized the lessons he had learned and which had contributed to the successful management of the partnership. These included having a good relationship with donors, such as the program has had with USAID, who have been closely following its progress and advising on challenges. The second has been identifying the right people to work with, those who are committed to the program and provide good leadership.

"The program calls for the leader to be innovative, a good listener and learner. To overcome the other challenge of staff turn-over, there must be trust and harmony and regular meetings and communication among all the partners. This facilitates better integration and implementation."

"Other important lessons learned," he concluded, "were networking with other organizations and programs, working closely with the communications department to capture achievements for stakeholders' information, and lastly, showing appreciation."

The ESA Project and its Chief Scientist are now looking forward to its second phase which would focus on polishing the integrated technologies and scaling them up and out to more farmers.



PowerPoint page showing the complexity of the Africa RISING partnership.

Tanzania's policy think tank explores partnership with IITA

The newly appointed Executive Director of the [Economic Social Research Forum \(ESRF\)](#), one of the leading policy think tanks in Tanzania, recently visited IITA at its East Africa Hub in Dar es Salaam, to explore ways that the two institutions can strengthen their partnerships and work together.

[Dr Tausi Kida](#) and her delegation were warmly welcomed by [Dr Victor Manyong](#), the IITA Director for East Africa, and other socio-economic researchers. The visit started with a formal meeting where the Heads of the two Institutes gave brief presentations on their organizations and held discussions on areas for collaboration. In the end they agreed that IITA and ESRF should formalize their relationship through signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

Dr Tausi said ESRF had been at the center of guiding the Government on economic development and the formulation of policies on poverty reduction in Tanzania for the last 20 years. She explained that ESRF was supported by the Government but it worked independently and was also supported by various donors. It was involved in knowledge management and the communication of policies, conducting strategic research on identified policy gaps, and building capacity on policy analysis through conducting short-term training and organizing policy dialogs. In addition, it carried out commissioned research policy analysis and impact studies for Government, the private sector, and NGOs.

Dr Manyong briefed the visiting team on the activities of IITA in east Africa which he said were directed to reducing poverty, hunger, and malnutrition and rehabilitating



A group photo of the IITA and ESRF team.

degraded lands in the region. He also gave a highlight of the on-going socio-economic research at the Institute which was more relevant to the focus of the ESRF.

These included assessing the impact of its research on poverty reduction by conducting impact assessments, ex ante (before a technology is rolled) and ex-post (after a technology has been developed, disseminated, and scaled out). Others include the studies on adoption of technologies, gender, livelihoods, and markets.

He gave an example of two studies by IITA to determine the impact of adoption of its technologies on poverty levels in the Great Lakes region. One was conducted in parts of Rwanda, Burundi, and eastern DR Congo under [the Consortium for Improving Agriculture-based Livelihoods in Central Africa](#) program, (CIALCA). The other in eastern DR Congo focused on the impact of the adoption of improved cassava varieties developed and distributed in this part of the country.

"From both studies, we were able to show how IITA contributed to lifting over half a million people out of poverty through their association with our technologies," he said.

Common areas of synergy that were identified in the ensuing discussions included knowledge management, capacity building, tackling youth unemployment, and influencing agricultural policies.

"We are conducting a lot of research on agriculture and we would like to influence policy. We can benefit from the expertise your organization has in this area," Dr Manyong informed the ESRF team. After the meeting, the ESRF Director and her team toured the IITA Science Building to learn more on the on-going research.



Dr Tausi Kida listens to Mr Harun Murithi's (right) explanation about research on soybean rust. She is accompanied by Dr Victor Manyong (center).

IFAD representative visits IITA to review activities of the ongoing HQCF value chain project

Nearly eighteen months ago, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) launched the IITA-led High Quality Cassava Flour (HQCF) value chain project which aims at improving the livelihoods and food security of sub-Saharan African farmers. Dr Ndavi Malu, IFAD's Senior Program Officer, Office of the Associate Vice President, has visited Ibadan to review the activities of the project so far, note challenges, and chart the course for future action.

Dr Malu was received by Dr Ylva Hilbur, DDG Research at IITA. During the 10-day visit, Dr Malu met IITA's top Management, the [IITA Agripreneurs](#), project implementers, and partners. He also visited various project sites across Oyo, Ogun, and Kwara States to inspect all the production and processing activities that the project initiated with the beneficiaries and also to see firsthand how HQCF has been used to improve the [value of confectionery](#) products in Nigeria.

He praised the efforts of the HQCF project team in productively engaging the rural and urban youth through the introduction of improved production technologies,



Dr Malu (wearing a white cap) with youth at WAHAN Farms, Ilorin.

thereby creating wealth for them and for the country.

He expressed satisfaction about the establishment of innovation platforms whereby resource-poor smallholder farmers were organized as [out-grower farmers](#) alongside the local youth to supply fresh cassava to HQCF processing factories.

"I am impressed by the output of the HQCF project," said Dr Malu during his meeting with [Dr Nteranya Sanginga](#), DG of IITA. He added, "African countries depend

on the western world for wheat and this cuts deeply into their foreign reserves... This initiative will help to reduce the importation of food for a country such as Nigeria that is exploring the option of substituting HQCF for wheat."

Dr Malu also praised the project for carrying out an impressive analysis of the cassava value chain in Nigeria and advised the project to seek and establish more implementing and outreach partners needed to ensure the wide delivery of the project goals.

Application of an African insect in fish farming

A visit to IITA Ibadan was made recently by Dr Takashi Okuda, entomologist at the National Institute of Agrobiological Science (NIAS), Japan. He spent from 10 to 21 June doing a field survey in the Ibadan area of a midge known as the Sleeping Chironomid, [Polypedilum vanderplanki](#), and gave a seminar on his work in which he described his unique and exciting achievements.

Dr Okuda said, "The Sleeping Chironomid is indigenous to semi-arid regions of Africa. It is associated with shallow rock pools that form in the small hollows that are characteristic of rock outcrops. These pools dry up rapidly and the midge larvae become completely dehydrated. However they do not die and are able to revive within an hour after [rehydration](#) by the next rain. This developmental arrest with zero metabolism is known as "anhydrobiosis" i.e., life without water – a phenomenon that is not known in any other insect." He added, "While most entomologists in Africa focus on reducing

damage to crops through insect pests we should remember that there are many other remarkable insects in Africa, such as the Sleeping Chironomid, which we may learn to value and utilize."

As a result of Dr Okuda's work, IITA is collaborating with the Japanese private sector to apply the insect to catfish culture. Dr [Haruki Ishikawa](#), IITA's Agronomist, explained that dried larvae of the Sleeping Chironomid can be used to feed catfish fry. Currently fish farmers have no way of feeding catfish when they first hatch as they can digest only very tiny live prey and lack the enzymes to digest the formula fed to adult fish. As a result, they eat one another and relatively few survive. He added, "These insect larvae can be kept dry for many years and when put in water they become live bait within minutes. The Sleeping Chironomid will overcome a major problem for fish farmers and increase both efficiency and profitability." [Deni Bown](#),

Head of IITA's Forest Unit, who assisted Dr Okuda in locating suitable habitats for Sleeping Chironomids commented, "This research is an example of why it is in our own interests to protect the environment and biodiversity and invest more in natural resource management. Many rock outcrops are being quarried for short-term gain and populations of Sleeping Chironomids are threatened with extinction in some areas."



Dr Okuda during the seminar presentation.

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