



## IITA is a great potential partner, says IFPRI DG

The Director General of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Dr Shenggen Fan has described IITA as a “great potential partner” in the battle against hunger and poverty.

Dr Fan made the remarks during his courtesy visit to IITA on 5 July. The IFPRI DG, who was received by a team of researchers from IITA led by the Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga, said the quest for a greater research impact, which is the main objective of the CGIAR reform, could be achieved with greater collaboration among research centers.

According to him, IITA has a critical role to play in the CGIAR Research Programs (CRP) 2 and 4—both led by IFPRI.

CRP 2 focuses on “Policies, Institutions, and Markets to Strengthen Assets and Agricultural Incomes for the Poor,” while CRP 4 centers on “Agriculture for Improved Nutrition and Health.”

Dr Fan said IITA is an important ally whose contribution is critical to the success of IFPRI-led CRPs.

He said his courtesy call was to congratulate Sanginga on his appointment as the DG of IITA, and to further enhance/strengthen the partnership between IITA and IFPRI.

Drawing from the successes recorded in the Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS) project—a project that involves IITA, ILRI, IWMI, and IFPRI; Dr Fan said he was optimistic that the



*Dr Fan (seventh from left) and DG Sanginga (tenth from left) pose for a group photo with staff during the visit to IITA-Ibadan*

CRP arrangement would draw synergies among partners and create greater impact.

DG Sanginga welcomed the proposal for increased collaboration and reiterated that IITA would continue to work with partners to improve the livelihoods of farmers in tropical nations.

Dr Fan was accompanied by two other IFPRI officials—Drs Ousmane Badiane, and Kwabena Gyimah-Brempong.

HarvestPlus’ Country Manager, Paul Ilona; and ReSAKSS’ Regional Coordinator, Dr Mbaye Yade were also part of the meeting.

## IITA Women’s Group held dinner to raise funds for good causes

The IITA Women’s Group held a successful gala night on 30 June to raise funds, tapping the diversity

within IITA.

Funds raised at the event will support charitable activities,

which comprise scholarships to children of IITA general staff, supporting homes for the motherless babies, and the SOS Children Village community projects in Shasha.

Funds were raised through the sale

of tickets for the gala dinner while individual members of the group cooked meals for guests.

But beyond fundraising, the event further reinforced the unity from the diverse cultures in the Institute, including cultural displays.

Under the leadership of Mrs Idara Ahmadu, the IITA Women’s Group this year gave a record of 39 scholarships to dependents of IITA general staff on PG 1-6.

DG Sanginga commended members of the Women’s Group for their efforts in building stronger relationships in the Institute.



*IITA Women singing songs of solidarity at the gala night*

## Risk management in IITA

Oversight of the Institute’s governance is provided by the Board of Trustees (BoT). This duty requires that the BoT should be aware of the potential risks that confront the Institute and its staff in the course of carrying out their day-to-day duties, and what Management is doing about them.

At its meeting in May 2012, the Board requested that Internal Audit should resuscitate the Risk

Management mechanism of the Institute.

This means a call for contributions from everyone. So let’s start by getting to know what we mean by risk and risk management.

What is risk?

Risk in the context above refers to whatever we are not doing that could:

- put our Institute in a disadvantage
- endanger our Institute’s operations

if something is not done about it.

Risk management is about knowing what the critical assets in our Institute and individual units are, identifying opportunities and threats to them, and planning what to do about those threats. Most of the issues are known but a conscious central effort to collate and assess them is often lacking.

*To be continued next week*

# Building Kenya's capacity to tackle soybean pests and diseases



Participants in a practical session on how to recognize disease symptoms and pests.

IITA-Tanzania and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)-Kenya held a capacity building workshop for partners in Kenya. The workshop, which involved both practical and theoretical sessions, was aimed at tackling soybean pests and diseases.

The diseases covered in the training, which was held in Maseno, Kenya, from 6 to 7 June included bacterial blight (*Pseudomonas savastanoi* *pv.* *glycinea*), bacterial pustule (*Xanthomonas axonopodia* *pv.* *glycines*), soybean mosaic virus, red leaf blotch (*Phoma glycinicola*), frog eye leaf spot (*Cercospora kikuchii*), brown spot (*Septoria glycines*), and target spot (*Corynespora cassicola*).

In his opening remarks, Dr Fredrick Bajjukya, an

agronomist from CIAT- Kenya noted that soybean production has been intensified across East and Southern Africa due to increased demand from poultry feed millers, manufacturers of consumer products, and makers of household soy-based products. However, diseases and pests are a major challenge.

He therefore said that correct identification of the disease would enhance their timely and effective control.

Dr Phinehas Tukamuhabwa, a plant breeder/geneticist from Makerere University and one of the facilitators, said the Asian soybean rust (*Phakopsora pachyrhizi*) was a major disease affecting soybean production globally, and its spread in Africa has increased in the last few years. It affects the plants especially at the pod filling stage, causing massive yield losses.

He noted that while management strategies such as the use of fungicides at the appropriate stage of plant development were important, breeding for resistance was the best approach to control the disease.

Harun Murithi, a plant pathologist at IITA-Tanzania and also one of the facilitators, elaborated on the ongoing activities of mapping the distribution and characterizing the rust populations in East and Southern Africa to support breeding activities to develop and deploy resistant germplasm. He emphasized the need for a regional approach for disease surveillance to counter the rapid spread of the disease.

## IITA and UI explore areas of fresh collaboration

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and the University of Ibadan (UI) on 4 July outlined areas of possible collaboration as both institutions strive to improve Africa's fortunes.

Areas under consideration include capacity building, establishment of a biotechnology platform, soil health, Geographical Information Science, fund raising for research, food and nutrition, and capacity building.

"If we collaborate on these areas, we will be able to help tackle the food and environmental challenges facing Africa," said Dr Nteranya Sanginga, IITA Director General, during a courtesy visit to the university.

Established in 1967, IITA remains a leader in crop improvement and the fight against biological threats and environmental sustainability in Africa. Improved crop varieties from IITA have accelerated productivity in several African countries with Cameroon doubling cassava yields, and Nigeria becoming the world's top producer of the root crop.

At the heart of it, Dr Sanginga said building human capacity was a major issue that needed to be tackled for Africa to maintain sustainable development.

"When you go to several African countries, the number of scientists is declining—whether in biotechnology or crop breeding. This must not be allowed to continue," he said.



The Vice Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, Prof Isaac Adewole (sixth from left in the front row) with other professors from UI pose for a group photo with Sanginga and the IITA team.

Dr Sanginga also called for investments in research infrastructure, particularly in West and Central Africa—a region that is rich in resources.

He said that the collaboration with the University of Ibadan would be of benefit to Nigeria in particular and Africa in general.

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, Prof. Isaac Adewole, said partnership was top of the agenda of the university, stressing that joint efforts with IITA would improve the welfare, nutrition, health, and incomes of people in the tropics.

According to him, Africa will be truly independent only when it is food secure, adding that the university is well placed to work

with IITA.

"I believe that IITA is there for us, just as the University College Hospital is for the College of Medicine... There must be a bridge between us and IITA... And we are ready to work with you," he said.

With its revised strategy, IITA intends to focus on increasing research quality, capacity building and partnerships. Consequently, a directorate for partnerships and capacity building has been created under the leadership of Dr Kenton Dashiell to champion and achieve that goal.

Both institutions agreed in principle to commit resources that would advance research for the benefit of resource-poor farmers and consumers.