



## IITA does it again! Launch of IITA Kalambo a resounding success

IITA has again successfully launched a new science facility—this time at its station in Kalambo, by the shores of Lake Kivu in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The facility, which has well-equipped laboratories and a crop processing center, was launched on 5 June 2014 by the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, Hon. Jean Chrisostome Vahamuitsi Mukesyayira on behalf of the President, His Excellency Joseph Kabila Kabangi.

Also in attendance were the Burundi Minister of Agriculture, Hon Odette Kayitesi, and the governor of South Kivu, Hon. Marcellin Cishambo.

### IITA research efforts lauded

The minister praised IITA in its efforts to develop agriculture in the country and in the region. He singled out the institute's research on cassava diseases, notably cassava mosaic disease (CMD) and more recently, cassava brown streak disease (CBSD), and research on value addition.

He noted that cassava was indeed the country's top staple food crop and therefore he said any threat to its production was a threat to the country's food security. He therefore said the new research facilities would bring a much needed boost to research in the country and region.

The Governor for South Kivu who together with his team offered a lot of support to IITA in the organization of the launch event, also commended the institute for investing in the research facilities and for its past work in the region.

The event attracted top government officials from the country and region, the diplomatic community, and the institute's donors and partners including representatives from other CGIAR centers.

The institute's staff in the Central Africa hub and from its Eastern and Western Africa hubs were also at the event led by the Director General Nteranya Sanginga and Bernard Vanlauwe, the Director of the Central Africa hub.

This was the second such event for IITA. Last year, a new science

building was launched in its eastern Africa office in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. In addition, IITA held a ceremony to lay the foundation stone for its facility in southern Africa in Lusaka, Zambia.

IITA is putting up these facilities in the hubs as part of implementing its new refreshed strategy and its vision of becoming a leading research partner facilitating solutions to hunger and poverty in Africa.

### IITA's impact in Central Africa

While welcoming the guests and partners to the event, Central Africa Director Vanlauwe, thanked the Congolese government for its support to IITA and cited its dedication to developing the sector and all the partners of the institute.

He noted that IITA has had several successes in the country in its 40 years of working in the country. These include the development of improved varieties of key staple crops, better agronomic practices, cassava processing techniques, , as well as capacity building.

"Most of the outstanding varieties of cassava, soybean, cowpea, maize, banana, and yam are IITA improved and introduced lines or

are derived from IITA lines. Our work on agricultural intensification through improved agronomy showed considerable increases in yields and diversity with a potential for reducing deforestation in the Congo Basin," he said. "We have trained more than 45 scientists from the national agriculture research systems (NARS) and university to MSc and PhD levels in the Great Lakes countries."

He also thanked all the IITA staff who had worked tirelessly to see that the event was a success.

IITA scientists in the region showed off their work on tackling pests and diseases, increasing productivity, improving nutrition, adding value, and other initiatives such as the ongoing work on biocontrol, natural resources management, and "agriprenurship" through an exhibition and demonstration.

The guests left Kalambo station in style, with a sunset sail on Lake Kivu courtesy of the South Kivu government. The launch was followed by a dinner for all the partners and staff hosted by the institute at the home of the Governor of South Kivu in Bukavu.



Director General Nteranya Sanginga (right, in white shirt) takes guests on a tour of the facilities. L-R: Bishop Francois Xavier Maroy, Burundi Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Her Excellency Odette Kayitesi (second from left), and DRC Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Hon. Jean Chrisostome Vahamuitsi Mukesyayira.

## Snapshot: Commissioning of the Bukavu science facilities



Left to right, top to bottom: DG Sanginga and Bishop Maroy in a conversation. Central Africa Director Bernard Vanlauwe doing a dry-run with scientists and staff from the hub 2 days before the launch. Marie Yomeni, Holger Kirscht, and Sami Mazumdar prepare the food display the day before the event. A huge rainbow heralded rain the night before the launch, looking like it passed through the tree. South Kivu Governor Marcellin Cishambo addressing guests. Mrs Charlotte Sanginga with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Hon. Mukesyayira.

### Tupo pamoja. One IITA.

"Tupo pamoja.... This is what we say in Swahili to underline that we are many, but have one heart and one goal. 'Tupo pamoja' also means we are working together in a free minded and open spirit." This was an excerpt from Director General Sanginga's note to staff working on the organization of the launch event in Kalambo, Bukavu.

"IITA has great people doing great work all over Africa...united in my hometown Bukavu, hosting people who can influence decisions and have an impact on our work to reduce poverty. I would like all of you to feel proud of being part of the team, proud of being able to contribute to the gathering of so many different people coming from different countries with different roles and responsibilities."

"I would like to congratulate you all for the successful launching of our

facility in Kalambo. Echoing Bishop saying he was proud of being an IITA staff that day; yes, I was too. Now our work has started and I invite the

Director, OIC and Country Leader to come up with the road map with a clear business plan on how this station will work," the DG said.



The high table during the opening program of the launch. L-R (first row): DRC Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, DG Sanginga, Burundi Minister of Agriculture, and Nigerian Ambassador to DRC.

## Staff and partners laud inauguration event ...what they say...

I am very impressed with what I have seen here. I think it's very important for the region to have such a structure to support agriculture and smallholder farming. I am very pleased to be here with you. I also congratulate IITA for the work you are doing in the area and Africa in general. Congratulations!

*Joseph Lititiyo, Deputy Executive Secretary, the Economic Community for the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL)*

This infrastructure is very good for the region. We only have one center near here. We are also going to use this facility in our future research collaboration with IITA. I am very glad to be here.

*Paul Mafuka, Director General of INERA and former IITA board member*

It's been a great day. I was initially worried but as the day rolled by I was excited by the participation of the guests; the governors from North and South Kivu, the Ministers in South Kivu, the Agriculture Minister from Burundi. I feel a sense of achievement, I feel proud. I commend DG Sanginga and Bernard for standing together with us, the team from Nigeria— they were just great. .... We have landed but now we have to run.

*Chris Okafor, Officer in Charge of IITA Bukavu Station*

Wow! That was a very successful event. When I look at what the team has done, it's fantastic. It's an achievement—not only the event today but also what the center means for the region, what it can do. It's an additional tool for the region to address the problems of food security, poverty reduction, all the issues related to climate change. We have seen the ongoing research on value addition and creation of jobs for the youth. This center will make a difference not only in the country but in the region as well in tackling the challenges in agriculture. I can only say congratulations to the team.

*Victor Manyong, IITA Director for Eastern Africa*

It's a great moment for us to come and witness IITA open a new office here. IITA and ICRISAT—we work on some common legumes and we have some projects together. And we are really looking forward to closer collaboration in DRC. At ICRISAT we do not have a presence here but we know many of our crops here are important in this part of the region. So I came all the way to represent our Director General because he thinks this is a very important moment.

*Moses Siambi, Director, ICRISAT*

We are really impressed with the facilities and the attendance and the excitement about what IITA can do in the region and the whole of Congo.

*Mathew Spector, Operations Director for America Refugees Committee*

I am very very impressed. I have been impressed with the research on cassava value addition. IITA has many opportunities to make a difference in the lives of small-holder farmers through value addition of cassava.

*Moses Foki, Program Officer Sustainable Development, Interchurch Development Organization (ICCO)*

We have been partners with IITA since 1974. I am quite happy the building is finally here. I was here in 2011 when the roof was being fixed. I think it's a good thing for the area, for South Kivu and Central Africa as whole. This is where the problems are. And I think research needs to have a direct link with development.

*Jos Kalders, the Belgium Development Agency*

I am very happy we have so many visitors from Europe, America, from West Africa, East Africa. And I hope this will give us a lot of boost to our work to improve livelihoods in the Central Africa region.

*Emmanuel Njukwe, IITA Burundi*

The launch of the science building is very interesting. I enjoyed the experience. By launching the science building and the labs and the greenhouses it supports research

to be carried out in Central Africa on breeding, disease control, etc. so scientists have enough facilities and this will improve our output.

*Nester Mashingaidze, IITA Burundi*

It's been a great day. I am impressed with the facilities, with the level of organization and the range of projects being carried out. It's marvelous. ...I am impressed that what the federal government of Nigeria is doing such as adding value to agriculture products by processing and use of local products in our foods is exactly what IITA is replicating in this new center. I saw the bread made from cassava and soybean. I was thrilled. I was able to talk to the two governors of North and South Kivu and I impressed them on the need to partner strongly with IITA to transform agriculture and turn it into big business and use it for youth empowerment and grow the country's economy.

*Dr Grant Ehiobuche, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*

I congratulate IITA for this new building. IITA is an important partner for us in our research on cassava and banana and on the diseases affecting these crops, such as cassava mosaic disease. We look forward to these science facilities to support these ongoing research activities. Burundi is very near Bukavu and we have similar agricultural conditions and problems such as banana diseases and cassava diseases. The science facilities therefore will definitely contribute to supporting the agriculture sector in the region.

*Dieudonne Nahimana, ISABU Director General*



*More than 200 guests attended the launching of the Bukavu science facilities with more than 50 journalists on site.*

For more information about the launch, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/IITA-Kalambo/1425577057709214?ref=nf>

## Historic IITA press conference in Bukavu

A press conference organized a day before the launch of the new IITA science facilities in Bukavu on 4 June 2014 from 6 pm attracted a whopping 90+ journalists from local, regional, and international media. Furthermore, the door of the conference room was closed 15 minutes after 6 pm preventing more journalists who wanted to join the conference to come in. It was a historic landmark for IITA in terms of media attention.

What had happened? IITA achieved this feat by facilitating the creation of a common ground for good governance in the region by

convincing the local decision makers to allow open questions from the journalists. This is usually not the case. The journalists normally write down their questions beforehand and submit them to the government officials days in advance. The institute also stressed to the journalists their role as independent and unbiased monitoring instruments, which in the new spirit of media development in the region most adhered to.

This, combined with the unique selling proposition of the launching of the Kalambo Center as a regional state-of-the-art research

facility, seemed to motivate media representatives to cover the event to the fullest.

Speakers at the press conference from IITA included Director General Nteranya Sanginga, the Director Central Africa Hub Bernard Vanlauwe, and Cassava Specialist Marie Octavie Yomeni. Other notable dignitaries were the governor of South Kivu, Hon. Marcellin Cishambo Ruhoya; the Burundi Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Odette Kayitesi; and the Provincial Minister of Agriculture, Adolphine Muley.



*Left to right, top to bottom: DG Nteranya Sanginga and Central Africa Director Bernard Vanlauwe in a huddle before the press conference. The IITA team preparing for the press briefing. DG Sanginga with Jos Kalders of Belgium's Directorate General for Development Cooperation. The media represented local, regional, and international print and broadcast houses. The IITA panel and South Kivu hosts during the press briefing held the night before the launch.*