



## DG concludes successful visit with partners and private sector in Japan

Last week, Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) was in Japan to visit partner institutions and potential partners to explore new areas of collaboration. His week-long itinerary, 5-11 April, included visits to the [Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences](#) (JIRCAS) and the [National Institute of Agrobiological Sciences](#) (NIAS) in Tsukuba; [Kyoto University](#) in Kyoto; [Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries](#) (MAFF), [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) (MoFA), [Japan International Cooperation Agency](#) (JICA), and [Tokyo University of Agriculture](#) (TUA) in Tokyo. On the final day he met with representatives of the private sector.

At JIRCAS, he was welcomed by the Management led by its President, Dr [Masaru Iwanaga](#), former IITA Board member and Director General of CIMMYT. Dr Iwanaga had visited IITA last February. Sanginga made a presentation on “*IITA: the leading research partner in Africa; Repositioning IITA for impact in Africa*”. Sanginga and Iwanaga discussed further collaboration between JIRCAS and other universities and research centers in Japan.

At NIAS, Sanginga was welcomed by its President Dr H. Hirochika and visited the lab of the Anhydrobiosis Research Group working on the [sleeping chironomid](#) (*Polypedilum vanderplanki*) living in the semiarid regions of Africa.

At Kyoto University, which has a strong research ongoing in Kahuzi bienga near Kalambo in DR Congo, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was discussed. The university wants to establish a liaison office in Africa and this could possibly be hosted in one of IITA's Hubs. With the new MoU, IITA would be able to work with 9 faculties, 19 graduate schools, and the 22,000 students of the university.

At TUA, the possibility was explored of working with IITA on other crops. TUA has seven IITA alumni among its professors and advanced research on yam is ongoing with IITA. It was agreed that new students would be posted to IITA this year.

The visits to the two universities not only enhanced collaboration but also provided an opportunity for Sanginga to introduce IITA to young students.

At MAFF and MoFA, the funding on cowpea and yam work was confirmed and the *Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI)*, a conference held every five years, was discussed. TICAD VI will be organized in 2016, possibly in Nairobi, and will concentrate on the agro-food system. TICAD aims to “promote high-level policy dialogue between African leaders and development partners.” IITA has been invited to organize a side event with JIRCAS.



*Dr and Mrs Sanginga wearing the traditional Japanese kimono, Kyoto, Japan.*

This is the first time that IITA has engaged with JICA, one of the biggest dissemination agencies in Japan. The Director General will visit IITA this year, possibly around July. A new collaboration with JICA is expected to enable us to deliver our results to farmers more efficiently.

The last day of the visit was devoted to a meeting with the Japanese private sector: 42 participants and representatives from 22 companies joined the meeting. Officers from JIRCAS, NIAS, MAFF, MoFA, JICA, the Embassy of Nigeria in Japan, and the Embassy of Japan in Nigeria also attended the meeting. After this meeting, many Japanese companies will be expected to collaborate and to participate in IITA's projects via the Business Incubation Platform (BIP) not only in Ibadan but in the hubs in Dar es Salaam, Nairobi, and Lusaka.

Sanginga expressed his appreciation for the support to IITA from Japan, not only in terms of funding, but also in the various kinds of collaboration, the exchange of ideas, and development of human capacities, including scientists and students.

The visit was organized by our Japanese scientists, Drs Sato Muranaka (JIRCAS), Haruki Ishikawa, and Kanako Suzuki.

At the end of the visit, Sanginga said, “I think that our travel was a great success and will enhance further collaboration and capacity building between IITA and Japan.”



*DG Sanginga (rightmost) meets with the president of Kyoto University, Japan.*

# Experts from EAC plan a communication strategy to raise awareness on aflatoxins

Experts drawn from the five East Africa Communities (EAC) countries convened in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to develop a five-year communication strategy to create awareness on aflatoxin contamination and its impact in the health, agriculture, trade and environment sectors. This is part of a regional effort to realize an aflatoxin-safe food and feed supply.

Aflatoxin is produced by *Aspergillus flavus*, fungi that naturally occur in the soil, and attack crops while in the field and in storage. The toxin is also found in milk, poultry, and farmed fish which have been fed contaminated feeds. Chronic exposure to it has been found to cause low birth weight, stunting in infants and young children, suppressed immune systems, and liver cancer. High intake can lead to death. Aflatoxin is a major threat to health, food security, and trade in the EAC region since maize and groundnut, two important staple crops, are highly susceptible.

The workshop convened by the [EAC Secretariat](#) on 14 to 17 April brought together diverse partners from Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, and Tanzania. Experts were drawn from relevant government ministries and departments – health, trade, agriculture and environment– as well as the private sector, international and national research organizations and the universities.

The workshop was held under the auspices of the [Aflatoxin Policy and Program for the East Africa Region \(APPEAR\)](#) project, whose objective is to strengthen the region's capacity to address aflatoxins through appropriate policies and programs. It is being implemented by [IITA](#) on behalf of the EAC and is funded by the [USAID East Africa Mission](#) in Nairobi, Kenya.



Delegates at the workshop listening keenly to the proceedings.

Speaking on the first day of the meeting [Dr. Victor Manyong](#), the IITA R4D Director for Eastern Africa, said it was the last of a series of workshops organized on policy and aflatoxin in the region under APPEAR.

The project had started by conducting a series of studies including assessing the impact of aflatoxin on the health of both humans and livestock, on good agricultural practices to reduce contamination in the field and in storage, economic aspects of trade, and the alternative use and disposal of contaminated commodities.

"This workshop has been convened to determine the best way to communicate the information gathered from these studies. We have brought together representatives from different sectors to find the best way to disseminate the right information to the right people," he said. "It's especially important that the information will get to the vulnerable communities."

Mr Moses Marwa, Acting Director Productive sector, EAC Agriculture Secretariat, said

aflatoxin was a real threat in the region. The deliberations from the meeting would go into refining a five-year communication strategy that the member states would implement to create awareness among producers, processors, traders, consumers, and policymakers, and to contribute to the development of relevant policies and programs.

Also at the event, Ms Mary Onsongo, representing the Regional Office of Agriculture and Resilience at USAID East Africa, noted that communication was a very important component of the multisectoral project which was dealing with a very complicated challenge. "Communication is the cornerstone of efforts to control aflatoxin and make food in the region safe," she said.

The participants studied a technical paper on a communication strategy on creating aflatoxin awareness developed by a consultancy firm, [Danya International](#), to identify the priority issues and areas as well as the implementation plan for the strategy. They also gave feedback on a logo developed by the firm for labeling aflatoxin-free food in the region. The firm will next incorporate all the recommendations received and finalize the communication strategy and logo.

The three-year APPEAR project seeks to establish a regional knowledge platform on the impact of aflatoxin on health, agriculture, environment, and trade; raise awareness of the issue among consumers and producers; identify best practices for control; and create policies and programs to improve nutrition. It is part of the wider African Union initiative, the [Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa \(PACA\)](#).



Mr Moses Marwa from the EAC Secretariat gives the opening remarks.

# Catholic priests and sisters commend IITA for its work

IITA-Kalambo was host to reverend fathers and sisters from Bagira Catholic parish (located in Bukavu suburbs, DR Congo). They visited the Station on 8 April to gain some insights on IITA's work from both the staff and scientists involved in the various undertakings. The visitors from two congregations: *Sisters of Mary, Queen of Apostles* and *Holy Family* in Bukavu were led by Fr Emmanuel Musoda and Fr Jean-Marie Balegamire – Head of the Catholic Parish in Bagira and Former Vice-Chancellor of the Catholic University of Bukavu (UCB).

They were received by Dr Paul Dontsop Nguetzet, the Acting OiC, who briefed them on IITA's activities. In response to their questions, he informed them about security arrangements at the Station, the positive impact of IITA's projects on the neighboring communities, the country as a whole, and the Great Lakes region. He also emphasized



Visitors with scientists, some staff, and Agrpreneurs, IITA-Kalambo.

the close collaboration between IITA and the local universities such as UCB and the Evangelical University of Africa (UEA), adding that students from these universities gained a lot from IITA in terms of access to research facilities, technical guidance, and grants for MSc and PhD studies. He underscored the importance of the new

partnership between IITA and the Catholic Church. The guests were also enlightened on the difference between genetically modified organisms and biofortified seeds/crops.

While touring the Station's facilities, the guests commended the quality of the facilities and equipment, the neatness of the premises, and the motivation of the staff. Sharing her feelings about IITA's work, one of the sisters said, "Now we know about IITA's work and its achievements for the benefit of our population. Our fears and skepticism about IITA's products and processes have disappeared. We look forward to contributing, in any way possible, to help IITA achieve a greater impact."

In his remarks, Fr Emmanuel added that he was moved by what was being achieved by IITA. He thanked all the staff for their good work and encouraged them to spread their activities further and diversify their interventions, to bring about solutions to the food shortage and crop diseases affecting most areas.



The visitors were taken on a tour of the facilities, including the greenhouses.

## Scientist stars in a documentary



IITA scientist Leena Tripathi stars in a documentary on "The Evolution of Food", directed by Academy Award nominee Scott Kennedy. Above a scene with Washington Post science journalist Tamara Haspel in the greenhouse, IITA Nairobi.

## Events

**Aflatoxin Awareness and Aflasafe Stakeholder consultative workshop,**  
Splendid Hotel, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso,  
23 –24 April

**Aflatoxin Awareness and Aflasafe Stakeholder consultative workshop,**  
Radisson Blu Hotel, Lusaka, Zambia, 28 April

**African Cassava Agronomy Initiative (ACAI) Stakeholder Convening and Proposal Writing Meeting,** Ibadan, Nigeria,  
28 April – 1 May

**IITA Board Meeting,** will be held in Livingstone, Zambia, 4–8 May