

## Engaging youths in agriculture brings hope to Africa and makes the IFAD President proud



Agripreneurs with Dr Nwanze, IITA Management team, staff and partners

The activities of young men and women in the Youth Agripreneurs (IYA) program under the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) have made the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) President, Dr Kanayo Nwanze proud; and rekindled the hope of a new generation of African agricultural entrepreneurs that will feed the continent, create wealth and employment.

The IITA Youth Agripreneurs program was developed about 2 years ago after Dr Nwanze visited IITA in Ibadan, planted a tree to mark the rejuvenation of the institute, and in his speech called for investment in the youth. Inspired by Dr Nwanze's speech the Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga took up the challenge to mobilize the youth, give them mentorship, teaching and training, thereby creating a passion in the youths to adopt agriculture as a business.

In less than 2 years, the group has recorded plausible achievements. These include producing and marketing over 30 tons of certified maize and soybean seeds, and over 280 tons of cassava roots, as well as multiplying over 3200 bundles of cassava stems and over 1000 suckers of plantain. The group has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Akinyele Local

Government Area of Oyo State to train 250 young people in agribusiness, obtained approval in principle from Oyo State Government for the construction of a Youth Education Center at IITA, and trained 33 young people from Cross River State. They have also received approval for funding from IFAD, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), as well as IITA.

Addressing the young agripreneurs in IITA in Ibadan on Tuesday, Dr Nwanze said that the successes recorded by the youngsters were signposts to a brighter future for Africa.

"I am overwhelmed by your achievements...by what you have done and... I am proud of you," the IFAD President said.

Despite an old proverb that says, "He who plants a walnut tree expects not to eat of the fruits," Dr Nwanze noted that sometimes we live long enough to see the walnut tree bear fruits.

"And I think I am one of those few who have been blessed with such an occasion," he added.

Dr Nwanze drew from the literal meaning of the word "IYA" in Yoruba meaning "motherhood," and described the Youth Agripreneurs program in IITA as the most

successful "incubator" that would raise the necessary human resources to address the food security concerns not just of Nigeria but also of Africa.

He advised the youngsters to take advantage of the program and plan for a better future.

"My future is behind me; your future is in front of you. When you are my age, you will know why I say that it's behind me already. I have lived my life; your life is just beginning. What you do today will determine your future, so please make your future as robust as you wish it to be. Learn all you can while you are here under the protection of IITA because the outside world is very challenging. Your greatest support will be your passion, your conviction, and your drive to move forward," he counseled.

Earlier, Evelyn Ohanwusi, one of the agripreneurs, in her presentation said the group envisaged that 40% of its members would become self-employed; 20% would further their studies with income generated from their activities, 20% would run the IYA program, 10% would be employed by the Business Incubation Platform of IITA, and 10% would be employed by other private and public institutions.

## N2Africa Phase two launched in Malawi



*Participants at the launching*

The N2Africa project has launched its Phase II at a conference on 5 June 2014 at Crossroads Hotel in Lilongwe, Malawi. At the launch, stakeholders reviewed the achievements and challenges of Phase I and mapped out the best way forward for Phase II.

The main objective of Phase II is to disseminate the outcomes of Phase I and to incorporate legume expertise within national systems. The project will also backstop commercial interests in nitrogen fixation technologies and legume enterprises.

Dr Ibrahim Benesi, Deputy Director of Agriculture in the Department of

Agricultural Research Services, appealed for collective efforts in the implementation of Phase II to ensure that the desired outputs are achieved.

The conference drew 37 participants from different organizations; these were World Vision, NASFAM, CADECOM, Department of Agricultural Research Services, Department of Agricultural Extension Services in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Agro-Input Suppliers Limited (AISL), Malawi Mangoes Limited, CIAT, ICRISAT, AGRA, and Malawi Oilseed Sector

Presentations at the conference were a

marvel to behold as they highlighted the many achievements of Phase I. Among these, N2Africa had more than achieved the target of 27,000 households and had reached 37,000 farmers. Phase I demonstrated the consistent positive impact of using inoculants in growing soybean and common bean. Results from trials showed that inoculation of soybean significantly increased grain yield by between 53% and 78%; the demand for inoculants also increased among farmers. According to the Project Coordinator in Malawi, Lloyd Phiphira, it had been noted in Phase I that the farmers' legume productivity was far below the potential, even with the use of inoculants. This was a context that called for farmers to put more efforts in field management activities.

The conference therefore concluded with partners in the Project committing themselves to promoting and disseminating legume technologies and interventions.

N2Africa is a large-scale, science-based "research-in-development" Project focused on putting nitrogen fixation to work for smallholder farmers who grow legume crops in Africa. The Project is currently working in Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. It is led by Wageningen University (the Netherlands) together with IITA. The base in Malawi is at IITA-Chitedze Research Station in Lilongwe.

## ILRI officially opens its Tanzania office at IITA's Eastern Africa Hub

The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) held a cocktail party and a tree planting ceremony on Friday 13 June 2014 to officially launch its office in Tanzania at the IITA's Eastern Africa Hub in Dar es Salaam. The Guest of Honor was Hon. Dr Titus Mlengeya Kamani, Minister for Livestock and Fisheries. Dr Jimmy Smith, Director General for ILRI; and Dr Victor Manyong, Director for Eastern Africa who represented Dr Nteranya Sanginga, IITA's Director General, were also in attendance.

Dr Mlengeya noted the increase in the number of the CGIAR centers in Tanzania, encouraged by the new IITA science building.

"It was only last year that our President Dr Jakaya Mrisho Kiwete inaugurated this beautiful new building. We are happy to note that this facility has already enticed centers such as ILRI to open offices here."

He further welcomed ILRI to Tanzania. "Their presence would contribute significantly to the country's research and development efforts to improve its livestock sector.

"The livestock sector had a real potential to make a difference in the lives of smallholder farmers and in the fight against poverty in the country," Dr Smith noted. Although Tanzania had the third highest number of cattle in Africa after Sudan and Ethiopia, the livestock sector was undervalued and lacked investment.

Speaking at the event, Dr Manyong said IITA was honored to be hosting ILRI in its new science building in Dar es Salaam as part of the efforts by CGIAR for centers to work more closely for better impact.

"As IITA, we are honored to be hosting ILRI in our new research facilities in Tanzania. ILRI hosts our Kenya office in Nairobi, and many



*Dr Manyong*



*ILRI DG Smith*

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## 5CP project on track to facilitate sharing of best cassava varieties for regional trials

National agricultural researchers in five countries in East and Southern Africa have identified their five best varieties in terms of resistance to Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD) and Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD) for sharing with one another to speed up efforts to develop varieties with dual resistance to the two diseases. The viruses have been successfully cleaned from 24 of these varieties. They have been sent to Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zambia as tissue culture plantlets for field trials in the areas most affected by the diseases to find out how well they can tolerate or resist the diseases as part of efforts to halt their spread. This progress in the New cassava varieties and clean seeds to combat CMD and CBSD project known as 5CP was reported at a meeting of its stakeholders to review the project, 16 – 20 June 2014 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Dr Fidelis Myaka, Director for Research and Development of the Ministry of Agriculture Food Security and Cooperatives (MAFC), in a speech read on his behalf by Dr Hussein Mansoor, Assistant Crops Director in the same Ministry, lauded the project team from the five countries for these milestones. He noted the importance of the crop in Tanzania and the region.

“We value cassava as a food crop and a cash crop that will fight poverty. However, the yield is still very low, around 6 t/ha, partly due to attack by these deadly viral diseases. This initiative is therefore extremely important to the country,” he said.

Victor Manyong, IITA’s Director for Eastern Africa, also commended the achievements of the project which was launched in 2012. He especially noted its capacity building efforts through supporting one PhD and four MSc students.

“While we have faced many challenges in the project, I believe we are on track. One of the major challenges was in cleaning up all the varieties to ensure they were virus-free before distributing them for trials,” said Dr Edward Kanju, IITA cassava breeder who is leading the initiative.



*Dr Mansoor giving welcoming remarks to the project partners*

In addition the countries have also initiated regeneration trials of their own five best varieties to see how they respond to the viral diseases and to identify those which remain healthy for a long time even when infected.

The virus cleaning was carried out by Natural Resources Institute (NRI) and the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate (KEPHIS). KEPHIS also carried out the initial multiplication before forwarding the material to a commercial tissue culture company, Genetics Technologies International Limited (GTIL), for mass multiplication. The virus-free status of the disease was verified by the Mikocheni Agricultural Research Institute (MARI) and IITA.

### Clean seeds system

Another area that the project is piloting in Tanzania is the setting up of a pilot seeds system for cassava. Currently, there are no commercial seed systems in most of the cassava growing countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Farmers mostly replant their old stock or borrow from a neighbor. This is contributing to the spread of the two diseases.

In setting up the seeds system, the released varieties from the breeders will go into a tissue culture lab to ensure they are virus-free before

being sent to commercial seed companies for mass multiplication for use by farmers.

Under this objective, great progress has also been reported. A team was assembled of all the key stakeholders including the Department of Research and Development of the Tanzania Agriculture Ministry, Tanzania Official Seed Certification Institute (TOSCI), the Mennonites Economic Development Association (MEDA) to develop a draft clean seed system. Standards for cassava seed certification have also been developed.

Four clean sites have also been established in Kagera, Hombolo, Mtwara, and Tanga regions under the leadership of the Sugarcane Research Institute, another project partner.

“The challenge we faced included maintaining a very low population of the whitefly, the vector responsible for spreading the diseases,” said James Legg, IITA’s virologist who is leading this component.

The next steps for the 5CP project include hardening and multiplying the clean TC plantlets for national trials in selected sites and, including the cassava certification guidelines in the Government of Tanzania Seed Act.

## ILRI officially opens its Tanzania office at IITA’s Eastern Africa Hub

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other CGIAR centers too. In Benin Republic, AfricaRice is hosting IITA. In Nigeria, IITA is hosting the offices of ILRI and AfricaRice. That is the new CGIAR,” he said.

He further noted that while IITA’s research focused on tropical crops, such as maize, cassava, banana and plantain, yam, soybean, and cowpea; and ILRI’s focus was on

livestock, the typical smallholder farmer in Africa grew crops and also kept livestock.

“The challenges facing smallholder farmers are so complex that we need to work together. Indeed we both work in close partnership with government institutions, farmers’ associations and women’s groups, national research institutes, universities, the

private sector and other members of the civil society in Africa and overseas. IITA and ILRI complement each other as they work in their areas of interest,” he said.

The event attracted over 60 representatives from the Government and NGOs in the livestock sector. The Minister afterwards planted a tree to mark the occasion.

## IITA inaugurates new canteen and cloakroom for staff



*IITA DG Sanginga cuts the tape at the inauguration of Cappa Canteen and Cloakroom*



*Staff jubilating*



*DDG (CS) Akuffo-Akoto makes a speech*



*Side view of the new facilities*



*The Cloakroom*



*The Cappa Canteen*



*Staff throng to witness the inauguration*

IITA has inaugurated a newly constructed canteen and a cloakroom for staff members particularly casual/field workers and temporary staff.

The construction of the facilities is part of efforts aimed at paying greater attention to the welfare of staff at all levels.

Dr Kwame Akuffo-Akoto, DDG Corporate services, said the provision of the facilities was in line with the 'Institute's belief that its strength lies in its human capital.'

"Therefore, as much as possible, we will continue to create a conducive environment to enable our staff at all levels to perform their tasks in the best conditions," Akuffo-Akoto said.

For over thirty years, the Cappa Canteen had operated as a "buka"—a term used to describe a modest place for buying food items— with

dilapidated structures.

With this construction, the services in the Cappa Canteen will be enhanced to offer improved services to casual workers, contractors and indeed the entire staff body while the newly constructed Cloakroom, located near the Cappa Canteen, will provide convenience for all to bath and refresh after the day's work on the fields whenever the need arises.

"For me, this is not about IITA alone, but a way of appreciating the people who have served IITA for a long time even when the conditions were unfavorable" said IITA DG Sanginga at the commissioning of the facilities.

Sylvia Oyinlola, West Africa Regional Administrator described the construction of the facility as "a gesture that demonstrates that the management listens and is concerned about staff welfare at all levels."

The Human Resources Manager Mrs Lade Oke in her opening remarks thanked IITA DG Sanginga and the Management team for the facility, adding that it would promote unity among staff.

The Management Staff Association represented by Kayode Awobajo donated chairs to the canteen as a show of support for the initiative. Adedeji Oluwaseun who spoke on behalf of casual and field workers at the event said they were delighted to be treated with honor as members of one family.

"Since Dr Sanginga became DG, he has extended to us the full benefits that other staff members also enjoy...some of us have gotten the opportunity to further our studies, while we also benefit from the leave package. We are indeed grateful," she said.