



IITA DG: How southern Africa can unleash its agriculture potential

Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) has called on southern African countries to tap the youth population in the region to address food insecurity and end unemployment.

Addressing policymakers and the youth in the region at a conference organized by the Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Africa ([CCARDESA](#)), Sanginga said the youth population in the region should be seen as an asset, not a problem.

“The youth have the energy, and if we are able to tap this energy we will be able to advance agriculture on the continent,” said Sanginga who was represented by [Alfred Dixon](#) Head of IITA’s Partnerships Coordination Office, in Durban, South Africa, 3-6 August.

Speaking on the topic “Unlocking agribusiness opportunities for youth in Southern Africa”, the DG gave an account of how a youth program called IITA Youth Agripreneurs ([IYA](#)) initiated by IITA in 2012 is attracting youth into agriculture.

“From zero dollars, these youths have been able to grow their incomes to \$700 per month,” he explained. “On their own, these young men and women are today managing different enterprises including cassava, maize, vegetables, soybean, banana and plantains, fish, and livestock,” he added.

According to him, the experience of the IITA youth program clearly demonstrated that with institutional support and mentoring, the youth could be engaged in agriculture to make a decent living.

Mustapha Quadri, a member of IYA, gave also a presentation titled “Cassava production, processing, and marketing” during a break-away session on the subtheme “The role of youth in innovations and agribusiness solution: Cassava case study”.



Alfred Dixon representing DG Nteranya Sanginga at the CCARDESA conference in Durban, South Africa.

The presentation was based on the various products and value addition that can be derived from cassava. Participants visiting the exhibition stands liked the various cassava products showcased in the exhibition.

In his keynote address, the Executive Director, [Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa \(FARA\)](#), [Yemi Akinbami](#) said, “The agricultural sector needs to be transformed to provide employment for the youth in Africa and we need to increase value addition to attract the youth.”

The Executive Director of CCARDESA, [Timothy Simalenga](#) commended IITA and other partners for initiating youth programs to attract the youth into agriculture, and emphasized that CCARDESA would continue to support agricultural development in the region with emphasis on getting more youth engaged in agriculture.

IITA participants included [Godwin Atser](#), [Ugheoke Avoedoghia Diana](#), [Christophe Kongolo](#), [Caroline Liwena](#), [Bupe Gwasa](#), [Ronald Ongario](#), and [Christine Zamugurha](#).

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Barking up the right tree: Multipurpose trees help Tanzania smallholders build a resilient farming system



Winnie Saigodi has planted *Gliricidia sepium* and *Grevillea robusta* trees as shelterbelts in her farm.

Winnie Saigodi, a mother of five, from Moleteti village in Kongwa District, Tanzania, had long given up on ever harvesting any meaningful produce from her one-acre farm.

"I completely lost hope because for five years, I hardly harvested anything from the farm despite cultivating different crops. Nothing grew well and soil erosion was also a major problem," Saigodi says. She eventually left the land fallow until researchers from the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) working under the IITA-led Africa RISING project visited her and asked to use part of her farm for research trials on growing multipurpose *Gliricidia* (*Gliricidia sepium*) trees, which can be grown for fodder, wood supply, wind erosion control, and soil fertility improvement.

She readily accepted because she had nothing to lose. Two years after the research and demonstration trials started, her opinion about the productivity of her land has completely changed.

What she has seen has convinced her that she and other smallholder farmers in Tanzania's soil erosion-battered districts of Kongwa and Kiteto can still get good harvests from their farms and turn around their fortunes.

Anthony Kimaro, the ICRAF country representative in Tanzania and the Africa RISING research theme leader, says that in the 2014/2015 season alone, courtesy of the project, over 16,000 *Gliricidia* seedlings were raised by farmers and distributed for planting in the five villages of Mlali, Moleteti, Ilakala, Manyusi, and Njoro. More than 100

lead farmers took part in a demonstration of the agroforestry technologies of raising these trees and they later shared their newly acquired knowledge with other farmers.

"Farmers now know how to raise these tree seedlings and plant them in strategic parts of their fields depending on site condition and land availability," explains Kimaro. Africa RISING is also establishing various landscape-based agroforestry practices to improve access to fodder, fuel wood, and to control soil erosion in Tanzania's Kongwa and Kiteto districts.

Farmers will also use the *Gliricidia* as a source of firewood and green manure. Harvesting of crop residues as fodder (supplementary animal feeds) or fuel wood (for cooking) is already a common practice in semi-arid central Tanzania where the project's activities are being implemented.

According to Kimaro, fuel wood extraction is responsible for more than a quarter (27%) of all deforestation in Tanzania. Farmers, especially women, in semi-arid areas spend six to eight hours each day searching for a head load of fuel wood which is used up after just two to three days.

He believes fast growing leguminous trees/shrubs such as *Gliricidia* and *Melia* trees will help households build firewood reserves in addition to providing animal feed and green manure for their farms.

"I am happy that my field is green and I have started enjoying the shade from the trees during lunch or breastfeeding breaks when working in the farm," says Saigodi. She is looking forward to harvesting a good amount of wood in December this year from the year-old *Gliricidia* trees, which is much more than she gets from crop residues.

She says knowledge from the project is changing the beliefs and misconceptions of farmers in the village.

"We believed that trees couldn't be planted in the farms because they suck away nutrients from food crops, but we now know the types of trees that are friendly to crops and that add nutrients in the soil," she says. "Moreover, planting trees at the farm is helping reduce farm boundary conflicts."



Creating change: Farmers in Mlali village in Kongwa District, Tanzania are also planting *Grevillea* trees to supply fuel wood and timber.

Elite cassava varieties to be tested for resistance to diseases

Five countries in East and Southern Africa will start field trials of over 20 new elite cassava varieties to select those with the best tolerance/resistance to the two viral diseases ravaging the crop in the region—cassava brown streak disease (CBSD) and cassava mosaic disease (CMD).

Each country shared its five best cassava varieties for the regional trials to speed up the development and distribution to farmers of the new and much-needed varieties with dual resistance to the two deadly diseases. The varieties first underwent a rigorous exercise to clean them of viruses before being distributed as tissue culture plantlets. This was followed by large-scale multiplication to generate enough planting materials for the first round of field trials for local adaptation, acceptability, and tolerance to the two diseases in at least six locations in each country.

The activities are part of a four-year project that aims to improve the food security and livelihoods of smallholder



Cassava roots infected with Cassava Brown Streak Disease.

cassava farmers in the five project countries and others in sub-Saharan Africa. The initiative, called “[New Cassava Varieties to Combat CBSD and CMD \(5CP\)](#)” is funded by the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) and led by [IITA](#). It is being spearheaded by the national agricultural research systems (NARS) in the five partner countries: Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique Tanzania, and Uganda.

Many firsts

According to [Edward Kanju](#), IITA cassava breeder and Project Coordinator, the project—now on its fourth and final year—is the first initiative where breeders in the five countries have come together to freely share their best varieties to tackle the two diseases threatening food security and income.

Speaking at the annual review and planning meeting recently held in Entebbe, Kanju said, “This is the first time that we have virus-indexed elite cassava material being shared in five countries. It’s also the first time that breeding trials are starting on a clean slate with all the new test materials and local checks being certified as virus free.”

Piloting a clean seed system

In Tanzania, the project is also supporting the development of a pilot clean seed system to make sure that farmers have access to clean planting material. This was lauded by Director General [Ambrose Agona](#) of the [National Agricultural Research Organization](#), Uganda, during the meeting opening. He said that access to clean planting material of the new varieties was one of the challenges affecting production in the region.

“The pilot seed system being tested in Tanzania will guide and ensure that smallholder farmers have access to the planting materials developed by researchers in the right quantity and quality,” he said.

The project is also building the capacity of researchers by sponsoring five MSc students – one per country, and one PhD student.



Group photo of participants at the annual review meeting in Entebbe, Uganda.

Certified Risk Based Auditor training held at IITA

The Certified Risk Based Auditor (CRBA) training for internal auditors took place at IITA Headquarters on 13-17 July with participants from [IITA](#), [AfricaRice](#), and the World Agroforestry Centre ([ICRAF](#)). [Lilian Mendoza](#), HR Head, IITA, in her opening remarks, commented on the new initiatives of making audit participatory and ensuring that all stakeholders are carried along. She encouraged participants to take the opportunity to leverage knowledge and add value to their work.

The training was facilitated by Jason Mefford, Head of Practice - Governance

and Audit with [Leoron Professional Development Institute](#), USA. The training was aimed at helping auditors use a risk-based audit approach and risk management principles and learn how to select areas to audit to help the organization meet its objectives.

It was also aimed at helping internal auditors prioritize the audit of projects, focusing on the ones with the highest risks to the organization, and providing assurance to Management and the Board. There were some group activities during the training and an exam was administered at the end of the training.

Participants’ comments on the training include: “It was good” - Eric Ihongu (ICRAF), “Very interesting, though some language barrier was encountered” - Armelle Assogba (AfricaRice), “Very interesting, very good except for a little language problem” - Cosme Idohou (AfricaRice). “It was educative” - Aminat Oladunjoye (IITA).

At the end of the training, Tariro Mutamuko, Head, IITA Internal Audit, implored all the participants to put the knowledge acquired to use in advancing IITA’s goals of reducing poverty in Africa through R4D.

SARD-SC holds regional cassava IP workshop in Zambia

From 18 to 19 August, the cassava component of the African Development Bank (AfDB)-funded “Support to Agricultural Research-for-Development of Strategic Crops in Africa (SARD-SC)” project held a regional training workshop on [Innovation Platforms](#) (IPs) in Zambia. About 40 participants representing partner entities from Zambia, Tanzania, and DR Congo attended the workshop, which was held at the Cresta Golfview Hotel in Lusaka.

To set the tone for the workshop, Chrys Akem, SARD-SC Project Manager, gave a summary of the project’s achievements so far based on the recently concluded mid-term review by the AfDB. “In essence,” he said, “we are in a very good position vis-à-vis the targets we have set to achieve by this mid-point of the project. On average, we have achieved more than half—about 64%—of our target outputs as outlined in our project work plan.”

“Our success so far could be attributed to the effective implementation of [IPs](#) across the different crop components—cassava, wheat, maize, and rice. The IP has always been, and will remain, the operational cornerstone of this project,” he added.

“Our project mission is to help build a better future for the rural youth of Africa, and this can best be attained through IPs,” he emphasized.

[Pheneas Ntawuruhunga](#), SARD-SC Cassava Country Coordinator for



Chrys Akem opening the IP workshop.

Zambia, expressed his enthusiasm for the training as he welcomed the multinational participants, saying that “the myriad of experiences that you have regarding IPs will help us enrich our training as we can draw diverse lessons from these experiences that have been shaped by the unique conditions of each country represented here.”

[Tahirou Abdoulaye](#), IITA Socioeconomist based in Ibadan, Nigeria, served as the workshop’s facilitator and one of the resource speakers. He detailed the workshop’s objectives, saying that “Generally, this training will improve our understanding of Innovation Systems and its applications to the SARD-SC cassava component.” [Johnson Onyibe](#), SARD-SC Maize Country Coordinator

for Nigeria served as the other resource person for the IP training.

“Specifically,” Abdoulaye added, “this workshop will review our understanding of the IP approach under SARD-SC Cassava and agree on a common approach, and use the agreed approach to define or improve the current approach being employed by cassava IPs in SARD-SC.”

At the end of the workshop, the participants had a better understanding of the IP concept, understood how to set up and make an IP functional, improved their skills on facilitating IP operations, and were able to better define and evaluate IP outputs and outcomes within the context of the SARD-SC project.

Upcoming Events

- Zambia Feed-the-Future R&D Technology Dissemination Workshop and Final Project Meeting, Radisson Blu Hotel, Lusaka, 25-26 August
- Field Day, Idologun, Ogun State, Nigeria, 2 September, for 150 farmers and extension workers to create awareness about banana bunchy top disease and use of virus-free planting material
- Africa RISING Farm typology meeting, Wageningen University, Netherlands, 31 August - 1 September
- Africa RISING phase 2 design meeting, Wageningen University, Netherlands, 1-4 September
- Institute-wide Gender Awareness Seminar, 1 September, and Workshop on Developing Capacity for Gender Mainstreaming, 2-4 September. Facilitator: Prof Jane Bennett of the African Gender Institute (AGI), University of Cape Town.
- Mobilizing Youth within Phase 2 CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs), co-organized by IITA, AfDB, and the CGIAR Consortium, 8-9 September, CGIAR Consortium Office, Montpellier, France. For more information, visit the workshop [website](#).
- TROPENTAG (day of the tropics) 2015, Humboldt University, Berlin, 16-18 September. IITA will have a special session to present its research portfolio and an exhibition to showcase its work as a CGIAR research institution.
- Africa RISING Program Strategy Workshop, Mali, 6-8 October
- R4D Week, IITA Ibadan, 22-28 November
- Joint World Cowpea and Pan-African Grain Legume Research Conference 2016, co-organized by IITA and the Feed-the-Future Legume Innovation Lab, Zambezi Sun Resort Hotel, Livingstone, Zambia, 28 February to 4 March 2016. For more information, visit the conference [website](#) or download the conference [announcement](#).