



## IFAD boss expresses confidence in IITA's capacity and vision to rejuvenate agriculture in the tropics

The President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Dr Kanayo Nwanze, expressed confidence in IITA's strategic vision that is aimed at addressing agricultural challenges across various agroecological zones in sub-Saharan Africa, which include the humid forest zone, the Sahelian drylands, the mid-altitude savannas, and the moist savanna and woodland zones.

IITA's strategic vision in the next 10 years will see staple yields increasing by 60 percent, farm incomes improving by 50 percent, 25 percent of poor households being lifted above the poverty line, and about 25 million hectares of degraded farm lands restored.

Dr Nwanze said the concept of tackling agricultural constraints across the the 'impact' zones and resource mobilization efforts towards the vision are "impressive and commendable."

The IFAD boss, who is from Nigeria, and a former IITA researcher, visited IITA this week. He said, "Increasing investments in agricultural research for development (R4D) could bring the much-awaited agricultural transformation to Africa and help address the rising wave of youth unemployment and its attendant poverty."



L-R: Head, IFAD Quality Assurance and Grants Unit, Shantanu Mathur; IITA DG, Dr Nteranya Sanginga; and IFAD President, Dr Kanayo Nwanze, during Nwanze's "homecoming"

Delivering a talk titled, "Rejuvenation: Investing in agriculture for the future of Nigeria and its young people," Dr Nwanze said Africa and indeed Nigeria should not shy away from committing more resources to agricultural research and development if they really want to witness an African Green Revolution.

"Agricultural research is the cornerstone of development... It is the vehicle that conveys development and we must invest in it," he said.

Dr Nwanze also supported calls for investments to rejuvenate research institutions such as IITA—a position

earlier made by Nigeria's former President Olusegun Obasanjo.

He commended IITA for its work on agricultural research, and pledged IFAD's support in rejuvenating the Institute.

IITA Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga said that the growing youth population is both an opportunity and a 'time bomb' for Africa.

"They are an opportunity if we convert their energies to agricultural development but they could be a 'time bomb' if we fail to do so," he explained.

## "Public-private sector collaboration as a tool for research impact"

Collaborative efforts between private sector organizations and research institutions provide a path to sustainable development, with improved livelihoods of farmers, according to the Chief Executive Officer, Africa Harvest, Dr Florence Wambugu.



Dr Wambugu during her seminar presentation in IITA-Ibadan

In a seminar presentation at IITA on 22 August, Dr Wambugu said the private sector is a key stakeholder needed for delivering research impact.

Drawing from lessons learnt from Africa Harvest's Tissue Culture Banana Model, Dr Wambugu said the private sector provided value-addition services and helped in carrying the technology to farmers in Kenya. The technology offered farmers cleaner and disease-free planting materials with high yield potential.

With adoption of the improved varieties on the rise, the private sector today is now involved in the multiplication of planting materials, amplifying the dissemination of the improved materials. Other areas where the private sector is involved in the value chain include the provision of mobile banking and communication. Along the chain, jobs are being created for several

stakeholders including youths, women, and men.

Dr Wambugu said she was impressed with IITA's work and asked scientists never to undermine the power of research.

According to her, whatever is working at a pilot stage has the potential of offering more benefits when out-scaled. She urged researchers to always encourage group formation in the communities they work, stressing that groups promote community cohesion and empowerment.

Equally important for successful value chain is communication, she added.

Africa Harvest is a nongovernmental organization with the mandate to apply innovative technologies and institutional approaches for improving livelihoods of rural communities, particularly small landholders, through science & technology-based sustainable models of agricultural development.

# Aflatoxin contamination: IITA sends 'good fungi' after 'bad cousins' in Senegal, Kenya, and Burkina Faso

Senegal, Kenya, and Burkina Faso have taken delivery of their local version of aflasafe™—a biocontrol product developed by IITA—to tackle the menace of aflatoxin contamination in maize and groundnuts.

Aflatoxin contamination is a major concern as it has negative impacts on health and trade. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), about 25 percent of grains produced in the developing countries risk contamination with aflatoxin.

IITA's biocontrol product—*aflasafe*™—is, however, giving farmers respite.

*Aflasafe*™ is composed of non-toxicogenic strains of *Aspergillus* otherwise known as 'good fungi' that are native to the countries where the formulation is applied. When applied on the field, the 'good' fungi outcompete their 'bad cousins' or the toxigenic strains. This process subsequently reduces the level of grain contamination with aflatoxin. In Nigeria, farmers who applied *aflasafe*™ on their fields had experienced aflatoxin contamination drop by more than 80 percent.

This year, IITA supplied 2.8 tons of *aflasafe*™ to Senegal, 1.5 tons to Kenya, and 1 ton to Burkina Faso.

"Demand for *aflasafe*™ this year has surpassed supply," say Dr Joseph



Staff loading *aflasafe*™ in a vehicle for departure

Atehnkeng and Ms Titilayo Falade—both working with Dr Ranajit Bandyopadhyay, a plant pathologist and leader of the team in IITA.

"This is because of the awareness being created about the positive health impact of *aflasafe*™ among farmers and its potential for income enhancement by reducing aflatoxin contamination. Farmers now want good quality grains for home consumption and the market," they added.

Efforts are currently under way to ensure that farmers' demands are met in the 2013 growing season. A demonstration-scale manufacturing

plant for the production of *aflasafe* is being set up at the IITA campus in Ibadan. This will serve as a prototype for eventual commercial uptake of the technology. Engr Lawrence Kaptoge of IITA is spearheading this effort in partnership with Dr Peter Cotty of the USDA-ARS. The manufacturing facility is being funded by the African Union-led Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA).

Partners for this work are the Institut de l'Environnement et de Recherches Agricoles (INERA) in Burkina Faso; Kenya Agriculture Research Institute, and African Agricultural Technology Foundation in Kenya; and Direction de la Protection des Végétaux (DPV) in Senegal. The project receives donor support from the Austrian Development Agency for Burkina Faso, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for Kenya, and the United States Department of Agriculture for Senegal.

*Aflasafe*™ will help farmers in these participating countries to improve food safety as it relates to aflatoxin contamination in maize and groundnuts and further open more doors for exports. But more importantly, the adoption of the product will improve the health status of people living in those countries.

## Thai Farms honors IITA

Thai Farms Limited, the largest maker of cassava flour in Nigeria, on 21 August honored IITA for the support offered to its operations in Nigeria over the years.

The CEO/MD of Thai Farms, Mr Louw Burger, said IITA contributed a lot in making the dream of the founders of the company to come true, beginning from site selection, organization of farmers, and product registration by regulatory authorities.

Today, Thai Farms is the major supplier of cassava flour to the Nigerian market that is being used in baking bread and other confectionery products.

The company buys thousands of tons of cassava roots from farmers, spending

about N1 million (US\$6,250) daily on the root crop, and creating a market and generating wealth for farmers.

The success by Thai Farms demonstrates IITA's efficiency in linking farmers to the market through its value chain approach.

Thai Farms Director, Nattanee Booncharoen, presented plaques to the Director-General of IITA, Dr Nteranya Sanginga; IITA Crop Utilization Specialist, Dr Bussie Maziya-Dixon, who helped in the registration of the company's product; and former IITA staff, Paul Ilona, now with Harvest Plus—who facilitated the organization of farmers around the company and also advised on the location of the factory.



Dr Maziya-Dixon (left) receives a plaque from Thai Farms Director, Booncharoen

## IITA welcomes Dr Michael Abberton

Dr Michael Abberton has joined IITA.

He assumed duty at IITA-Ibadan as the Head, Genetic Resources Center.

Dr Abberton is a British national. He has Ph.D. from the University of Manchester (1988) and a B.Sc in Botany from the same university (1984).

Prior to his appointment, he was the Head of Plant Breeding and Genetics at the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences, Aberystwyth University. Dr Abberton resides temporarily in I-House Dormitory and would be



Abberton

subsequently moved to his permanent residence on campus. He could be reached on ext 2422.

## Risk Management at IITA

### Why talk about risk?

The reality of life is that once in a while things will go wrong no matter how well we plan and prepare and no matter for how many years they have always gone right. It is also true that just as good things happen to good people and organizations, bad things also happen to them.

- Some research trials will fail
- The ever reliable equipment will one day stop working
- Reagents stored under the best of conditions will go bad
- Timelines would not be met
- A donor would fail to pay up
- Human errors would occur
- Budgets will be over spent
- Someone will manipulate data, time, money, etc.
- Accidents will happen in the laboratories, on fields, office, on the road and in the air.

This is why we all need to come together and talk about risk.

...To be continued