

IITA delegation visits Tanzanian President; President Kikwete agrees to be IITA Goodwill Ambassador

His Excellency President Dr Jakaya Kikwete generously granted an appointment to a delegation from IITA Tanzania led by Dr [Victor Manyong](#), Regional Director for Eastern Africa on 22 July. Other members of the delegation included Ms Edith Kazimoto, IITA Administrative Assistant in Tanzania and Mr Vianey Rweyendela, AGRA Country Coordinator of the Scaling Seeds and Technologies Partnership Project and a former IITA scientist.

The dialogue started with Dr Manyong thanking Pres Kikwete for granting IITA an audience. He also delivered a personal letter from the former President of Nigeria (1997-2007), Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, an [IITA Goodwill Ambassador](#).

Major points discussed included the request by IITA for President Kikwete to become the IITA Ambassador in Tanzania who will champion agricultural development in eastern and southern Africa given his well-known passion, experience, and interest in agricultural development in the region. The IITA delegation also gave an update on new major investments for agricultural research for development made by IITA since the [commissioning by the President](#) of the high-tech science building at Mikocheni in May 2013. The new investments include the construction of a training center for a new generation of youth in agribusiness at Kwembe village worth about US\$1.5 million (about 25 km from the Dar es Salaam City center), banana research in the Moshi and Kagera regions to control devastating plant diseases, biological control of aflatoxin on maize and groundnut for safer food and food products, and [sustainable intensification of agriculture](#) to increase crop yields while maintaining the resource base in the Babati, Morogoro, and Kigoma regions, etc.

The final point discussed was the request for support from the Government of Tanzania in two areas: (1) the accreditation of IITA with a diplomatic status--this would improve the performance of IITA as an international organization that is supported by several governments. Other African countries that have granted a diplomatic status to IITA where it operates are Nigeria, Mozambique, Malawi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Benin Republic, and soon, Kenya; (2) financial grant for the ongoing development of the training center for youth at Kwembe village. This will provide a strong signal to donors who assist IITA that are making increased agricultural investments in Tanzania about the commitment and support of the Tanzanian Government to the IITA research and development activities in the country.

The President welcomed the visitors and read with great interest the letter from his brother and former President Obasanjo. President Kikwete said that he accepts the role of IITA Ambassador in eastern and southern Africa. He also indicated that he will take up with the appropriate services the issue of accreditation so that a diplomatic status could be granted to IITA as soon as possible. He said that he and his Government are very supportive of the IITA initiatives in the country and that he will seek ways to provide financial support to the development of the training center for the youth. He challenged the IITA delegation to complete the construction of this center by October 2015 so that he himself can commission the premises before leaving the office.

During the ensuing discussion the President learned about and showed a noticeable interest in using cassava

ingredients in the formulation of animal feed, which will boost the use of locally produced agricultural products and thus enhance the market for smallholders' farmers.

Finally he advised the delegation to write a summary of issues discussed and agreed, and to submit this as soon as possible to enable him to take action with the respective ministries.

The meeting took place in the President's private residence and lasted an hour and 15 minutes.



Dr Victor Manyong (rightmost), Regional R4D Director for East Africa led the IITA delegation that made an official visit to Tanzanian Pres Kikwete (in white t-shirt) at his private residence on 22 July.

Uganda's Minister of State for Agriculture commits to fast-track policies relevant to crop intensification

The [Policy Action for Sustainable Intensification of Cropping Systems \(PASIC\)](#) project, through its Collective Learning for Policy Action (CoLPA) platform, collaborated with the Economic Policy Research Center (EPRC) to organize the 4th National Agricultural Policy Forum (NAPF). Participants represented various organs of government, private sector organizations, NGOs, researchers and farmers among others. Actors such as the Operation Wealth Creation, the National Planning authority, the agricultural desk in the Office of the Prime Minister, Uganda Seed Trade Association, agricultural NGOs, parliamentarians, private input dealers, and journalists attended to listen to the evidence that supports the need for agricultural intensification.

The forum brought together different stakeholders to contribute to the agricultural policy debate by critically evaluating the country's overall agricultural policy framework for inconsistencies, and implementation gaps with a particular focus on policies that influence crop intensification (i.e., fertilizer, seed, land, and extension policies); and pave a way forward to stimulate increased crop production and productivity.

The objectives of the forum were to:

- examine Uganda's agricultural sector policy framework for policy inconsistencies
- identify the implementation gaps and challenges and their effect on the sector
- examine policy options for stimulating productivity in the sector, and the forum will then contribute to the ultimate outcome of a transformed, highly productive agriculture sector through a deeper understanding of the agricultural



Uganda's Minister of State for Agriculture pledges to move the process for obtaining cabinet approval of the pending policies, regulations, and strategies.

- policy framework
- foster participation of relevant agricultural stakeholders.

The consultation was officiated by Hon. Vincent Ssempijja, the Minister of State for Agriculture, who assured participants that the Government of Uganda values the importance of the agricultural sector and has developed policies and programs to support its growth such as the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), the Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA), the Development Strategy Investment Plan (DSIP), the National Agricultural Policy, and the Land Policy, all of which are incorporated in the Agricultural Sector Strategic Plan.

The Minister also acknowledged the challenges faced by the sector such as the weak linkages among agricultural sector policy stakeholders, low adoption of agricultural innovations, including fertilizers and improved seeds in

Uganda; and appealed to stakeholders to strengthen linkages by engaging in such forums to enhance the productivity and transformation of the sector. He pledged to follow up all pending policies and strategies such as the National Seed Policy and National Seed strategy. PASIC, USAID, and Integrated Seed Sector Development (ISSD) contributed to national stakeholder validation of this seed policy last year. This policy is at the formulation stage and awaits approval to advance to the cabinet level. He also pledged to follow up on the National Fertilizer Policy, and strategy which are awaiting approval by cabinet. The fertilizer policy is currently at the adoption stage of the policy cycle.

Presentations relevant to crop intensification were made and discussed by the different stakeholders who focused on the policy development cycle in Uganda, policies relevant for crop intensification of smallholder agriculture, reforms in the Agricultural Extension System, challenges to sustainable crop intensification, and risk management and coping strategies by smallholder farmers.

The Forum was closed by parliamentarian Mathias Kasamba who regretted the absence of an agricultural extension law; and stressed the importance of collaboration between and within sectors if realistic targets for national development are to be set. He indicated that many members of Parliament are part of the process to transform agriculture and have reorganized into a strong platform that seeks partnership in developing the sector and have put up commodity approaches to enhance livelihoods in their constituencies.

Kenyan Government approves use of Aflasafe KE01 to fight aflatoxins

Kenyan [farmers will soon have access](#) to a product that can dramatically reduce [aflatoxin](#) contamination. During a meeting of the Board of Management held on 29 June, the Pest Control Products Board (PCPB) granted full registration status to the biocontrol product Aflasafe KE01™, with the [Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization \(KALRO\)](#) as the registrant.

“Now that this biocontrol product is fully approved for use after meeting stringent

standards of safety and efficacy, we expect that its rapid adoption will help us to deal with the recurrent and vexing aflatoxin problem and make our maize safe to eat and trade,” said Dr Eliud Kireger, Director General, KALRO.

Aflatoxin contamination in food grain and feed in Kenya is a major concern with a negative impact on health, trade, and food security. Aflatoxins stunt the growth of children, suppress immunity, and cause liver cancer. Nearly 200 people, including



A biocontrol product for Kenya: Aflasafe KE01™

school children, have died in Kenya owing to acute aflatoxin poisoning in the recent past.

Aflasafe KE01™ contains four local strains of the *Aspergillus flavus* fungus incapable of producing the toxins. When applied in the field before crop flowering to reduce the source of contamination, the aflatoxin-deficient strains in Aflasafe KE01™ outcompete and displace those producing toxins in the field. Aflatoxins are thus reduced before the crop is harvested and reductions continue after the crop moves into storage. This biological control principle, initially developed by the [United States Department of Agriculture–Agriculture Research Service \(USDA-ARS\)](#) and widely used in the United States, was adapted by [IITA](#) in partnership with USDA-ARS and others for use in several African nations. Earlier, a biocontrol product called aflasafe™ was registered in Nigeria by IITA.

Similar products are under development in 10 other countries.

Aflasafe KE01™ was jointly developed by KALRO, IITA, and USDA-ARS with support from the African Agriculture Technology Foundation ([AATF](#)), [ACDI-VOCA](#), and the Ministry of Agriculture. It is highly effective (up to 98% reduction) in farmers' fields in aflatoxin-prone areas of Kenya where maize is frequently unmarketable.

Furthermore, Aflasafe KE01™ persists from one season to the next and disperses beyond the fields that are treated. These characteristics allow for area-wide approaches to aflatoxin management with the potential for both cumulative benefits that increase with each year and community-wide benefit where entire areas can achieve relief.

Earlier in the year, the [Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries](#)

dedicated 1.5 billion shillings for aflatoxin mitigation in the country. Development of in-country capacity to produce Aflasafe KE01™ for Kenya got under way in November 2014 with the [ground breaking ceremony](#) by the Cabinet Secretary for the Modular Manufacturing Facility at KALRO-Katamani. This facility will be run by KALRO with technical backstopping from IITA and USDA-ARS. For providing immediate relief to the farmers, the Agriculture Ministry is procuring 230 tons of Aflasafe KE01™ from the Aflasafe manufacturing facility in IITA, Nigeria.

The project had many phases that were funded in part by the [United States Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#), [USDA–Foreign Agriculture Service](#), the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), the African Agriculture Technology Foundation (AATF), and the [CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition & Health](#).

DRC Prime Minister visits IITA-Kinshasa; strongly supports youth engagement in agriculture

Agriculture has been identified as a major sector which can help to increase growth in the economy of African countries," said the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Matata Ponyo Mapon, on 14 July, at an exhibition organized by the Government and IITA.

The exhibition *Young Congolese and Agribusiness* showcased various products derived from cassava and soybean at the Prime Minister's garden in Kinshasa.

Speaking during the exhibition, Mr Matata Ponyo said the Government had identified the youth as "agents of change that would bring the necessary technologies and zeal to revolutionize the agricultural sector."

He added that the government shared IITA's vision of improving agriculture through research, science-driven agriculture, and youth involvement in the sector.

"The organization of this exhibition is a testimony to the engagement of the President, His Excellency Joseph Kabila, the Prime Minister, and other ministries to improve agriculture especially in the rural areas," he said.

Impressed by the activities of IITA especially on youth involvement in agriculture, the Prime Minister commended IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga, for IITA's youth initiative and promised that the country would support the spread of the initiative.

Dr [Mahungu Nzola-Meso](#), IITA's country representative, thanked the Prime Minister and members of the cabinet for the opportunity given to IITA to showcase agriculture from a new dimension. The [IITA Youth Agripreneurs](#) initiative is spreading across Africa and aims at reducing youth unemployment around the continent.

"Agriculture is the best sector to bring youth into business. IITA joined in the same view by initiating the Agripreneur model which is now well known on the continent. Young Agripreneurs are really committed to learn business using agriculture along the value chain from the seeds to the consumer," he said.

He added that chapters of the youth group already existed in parts of DRC such as Bukavu, Kinshasa, and Kisangani. There are expectations that the model would be extended to other parts of the country.

The different groups of the IITA Youth Agripreneurs in DRC were joined by their counterparts from Nigeria for the exhibition.

The exhibition is an outcome of the [visit to IITA Nigeria](#) by two special advisers to the Prime Minister, Mr Gerome Masankisi Kamwanga and John Ulimwengu, in June this year to explore areas of partnership and investment with the Institute.



The IITA Youth Agripreneurs showcase food products developed from various staple crops.

IITA hosts AWARD women's leadership training

IITA, with the African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) hosted the AWARD Women's Leadership and Management course at its headquarters in Ibadan, 14-20 June. This is part of IITA Management's commitment to ensure that women get the opportunities to reach leadership positions in the near future.

Twenty-two women scientists, research managers, specialists, and administrators from CGIAR and affiliated centers and partners including 14 from IITA took part in the exciting, interactive, and intensive training.

Training topics covered included the following: leadership and management, core communication skills, 360 inventory, personal styles and preferences, emotional intelligence, sustaining team performance, team building, team feedback, power and assertiveness, dealing with conflict, and peer consultation.

[Pauline Bomett](#), Senior Manager, Leadership, Training and A-Team of AWARD, the course coordinator, said, "It is very important for women to be confident... Women need to have confidence to direct leadership."

"In this course, participants learn about their strengths and weaknesses in leading and managing. They can then celebrate their strengths and work on their weaknesses. They also learn how to be assertive, how to manage conflict, and how to 'claim'



Participants and resource persons of the AWARD women's leadership and management course.

power." She further added, "Women have a lot to contribute...an organization cannot run only with men—we need both men and women, so women should make their voices be heard and be mentors...AWARD works with both men and women and has designed courses and mentoring programs for both."

"I learned so many concrete skills for negotiating relationships in the workplace and these are transferable to personal relationships too. One of my favorites is BIC (behavior, impact, consequence). That little gem is a simple and direct way to give people constructive feedback," said Krista Isaacs, a postdoctoral fellow from [ICRISAT](#),

Mali—one of the participants.

The course facilitators/trainers were Monica Kapiriri, Maria N. Musoke, and Marie Soumonni. Maria's advice to the participants: "Feel the power and use that power to influence the world around you. All across Africa, across the world—the world has been waiting for your energy, effort, and wisdom. With the tools and the wisdom from this course, excel in your potential to do what you can. You have that power and you just need to claim it and use that energy, and whatever else you may be missing. Just tap into the AWARD network and go for it and change this world into a better place."

IITA fellows attend Nestlé agricultural conference in Switzerland

IITA received grants for five Fellows to attend the Nestlé Conference: Planting Seeds for the Future of Food in Lausanne, Switzerland, 2-3 June, and make poster presentations of their research work.

The postdoctoral fellows were [Nouhoun Belko](#) (Kano) and Renee Bullock (Kenya); the doctoral fellows were [Dorcas Olubunmi Ibitoye](#) (Cowpea unit, Ibadan), Mariola Acosta Frances (Uganda), and Abraham Attah Shaibu ([AfricaRice](#)). Nestlé is a multinational company poised to deliver healthy living through agricultural product delivery. This conference discussed the agriculture-nutrition nexus.

Eminent scientists across the globe joined the Nestlé researchers in the conference. Twelve students across the globe had been given awards to attend the conference and showcase their research activities. IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) gave a presentation on the engagement of youth in agriculture using the success story of the IITA Agripreneur initiative.

Dorcas Olubunmi Ibitoye, [IARSAF](#) (IITA's International Association of Research Scholars and Fellows) President, said, "We appreciate the intellectually stimulating opportunity IITA has given us to share our research with experts at this conference. This has increased our network and visibility

in the agricultural research community. We appreciate the support of the DG, the Training Unit for their moral and financial support, Travel and Resource Mobilization, Protocol, and External Liaison (RMPEL) offices—we thank you all and also our supervisors for investing in us."



DG Nteranya Sanginga (center) with awardees from IITA.