



DRC Prime Minister agrees to be champion of youth program

DG [Nteranya Sanginga](#) and Chiji Chinedum Ojukwu from the [African Development Bank](#) (AfDB) recently met with His Excellency, Hon. Augustin Matata Mpoyo, the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, for a briefing on the Youth Agripreneurship Program which AfDB will finance.

The Prime Minister spoke very highly of newly elected AfDB President [Akin Adesina](#), former Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Nigeria, calling his selection as president as historic and a blessing for the growth of the continent's agriculture sector and rural development. A farmer, himself, he traced his own humble beginnings from the rural sector and reiterated his government's commitment to the development of agriculture and the rural space.

According to him, the DRC government had sent a formal request for financing the youth program in agribusiness, and an initial funding for a donor conference to mobilize additional



DG Nteranya Sanginga (right) and the DRC Prime Minister (center).

resources for the program. The Prime Minister said that they are upscaling the [IITA Youth Agripreneur](#) model and providing credit to graduates to set up their own enterprises after graduating from the incubation platform. He fully endorses the approach and has asked the Bank to accelerate this and to turn commitment into results.

Because of his enthusiasm about the youth program, the prime minister was asked to be a Champion for the Youth Program, which he gladly accepted, to help advocate for the initiative continent-wise.

IITA would be providing support for initiatives that would make a difference in DRC with its abundant potentials.

Tasty or not?

Researchers conduct evaluation and consumer acceptability study for cassava ugali

A team of researchers conducted a two-week study to evaluate the acceptability of products from improved cassava

varieties and processed using modern methods by consumers in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The researchers were from the

[Natural Resources Institute \(NRI\)](#) of the [University of Greenwich](#), IITA and [Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre \(TFNC\)](#).



Ugandan enumerators.

The study focused on *ugali*, a stiff porridge made with maize or cassava flour and which is a key staple food in the country. It tested if the consumers detected any differences in the taste and texture of *ugali* when cassava flour was processed using improved drying technologies such as flash and cabin dryer and traditional sun drying. And, if the differences were detected, were they acceptable?

According to [Aurélie Bechoff](#) a food technologist from NRI and one of the researchers, participatory consumer preference studies are important for the

successful promotion of innovations to small-holder farmers and other stakeholders.

“Ugali is a staple food crop consumed by the majority of Tanzanians. The *ugali* we used was made either with pure maize, pure cassava flour from the traditional or improved drying technologies of flash dryer, and use of a cabinet or a mixture of maize / cassava flour. The data collected will be analyzed and will be useful in identifying cassava processing technologies that are suitable to consumers’ tastes.”

The study was divided into two parts: First, a sensory evaluation of the various types of *ugali* was conducted at the IITA Eastern hub with 15 sensory panelists who established a sensory profile of the products. In the second part, the same products were taken to consumers at the IITA canteen and at various restaurants around the city to evaluate their acceptability. A total of 120 men and women were interviewed. The study is part of a project of the [CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and](#)

[Banana](#) titled “[Ensuring acceptability of food products resulting from new varieties and new processing technologies for cassava](#)”. The research studies are being undertaken in five countries in sub-Saharan Africa: Nigeria, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Benin. The project started in January 2014 where partners including IITA, NRI, CIAT and CIRAD held a kick-off meeting in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania together with all the country partner representatives of the project.

IITA Youth Agripreneurs partner with Swedish youth

Students of Agricultural and Rural Management at the Swedish University of Agriculture (SLU) in Sweden visited Nigeria to explore areas of partnership with the [IITA Youth Agripreneurs](#) (IYA) in Ibadan, 18-25 August.

The partnership, which is part of IYA’s objective to gain momentum and upscale agriculture by providing jobs for young, well-educated persons in the agricultural sector is expected to widen the horizon of both groups on adoptable modern agronomic practices and mechanization.

Prior to the visit of the students of SLU to Nigeria, Jinadu Olaide, a representative of IYA, visited SLU in May and presented two seminars showcasing the activities of IYA and the potentials of members in Nigeria and other hubs.

During an interactive session between IYA and the SLU students, the two groups shared their experience on agribusiness, mechanization, value addition and also challenges encountered by young “agripreneurs” in the agricultural sector.

[Evelyn Ohanwusi](#), a member of IYA, gave a background on IYA and related that members of the group have been able to increase their level of productivity and income through production of the various staple crops and value addition of their commodities. She also gave an insight on how each unit of the organization operate and complement each other’s effort across the agricultural value chain.

She stressed that agriculture, though very profitable, would be more fascinating to the youth if modern technologies and mechanization were available and accessible.



Agripreneur Evelyn Ohanwusi facilitating an interactive session with SLU visitors.



IITA Agripreneurs and SLU students and professors.

Richard Karlsson, a representative of SLU, also give a presentation on their activities, and said that after graduation from SLU, many of them become farm managers, advisors for banks, insurance companies, etc.

“Your network of knowledge in school gives you higher chances of income

and profit when running your own field because you have learned what to do and how to do it better.” Karlsson, Kim Eriksson, Charlotta Ydren, and Christine Sanden were accompanied by Teun Dekker, Torsten Horndahl, and Larsson Jan from SLU. They also visited IYA fields and some agribusiness enterprises within the South West metropolis.

Engaging young people in agriculture

More than 2000 young people listened to Alfred Dixon, Head of Partnerships Coordination, in Lagos as he spoke on the topic “Addressing the technological constraints of agribusiness in Nigeria.”

Speaking at the agribusiness seminar/conference organized by the Covenant Christian Center, Dixon, on behalf of Kenton Dashiell, IITA Deputy Director General for Partnerships & Capacity Development, called on the young men and women to harness the business opportunities presented by agriculture across the value chain.

Dixon talked about the successes being recorded by the IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA) and the Business Incubation Platform (BIP). He emphasized that the youth were the untapped resources in Nigeria, and that they have to be carried along for economic development and sustainability.



Alfred Dixon (third from right) at the youth conference in Lagos.

After the lecture, hundreds of participants thronged to the exhibition booth of IITA to seek information about the Institute.

The exhibition booth featured products such as cassava bread, cassava cake, cassava cookies, cassava snacks (tidbits), soymilk, maize, soybean, and

cowpea seeds, Aflasafe and Nodumax products, and publications.

Visitors to the exhibition who tasted the products suggested having the products made available in Lagos; some volunteered to be distributors of the products.

Agriculture is “cool” after all

18 August was United Nation’s Youth Day, dedicated to create awareness on the importance of engaging youth politically, economically, and socially, which is essential for the achievement of sustainable human development. Here is what a few young people engaged in agriculture at IITA say about their experiences and views on ways to engage other young people in agriculture and research.

Veronica Kebwe is chairperson of Tanzania Youth Agripreneurs (TYA), a group of young people that have come together to engage in agribusiness. She has been serving as the group’s leader since its formation, one and a half years ago, and says that the group has been making progress in their agribusiness ventures.

“TYA members are now well equipped with agribusiness entrepreneurship skills. Currently we are producing/processing high quality cassava flour, soy milk/yoghurt, making various food products from cassava, growing tomato, and providing weed management services through safe use of herbicides.

“In the time I have been leading TYA, I have discovered that there are many agricultural opportunities that the youth can use for their own development. However, they need to be patient and committed. Many youth who engage

in agriculture expect to make a profit within a short time and they give up when this does not happen.”

Plenty of opportunities to be exploited

“Before joining the group, I had very little knowledge of agribusiness. Now I realize there are a lot of opportunities in agribusiness that we young people can explore to create income for ourselves. People need food to survive, but not only food, healthy food, so we are assured of a market for our agricultural produce,” says Mariam A. Sein, also a member of the TYA.

“Being a member of TYA has not only changed my mind set on agribusiness, it also exposed me to a lot of opportunities through travels to other countries in sub-Saharan Africa and getting to meet and connect with fellow youth with an interest in agriculture,” she said.

Equip youth with sufficient knowledge

“I simply enjoy what I am doing as it contributes to controlling diseases that attack farmers’ produce and contributes to the country’s development,” says Christopher Mduda, BSc holder of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology and an intern at the IITA Eastern Africa hub conducting research under the supervision of IITA senior scientist James Legg.



Reuben S. Samweli, IITA Research technician

“Most youth have negative perceptions about agriculture. This is because the youth are not well exposed to many of the opportunities available. The youth are active and energetic; they can be at the core of development if they are equipped with sufficient agricultural knowledge and fully supported.”

This is echoed by Reuben S. Samweli, another young Research Technician at IITA with a degree in Biotechnology and Laboratory Sciences who notes that youth engagement in agriculture is key for development and tackling the high levels of unemployment in many countries.

“Engaging youth in the agricultural sector can help deter them from engaging in anti-social behaviors, such as drug addiction, alcoholism, sexual addiction, and crime. However, the support received from government and non-government organizations is inadequate. There is also poor flow of information.”

Training workshop kickstarts yam quality management protocol and positive selection programs in Nigeria

Two IITA projects—Yam Improvement for Food and Income Security in West Africa (YIIFSWA) and Community Action in Improving Farmer Saved Seed Yam (CAY-Seed), in collaboration with the National Agricultural Seeds Council (NASC) recently organized a training workshop in Abuja on 11-13 August, for 40 national partners working to promote the adoption of quality seed yams.

The training aimed to help participants improve the quality of seed yams by using YIIFSWA's seed yam quality management protocol and CAY-Seed's 'Positive Selection' approach for implementation

in the current cropping season, as well as strengthening efforts to implement seed yam quality certification and improving seed yam systems in Nigeria. The trainees were drawn from the [National Root Crops Research Institute, Umudike](#), [Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary](#), and NASC.

"The importance of this workshop on the development of the yam seed sector of Nigeria and yam improvement in particular cannot be overemphasized," stated Phillips Olusegun-Ojo, Director General, NASC. He added that "by partnering with IITA, NASC intends to

drive this goal in Nigeria and ensure that farmers have access to quality seeds that will ultimately increase their productivity."

The participants gained knowledge on yam seed health and were exposed to practical sessions on pest and disease recognition, positive selection, and implementation of Quality Management Protocol on a yam plot at the station where they identified, tagged and scored diseased plants.

Participants also visited the [aeroponics](#) and [bioreactor](#) facilities of BIOCROPS in Utako used for high ratio yam propagation to understand the implications of seed health aspects on emerging technologies.

The training was facilitated by IITA scientists [Lava Kumar](#), Virologist; [Beatrice Aighewi](#), YIIFSWA Yam Seed System Specialist; and Ebiarede Zidafamor, Deputy Director, NASC.

YIIFSWA and CAY-Seed are funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation with the ultimate goal of implementing a series of activities to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders to produce high quality seed yam in Nigeria and Ghana. The production process could involve use of high ratio propagation technologies as well as conventional methods to obtain pre-basic, basic, certified and quality declared seed yam. While CAY-Seed focuses on the improvement of farmer saved seed, YIIFSWA engages in improving all classes of seed yam with the aim of slowing down the progression of seed degeneration.



Hands-on training on yam quality management protocol, Abuja.

IITA social scientists participate in international meeting

Six scientists from IITA participated in the 29th International Conference of Agricultural Economists (ICAE) held at the University of Milan, 9-15 August. They include Bekele Kotu, Djana Mignouna, John Herbert Ainembabazi, Bola Awotide, Adebayo Akinola, and Makaiko Khonje.

The theme for this year's conference, "Agriculture in an Interconnected

World," embraced a wide range of the interconnections that are contributing to unprecedented changes in global agriculture. Held in the beautiful city of Milan, Italy, this year's conference was record breaking in many dimensions.

With over 1,250 participants attending from over 80 countries and 200 institutions, the conference included 420 oral contributed presentations,

200 visual contributed presentations, 98 organized symposia, 15 invited panels, and 7 plenary sessions. IITA agricultural economists presented and discussed research findings on our research and impacts on a wide range of outcomes.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.conftool.com/icae2015/sessions.php>.

Got a story to share? Please email it with photos and captions every Wednesday to Katherine Lopez (k.lopez@cgiar.org), Jeffrey T. Oliver (j.oliver@cgiar.org), Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org), or Adaobi Umeokoro (a.umeokoro@cgiar.org).

AgResults Aflasafe Innovation Platform fosters market linkages for maize value chain actors

The [AgResults](#) Aflasafe Innovation Platform (IP) meeting was held in Lagos on 20 August to establish a linkage between implementers and buyers for a mutually beneficial business discussion and relationship, with over 50 participants in attendance. The AgResults Aflasafe project had adopted the [IP approach](#) to improve farmers' access to "aflatoxin reduced" maize—maize with reduced levels of aflatoxin and assemble value chain actors to interact, address common issues, and find a sustainable market for "aflatoxin reduced" maize.

Participants were AgResults Aflasafe implementers—cooperative or farmer-based organizations producing aflatoxin reduced maize and private companies interested in buying aflatoxin reduced maize.

[Debo Akande](#), AgResults Project Manager, said the event was to improve farmers' access to aflatoxin reduced maize market, "hence we have brought together value chain actors that include food and feed processors, poultry industries, farmers and aggregators through an IP, to address challenges on having a sustainable market for and adoption of aflatoxin reduced maize." With the level of interaction between the implementers and the buyers, the IP event facilitated better understanding of aflatoxin issues and market challenges, sources of supply and demand for aflatoxin reduced maize, and created business relationships between farmers using [aflasafe™](#) and end-users of maize.



AgResults Aflasafe Innovation Platform meeting participants.

Mustapha Dalhatu, Implementer, [Commercial Agriculture Development Project](#), Kaduna, Nigeria said "the IP event is a timely one; it facilitates business and has provided me the opportunity to meet more prospective buyers of the maize we produce."

[Joseph Atehnkeng](#), Country Coordinator, Aflasafe Project and Stella Denloye, Director of Laboratory Services, [National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control](#) delivered presentations through which they enumerated the economic impact and the health hazards of consuming aflatoxin infected maize, noting that they could cause cancer, liver problems, stunting in children and death and urged the participants

to embrace the use of [aflasafe™](#) and modern farm management practices.

"From the results of the survey conducted in 2014 on certain food items, Denloye said they showed high level of unacceptable level of aflatoxin but with the use of [aflasafe™](#) on farms, the products are now showing consistently low level of the toxin. This is an indication that farmers in Nigeria are now embracing the use of [aflasafe™](#)."

Aflatoxin is a potent carcinogen produced by some species of *Aspergillus* fungi, most commonly found in maize and groundnuts. This contamination has harmful health effects on consumers and negative consequences for farmers.

Announcements

- **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
- **Third Annual CEO Forum**, private sector and government assembly to end poverty and hunger in the world by 2030 in line with

the overall aim of the Sustainable Development Goals, 7 October, Offices of Ford Foundation Lagos.

- **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](#).
- **The IITA Women's Group** is calling on all potential applicants to submit completed scholarship forms on or before 10 September. Ibadan Headquarters: Employee Services Officer, Human Resources, Bld. 500; Outside Hubs/Stations: IITA Regional Hubs: The Regional Administrator, IITA Stations: The Station Administrator.