

DG in a heart-to-heart talk with staff in Uganda and Zambia



Sanginga with IITA staff in Zambia

IITA is only as good as its staff whose support it needs to achieve its vision of getting 20 million people out of poverty and rehabilitating 25 million ha of land for agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa in the next 10 years, as spelt out in its new revamped strategy.

This was the key message of DG Nteranya Sanginga in his meeting with the institute's staff based at the Southern Africa hub in Lusaka, Zambia, and Uganda country office in Kampala, during a familiarization tour of the two countries, on 11–22 June.

In return, he said, IITA would support them, build their capacity, and ensure that they have all the necessary tools they would need to do their science and other supporting activities. And to this effect, he said, IITA is strengthening its partnership and capacity building department under the leadership of Dr Kenton Dashiell.

He told all staff that they all had a role to play in the institute's success and urged them to believe in its vision: "We all count, from the drivers to the DG. Be proud of working at IITA, believe in our vision and work to build the institution," he said. "I have a lot of faith in you and I will support you in all your work."

Sanginga further said that IITA had established a commission to look at human resources issues in both headquarters and in the field to ensure that it was able to attract and retain new talents. He added that by the end of this year, IITA was going to restructure its wages and other welfare conditions following the result of the CGIAR common service survey.

Along the same vein, he said that IITA was going to be more strategic on how it worked with partners and especially the national systems: "We want to work with them in a more transparent and open manner," he said.



Sanginga with IITA staff in Uganda

Dashiell declares training on advanced Microsoft Excel open

The DDG Partnership and Capacity Building, Dr Kenton Dashiell last Friday declared open a training workshop for staff on advanced Microsoft Excel. Participants were drawn from

various units based on training gaps identified during the 2011 annual performance appraisal.

The training, which will run through June-August, aims to build the capacities of staff in data management.

Addressing participants at the workshop, Dr Dashiell said the training would make staff more knowledgeable and IITA more efficient.

"Jobs that you were spending two hours to do will now take you less than 5

minutes to accomplish after this training," he said.

The first batch of the training involved 14 staff, and is expected to end mid July after which the second batch will commence.

The renewed focus on training is part of the Institute's strategy to develop a work force that will help push millions of people out of poverty and rehabilitate millions of hectares of land in the next 10 years.

Mrs Lola Idowu, coordinator of the training unit, urged the participants to learn the skills offered by the training.

According to Idowu, the Microsoft Excel package is a tool needed for data analysis which improves efficiency.



Dashiell (right) addresses participants at training

Stakeholders discuss strategies to combat aflatoxins in Africa

Researchers, representatives from the private sector, farmers organizations, Regional Economic Communities, and other stakeholders under the auspices of the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA) met in Ibadan on 25-27 June to discuss comprehensive approaches and strategies on how best to combat aflatoxins in Africa. The meeting also planned activities for PACA for the remaining part of the year.

Coming at a time when food safety is a global concern with barriers on unsafe foods hurting trade, the three-day meeting received progress reports across several African countries including regional blocs towards fighting the menace of aflatoxins.

In Kenya, for instance, reports filtered in that permission for on-farm trials of aflasafe™ has been granted by the government, whereas in Nigeria the product is already in use, with researchers aiming to cover 25,000 ha by next year. Progress has equally been



Participants at the PACA workshop in front of the aflasafe™ demonstration-scale manufacturing plant in IITA-Ibadan

made in Senegal for trials of the biocontrol product.

Addressing participants at the meeting, DG Nteranya Sanginga, said aflatoxin contamination of food crops was of great concern to Africa, with several countries seeking for solutions. He pledged IITA's support in sharing its scientific expertise to help fight the scourge of aflatoxins on the continent.

Ms Martha Byanyima of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), who

chaired the meeting, said IITA's biocontrol research fits properly in the package of efforts to contain aflatoxins in Africa.

She also noted that PACA's partnership with IITA was important for the success of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) at large—an Africa-owned and -led initiative that aims to increase investments in agriculture and to boost agricultural productivity and yield.

IITA Women's Group offers scholarships to students

Scholarship grants to students by the IITA Women's Group hit a record with 39 beneficiaries this year.

Beneficiaries include students in secondary and post secondary schools who are children/dependents of IITA general staff based in Nigeria on PG 1-6.

As in previous years, awardees went through a thorough screening involving filling of forms, writing of exams, and oral interviews.

"This year's award event is special ... Because it coincides with the celebration of 45 years of IITA," says Mrs Charlotte Sanginga, Scholarship Committee Chair.

Seventy four students applied for this year's grants, of which 39 were selected.

The event was attended by Dr Kenton Dashiell, who chaired the event; Mrs Lilian Mendoza, Human Resources Manager; and Dr Samson Adeleke, Head of IITA Clinic—the guest of honor; Wole Oladokun, Acting Human Resources Administrator; Omoshalewa Sholola, Director of Finance. Mrs Safi Yade and N. Iheanacho handed the certificates and cash to the beneficiaries.



IITA Women's Group and the awardees

Addressing the awardees—who were mostly teenagers, Dr Dashiell commended the beneficiaries and predicted that in the next 40 years, one among the awardees will become the Director General of IITA. He also used the occasion to impress on the minds of the awardees the importance of IITA's work in Africa.

According to him, IITA and its staff work and are committed to improving the nutrition, health, and incomes of farmers in Africa.

"So if you are asked: What does your father or mother do? Simply say: My father or my mother is helping in getting 20 million people out of poverty and also helping in restoring degraded lands across Africa," he explained.

Dr Adeleke encouraged the awardees not to rest on their oars. Coining the phrase—3 Ds to success—he urged the awardees to be disciplined, diligent, and determined (3-Ds) in their academic pursuits.

He said that if the awardees adhere to the 3 Ds, the prediction of having a DG from among them might be realized.

Mrs Jacqueline Musiimenta, in her vote of thanks, expressed gratitude to the parents for their children's participation in this year's award.

Initiated by the IITA Women's Group in 1993, the scholarship award began with 10 recipients with cash amounts ranging from N600 (\$4) to N1000 (approximately \$7).

This year, the IITA Women's Group under the leadership of Mrs Idara Ahmadu, has given cash ranging from N10, 000 (approximately \$70) to N15, 000 (\$100).

More than three-quarters of the amount will come from individual donations. Refreshments at this year's event were also donated by members of the Women's Group.