



Why go Open Access...

Excerpts from a discussion with Martin Mueller, E-Research Coordinator and Database and Knowledge Manager

Should the rest of the world have unlimited, free, and unrestricted access to findings from our research through the Internet? What would be the implications for IITA and its science? The debate has lingered on for a very long time.

In a recent interview, [Martin Mueller](#) makes a case for [Open Access](#) (OA) by highlighting the benefits, the implications for future and ongoing research by the Institute, and the changes scientists must look forward to starting in September 2015.

In explaining OA, Martin said that it is a global trend, a movement that is already 20 years old but had become more pressing because of the numerous opportunities provided by the Internet in developing repositories (archives) that can harvest data from very distributed or dispersed sources and make data much more discoverable.

“If you ‘open’ data then you also open them for completely different user groups and research purposes; farmers, engineer, traders, and development agencies may have a deep interest in our data and publications. In all, they contribute piece by piece to change and that is what we want; we want impact. The donors do not fund research for the sake of doing research; they fund research to get impact. IITA is a research-for-development institution so our work is for a purpose. OA is able to unlock potentials by spreading information itself and by inspiring people in different knowledge contexts...going OA is also a signal to donor agencies that IITA stands by its responsibility.”

“Let us imagine a situation 20 years from now,” he continued. “Let’s imagine that IITA has not gone for OA. All other agricultural research institutes would be having a strong sharing approach, not

only by sharing data with one another but also by being supplied with data by all others. This might not be the case for IITA. I doubt that other research institutes would share their data with IITA if they did not receive the same from IITA.”

Martin further highlighted that most of the challenges restricting scientists from going OA can be effectively addressed by accompanying data with proper, informative [metadata](#) (additional accompanying data, e.g., source, date, venue, file type, etc.) and with a proper peer review.

Open Access was defined by the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) as follows: “By ‘open access’ to literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited.”

“The world is changing rapidly and IITA will be missing the train if it does not go OA as well. So change is the price we have to pay to keep pace. There are challenges that we need to consider. For example, we need to react if a researcher has doubts that the ‘right’, knowledgeable people get the data or if the quality of further processing open data is adequate. This can be solved by accompanying open data with proper metadata. This ensures that the scientist is cited correctly. When we open our data, we do that bound by the restriction that users all over the world must cite us. If we don’t, then people will build their own interpretation and use the open data for an inadequate, ‘rough and dirty’ analysis, resulting in wrong recommendations and so to an anti-productive impact... What we get back when we give our data is visibility and visibility is the future currency in research.”

According to Martin, IITA is in the process of enlisting with the [CG Space](#) repository of OA. Several activities are ongoing, such as designing the workflows and communicating what must be done: setting up, data migration, adding metadata, training staff, etc. Once these activities are completed, hopefully in September, IITA will launch this platform together with a new version of CG Space.



Martin Mueller



From research plots to farmers' fields: Africa RISING – NAFKA project partners plan scaling up of improved crop varieties

Partners implementing activities under the [Africa RISING – NAFKA](#) scaling project held their first [annual review and planning meeting](#) 8-10 July, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where they discussed effective ways of scaling up improved crop varieties to Tanzania's smallholder farmers. The meeting was attended by over 30 participants including representatives from [CGIAR](#) centers and organizations from the research and development sector overseeing scaling activities in the project.

The project was launched in October 2014 through funding by the USAID mission in Tanzania. It is working to support ongoing research by Africa RISING to disseminate best-practice technologies on vegetables, maize, rice, and postharvest methods that can sustainably increase farm productivity.

"Holding this meeting where we can discuss the implementation issues and carry out joint planning is absolutely essential if we are to reach the target of 47,000 beneficiary households in maize- and rice-based systems within the country," noted [Haroon Sseguya](#), Africa RISING Technology Scaling Specialist. "The team is also aiming to expand the area under improved rice production technologies to 116,000 hectares and increase both maize and rice yields by 50%."

Participants at the meeting discussed the experiences from year 1 of implementing project activities and used the lessons learned as a basis to plan better for year 2. Some of the emerging issues raised by partners from year 1 included partnership challenges; difficulties of seed distribution networks in the country and how to overcome them; reporting on [USAID/Feed the Future](#) indicators; as well as the best approaches for scaling up and scaling out technologies.

A significant output from the meeting was the development of work plans for year 2 by all partners in a round table set-up that allowed more integrated planning. For the scaling approach to be used in year 2, it was



L-R: Gaudiose Mujawamariya and Kalimuthu Senthilkumar (AfricaRice), Elisha Mkandya (ILONGA Agricultural Research Institute), and Silvanus Mruma (NAFAKA) discuss the proposed work plan for the rice team's year 2 activities (Photo credit: IITA/Gloriana Ndibalema).

resolved that all partners would be expected to continue making visits to the "mother farmers" in the initial project intervention sites even after establishing new "baby sites."

Training sessions on project communication tools and monitoring and evaluation were also conducted as a means to improve project reporting and documentation during the three-day meeting.

"Through this meeting we were able to come up with work plans that we will manage to implement together with our fellow partners who are working in the same geographical sites. This is very important to the success of the project," explained [Kalimuthu Senthilkumar](#), Systems Agronomist at [AfricaRice Center](#).

[Veronica Uzokwe](#), Agronomist/[SARD-SC](#) Tanzania Country Coordinator, noted that the meeting was important in helping partners to achieve, within a short time, what they could not have completed while working from different project locations.

"We brainstormed and came up with ideas to fast-track the process of meeting project objectives as a team and not as independent Institutes. The fact that we had representatives from [AVRDC](#), [AfricaRice](#), [IITA](#), [NAFAKA](#), [World Agroforestry Center \(ICRAF\)](#), [International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center \(CIMMYT\)](#), [KATRIN](#), [TAMASA](#), [ARI-ILONGA](#), [ARI-HOMBOLO](#), and others around the same table enriched our discussions and facilitated decision making about next year's activities," she said.

The Project Management Team (PMT), which is responsible for providing oversight on project activities, also held its inaugural meeting, chaired by [Dr. Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon](#), Africa RISING Coordinator for West Africa and East/Southern Africa. Key decisions taken by the PMT included the need for all project partners to involve local government authorities in their activities as much as possible, the way forward on reporting on Feed the Future indicators, and the development of success stories.

DRC Prime Minister Matata Ponyo Mapon, visits IITA-Kinshasa on 14 July, part 2

In [last week's issue](#) of the IITA Bulletin, we featured a story on the DRC Prime Minister's visit to IITA-Kinshasa as part of the Agripreneurs exhibition called *Young Congolese and Agribusiness*.

During the visit, Mr Matata Ponyo Mapon thanked IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) and cited the work of IITA in agricultural development in DR Congo and beyond, especially in research and youth development.

Mr Matata Ponyo also emphasized that research was fundamental for agricultural development and assured IITA of the commitment of the DRC President to make agriculture a key sector in the development of the country's economy. He went further to reiterate that the Government would support and help extend the Youth in Agribusiness initiative across the whole country.



DG Sanginga (left) welcomes the Prime Minister (right) to the event.



Mrs Charlotte Sanginga shakes hands with the honorable prime minister at the exhibition booth.



Mr Matata Ponyo reaffirms the DRC government's unending support for IITA.



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



The IITA Youth Agripreneurs with the prime minister (center), flanked by Dr and Mrs Sanginga.

Yam vine cuttings from aeroponics develop shoots in 2 weeks!

Yam plantlets at the [aeroponics screen house](#) are growing at an exponential rate after being exposed to sunlight! Also, vines pruned from the aeroponics system and planted into soil are producing shoots within 2 weeks.

This is good news for yam growers as it takes 4 to 6 weeks for normal vines from field plants to develop shoots.

[Dr Norbert Maroya](#), the principal scientist on the development of the aeroponics system for seed yam production, said that the [YIIFSWA](#) project is planting over 1800 one-node vine cuttings (in soil) from vines produced in the system to produce mini-seed yam tubers. He said he is excited that the shoots at the screen house were developing within 2 weeks of planting.

“To understand why this is significant,” he gushed, “it is important to note that vine cuttings pruned from plants grown on the field take about 1 to 2 months to establish both roots and shoots. But given the vitality of these vines, roots and shoots develop within 2 to 3 weeks after being planted in the soil.”



Aeroponics screen house transformed into a dense forest of entwining yam vines.

Vine cutting technology was developed to improve the multiplication rate of yam as well as reduce the impact of pests and diseases on seed tubers. The use of vine cuttings as a planting material gives a higher multiplication rate that is about 30 times more than in the traditional system.”

Both the aeroponics system and vine cutting technology offer a rapid solution for a high-output production of seed yam. Together they can address

the need for the quick distribution of planting materials of improved varieties to large numbers of farmers. With such promising results, [YIIFSWA](#) is set to achieve its goal of producing 100,000 clean planting materials by the end of the fourth project year. These will be distributed to national agricultural research and extension systems, private seed companies, and farmers involved in producing certified or quality declared seed yam.

IITA-Uganda hosts German Ambassador

Last month, [IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga](#), led a delegation to the German embassy in Uganda where he requested the German Government's support in promoting IITA's work. This visit followed the launching of the Uganda Youth Agripreneurs (UYA) scheme. To establish the agreements that were reached during this courtesy visit, His Excellency [Dr Peter Blomeyer, German Ambassador to the Republic of Uganda](#), visited the IITA Uganda Station in Naguru on 28 July.

[Dr Victor Manyong](#), IITA East Africa Hub Director, received Dr Blomeyer and gave a short introduction on [IITA](#) and its work in sub-Saharan Africa. Dr Blomeyer learned more about IITA Uganda through the presentations by the research team in Kampala which highlighted IITA's research and focus in tackling various agricultural challenges in this country in areas such as crop productivity and health, sustainable



His Excellency Dr Peter Blomeyer talking to IITA staff.

intensification, climate change, policy planning, livelihood systems, and gender and the youth in agriculture.

“The problems are complex and so there is a great need to employ a holistic approach,” Dr Blomeyer said after listening to the presentations. He was impressed by the diversity of expertise

at IITA. He also promised to link IITA's climate change adaptation initiatives to an ongoing project sponsored by the German Government in Uganda.

Dr Blomeyer then travelled to Nabbale Sub-county of the Mukono district where he met the UYA and visited their newly opened resource center and

5-acre farm in Nakanyonyi village. The Agripreneurs described their different enterprises and indicated their plans to acquire an irrigation system that would allow them to produce vegetables throughout the year and later to expand into livestock-keeping and fish farming.

“Agriculture excites me but I am particularly thrilled by IITA’s approach through the [Agripreneur scheme](#) which encourages educated young people to engage in agriculture as a way of enriching themselves. I shall invite the Agripreneurs for a meeting where they would be linked with other programs dealing with issues of irrigation as well as capacity development,” he promised.



The Uganda Youth Agripreneurs showing Dr Peter Blomeyer around their farm.

Young researchers convene for the 18th IARSAF annual symposium

Young researchers under the International Association of Research Scholars and Fellows (IARSAF) at IITA successfully organized their 18th annual symposium at IITA last 23-24 March. The symposium was on the theme *Africa, potential food basket of the world: nurturing the next generation of researchers and entrepreneurs*.

[Mr Kwame Akuffo-Akoto](#), DDG Corporate Services, served as

the chairperson of the event. In his speech, he encouraged the research students to aspire for excellence in their career paths. [Dr Kenton Dashiell](#), DDG Partnerships and Capacity Development, also encouraged the researchers to be well positioned for their place in revolutionizing agriculture in Africa.

This year’s symposium for the first time held both oral and poster presentation sessions on the research work of IARSAF members. Prizes (book) were

awarded to the best posters.

Other highlights included training on time management, negotiation tactics for career advancement, scientific writing, proposal writing, bibliography management using [Zotero](#), and thematic presentations on various trends in agriculture-related issues.

During the feedback and closing session chaired by Dr Dashiell, participants judged this year’s symposium their best so far. One participant appreciated the orderliness of events and the introduction of an e-book of proceedings. The symposium was supported by the IITA Management, IITA’s Capacity and Development Office and co-supported by Inqaba Biotech and Sterling Bank.



IARSAF participants during the scientific writing training session.

Announcement

The First World Congress on Root and Tuber Crops, earlier scheduled to take place on 5-10 October, at Nanning, Guangxi province, southern China, has been postponed to January 2016.

Got a story to share? Please email it with photos and captions every Wednesday to Andrea Gros (a.gros@cgiar.org), 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).