

DR Congo Minister of Agriculture on a learning visit to IITA ... excited over cassava improvement in Nigeria

The Provincial Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Rural Development, South Kivu, DR Congo, Madam Adolphine Muley Byayuwa has expressed optimism that technologies developed by [IITA](#) can help transform agriculture in Africa. She made this remark during her visit to IITA, Ibadan, to participate in the Systems Marketplace event organized by the Humidtropics in collaboration with the Forum for Agricultural Research for Africa.

The event, held 15-17 November at IITA, Ibadan, was attended by more than 100 participants from the [CGIAR](#) Centers and national agricultural research programs. The three-day event provided space for learning and sharing of ideas among CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) on how systems perspectives and approaches have been considered going into the 2nd phase of CRPs as well as to share experiences and legacy products arising from research of Humidtropics and others CRPs.

During her stay, Muley took time to visit IITA's Business Incubation Platform (BIP),



Bags of dried cassava chips in Mbuji-Mayi, DRC

Facility Management Services (FMS), Postharvest Utilization Unit, and fish ponds, and interacted with the IITA Youth Agripreneurs ([IYA](#)) that is engaging young people in agribusinesses. She also visited a community cassava processing factory in Moniya owned by the community which processes 1.5 tons of garri per week and another one that is privately owned, Niji Farms. This processing plant owns a 3000-acre integrated cassava farm located in Ilero, Oyo State, Nigeria. It processes about 15 tons of fresh cassava roots per day.

Excited with what she saw, Muley said that DR Congo has a lot to learn from both IITA and Nigeria in terms of agribusiness and agricultural development. "I am excited about what is happening here because it holds promise for agricultural transformation in Africa," she said.

The Minister said she will work with IITA to help transform agriculture in DR Congo. She also commended the Humidtropics for the work done on systems research in South Kivu Province in Eastern DR Congo.

aTTC project set to multiply yields and income of smallholder farmers

Triple yields with a better income await maize and groundnut smallholder farmers, thanks to a project—[aflasafe](#) Technology Transfer and Commercialization (aTTC)—that will facilitate farmers' access to [aflasafe](#)[™], an innovative solution for the control of aflatoxin.

The aTTC project was launched at IITA, Ibadan, on 1 December to create awareness about the technology, and look for partners. The project aims to reduce aflatoxin contamination in food and feed and thus contribute to improved food safety through the use of [aflasafe](#). This will be achieved by increasing the availability and accessibility of [aflasafe](#) through improved access to markets for aflatoxin-safe maize and groundnut.



Dr Ranajit Bandyopadhyay addresses participants at the aTTC project launch in IITA, Ibadan.

More than 100 participants from farmer-based organizations, research institutions, Ministries of Agriculture, regional economic communities, and private sector actors were in attendance.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, the IITA Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery, [Kenton Dashiell](#), emphasized the importance of the private sector in getting the technology to the masses. He said, “to get the product to the users, we need many companies, millions of small-scale farmers, and distributors, who know what aflasafe can do to apply it. We are passionate; we are excited because we are on the edge of seeing this happen”.

Also speaking at the event, Amare Ayelaw, the Program Manager of the Partnerships for Aflatoxin Control in Africa ([PACA](#)) of the African Union, highlighted the need for disseminating the innovation to farmers. “In Africa, farmers produce highly contaminated crops, which cannot be exported. They therefore need research technology like aflasafe that can meet their standards and nourish their families”, Ayelaw stated.

[Peter Cotty](#), a Research Plant Pathologist and Adjunct Professor from the University of Arizona, who is co-lead of the aflasafe initiative, said that private sector, governments, and agencies that control imitation of food products are needed to partner with IITA to manufacture the aflasafe technology. “Agencies for food control, private sector players, and governments need to come together and partner with IITA to ensure the constant availability of the product, and limit the imitation”, Cotty emphasized.

Explaining the importance of partnerships in enhancing delivery of aflasafe products, [Ranjit Bandyopadhyay](#), IITA Plant Pathologist, and co-leader of the aflasafe initiative stressed, “This product is indigenous! Developing the technology was not difficult, taking it out to the end users is the challenge, and therefore, partnership is very crucial”. On ways of sustaining and improving the accessibility of the aflasafe product, Matieyedou Konlambigue, the Managing Director, aTTC, said: “We look forward to working with the national governments and private



Youth enjoying aflatoxin-safe maize.

sector on this project, to make aflasafe available and accessible to farmers, to improve the food safety and income of farmers”.

The aTTC project is designed to identify strategic options for partnerships with private companies, and/or government entities, execute those partnerships, and help ensure that aflasafe products reach millions of farmers throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

A cassava agronomy project finds ways to reduce the yield gap to increase cassava production in Africa

Strategies and methods aimed at reducing the yield gap in cassava and leading to increased production for the benefit of farmers and processors have been mapped out during the inaugural meeting of the African Cassava Agronomy Initiatives (ACAI) project, at IITA, Ibadan, 5-7 December. At this meeting stakeholders converged to review the project’s activities since its launch earlier in the year and organize plans for implementing the program for 2017.

The project aims at increasing the income of farmers through improved cassava yields, root quality and the supply to processing sectors by developing and promoting best-bet agronomic practices. The review and planning workshop comprised a series of presentations ranging from cluster forums involving cassava value chains to modelling, geospatial analysis as well as scaling out methodologies. All of these were discussed around project use cases that had been identified by stakeholders who are working in ACAI target communities and improving the livelihoods of cassava smallholder farmers. The use cases are Fertilizer Recommendation, Fertilizer Blending, Scheduled Planting, High Starch Content, Intercropping, and Best Planting Practices (PP) which are required by ACAI partners.

Lawrence Kent, a representative from the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), said that it is essential to be attentive to the demands

of partners, and research should aim at fulfilling their demands at all times. “There are certain partners that have priorities and we are trying to organize research to be responsive to their demands; we have to ensure there is an immediate answer to their needs”, Kent said.

[Bernard Vanlauwe](#), IITA Director for Central Africa, who is the Principal Investigator of the project, expressed satisfaction over the workshop. “The meeting was good. Plans were drafted and we got feedback from the Project Advisory Committee on how to do things better. The youths will also be involved in the delivery,” Vanlauwe stated.

Expected outputs were delivered, with stakeholders having a common understanding of the issues in the implementing framework.

ACAI’s Project Coordinator, [Abdulai Jalloh](#), said the meeting marked an important milestone in consolidating the required partnership that will ensure effective project implementation. He noted that the three days brought a diverse range of key stakeholders that have shared ideas and learned from one another to improve cassava production. He went on to appreciate everyone for their active participation.

ACAI is a five-year project that seeks to increase the availability of appropriate and affordable technologies to sustainably improve short- and long-term agricultural productivity of cassava. The project has been in existence for the past one year under the leadership of IITA, and is funded by the Gates Foundation.



Agronomists and other stakeholders meet in IITA, Ibadan to review project activities.

YIIFSWA scientist honored by research community

Morufat Balogun, Tissue Culture Specialist with IITA's Yam Improvement for Income and Food Security in West Africa (YIIFSWA) project has won the 2016 edition of the International Institute for Training, Research and Economic Development (IITRED) prize. The award recognizes her study on *Absorbent kenaf materials and method of making and using same; development of high yield kenaf varieties* as an outstanding agricultural research.

Balogun's paper went through a rigorous selection process and was adjudged the best for the year.

The award was officially conferred on 1 December at the NICON Luxury hotel in Abuja with the DG, [Nteranya Sanginga](#), ably represented by [Gbassey Tarawali](#), giving the keynote paper on "Creating

youth employment in Nigeria through agriculture".

During the conferment ceremony, Balogun made a presentation on *Status and prospects for greening the Niger Delta using home-grown kenaf*.

"The research work is timely to the continent as it would assist in addressing environmental remediation, specifically the cleaning of oil spills, and improving seed systems in agricultural production. This is in addition to the economic impact this research would create," Sani Dawop, IITRED President/CEO, said.

Balogun's collaborative mutation breeding efforts have led to the registration and release of the high-yielding, photinsensitive variety IKEKEN DI 400, adapted to Nigeria's agroecology. Stems of kenaf grown in Nigeria were



Morufat Balogun.

processed into absorbents that will absorb eight times its weight of oil and related liquids and can be used for cleaning oil spills efficiently. All these highlight genetic resource conservation and improvement, biotechnology applications, networking and partnerships, patenting, and mentoring.

IITA scientist addresses first commonwealth forestry gathering

During the first conference of the Commonwealth Forestry Association Nigeria Chapter held at the [Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria](#) in Ibadan on 10–12 October, [Deni Bown](#), Head, IITA Forest Unit, presented a paper titled "Prioritizing and protecting Nigeria's threatened trees: the work of IITA in promoting the propagation and cultivation of indigenous tree species."

The paper detailed the efforts of the IITA Forest Unit's projects in conserving

flora and fauna, especially endangered tree species of importance to West Africa. IITA's headquarters in Ibadan, southwestern Nigeria, comprises 1000 ha which include a forest reserve and other patches of secondary Guinea–Congo rainforest totaling approximately 360 ha. Since 2010 there have been several projects that utilize these forest resources for conservation, research, and education. These projects carry out tree propagation and planting and have redeveloped degraded

areas of the campus to demonstrate the importance of indigenous tree species for landscapes, livelihoods, and biodiversity. The paper therefore outlined the activities, skills, and partnerships that have arisen from these projects and that are now managed by the IITA Forest Unit.

The conference also included a field trip in which 86 attendees visited the Tree Heritage Park and forest. Read the full paper [here](#).



Left: Prof. Busuyi Agbeja plants a tree for the Commonwealth Forestry Association Conference (CFA) in the Tree Heritage Park, 12 October 2016. Right: Deni Bown with women foresters, CFA.



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).

African youth are capable of revitalizing agro-allied industries

The president of the African Development Bank, [Akinwumi Adesina](#), has reiterated his support for Africa's youth, saying that if given the chance to participate effectively in agro-allied industries, they will rejuvenate the agriculture sector, create wealth, and become gainfully employed.

Adesina gave the opening talk at the [African Economic Conference](#) (AEC) held in Abuja on 5 December.

This year's AEC titled *Feed Africa: Towards Agro-Allied Industrialization for Inclusive Growth* focused on means of unlocking the potentials of agro-allied industrial development in Africa.

At the opening ceremony, Adesina stated that agriculture, which contributes over 28% of the GDP of Africa, holds the key for the accelerated growth, diversification, and job creation for African economies. He added that no region of the world has moved to industrialized economy status without passing through the transformation of the agricultural sector.

"Africa sits on huge potential in agriculture. It is estimated that 65% of all the uncultivated arable land left in the world, to feed 9 billion people by 2050, is in Africa. So, what Africa does with agriculture will also shape the future of food globally," he said.

"The way out of the state in which the sector has found itself in the continent is for everyone to treat agriculture as a business and take the full value chain approach to modernize the sector."

Making a reference to the [IITA Youth Agripreneurs](#) model in Africa, Adesina stated that the youth through the opportunity given to them by IITA, are diversifying, innovating, and rebranding the agriculture sector. "The steps taken by these youth and many of their colleagues

spread across the continent are part of the contribution needed to change the agro-industrialization."

"In the Democratic Republic of Congo, young graduate entrepreneurs from IITA have taken up the business of using cassava flour for bread and confectionaries. These young entrepreneurs are laughing their way in riches to the Bank. On Friday last week, I received a large delegation of IITA Youth Agripreneurs at the Bank. A young graduate, Noel, from Bukavu in DRC, together with his colleagues, have moved into agribusiness. In just a little over one year, they manufacture cassava flour, well packaged and standardized for bakers. Today, Noel and his team generate an income of \$4,000 per week, or \$16,000 a month, or \$196,000 per year. That means they are making over 78 million Naira, annually. They are already multi-millionaires. He that has ears let him hear: The key to Africa's prosperity is value addition in agriculture, in turning our products to money, in looking inwards. Africa must feed itself," he stated.

This initiative and many more are the technologies needed for Africa to feed itself. He said the technology, however, needs to be outscaled for widespread adoption by farmers.

He stated that the bank will be launching an \$800-million initiative – Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation ([TAAT](#)) – with the goal of reaching 40 million farmers over 10 years.

All these will improve agro-allied growth in Africa and also help reduce food importation in the continent.

"Africa spends \$35 billion annually importing food. As it does, it decimates its own agriculture, spends scarce foreign exchange importing what it can and



African Development Bank President Dr Akinwumi Adesina giving his opening remarks.

should produce, exports jobs, and makes itself subject to price effects from global commodity supply shocks. Estimates show that the food and agribusiness sector is projected to grow from \$330 billion today to \$1 trillion by 2030. The key is to unlock this opportunity. Our goal is simple: support massive agro-industrial development all across Africa. To make this happen, there is need for well-directed public policies to provide incentives to the agricultural sector, especially agribusiness and food manufacturing companies. And when that happens, Africa would have turned the corner, and taken its rightful place as a global powerhouse in food and agriculture. Now, let's make that happen," he said.

Speaking at the conference, the Vice-President of Nigeria, Yemi Osinbajo, said the conference came at a point when Nigeria was intensifying efforts to diversify its economy. He said the recent support of \$600 million provided by AfDB represents the first tranche of the planned \$1 billion support to Nigeria and will certainly go a long way in helping the country to further pursue reforms in the agricultural sector as well as the energy sector, both of which are crucial to inclusive economic growth and development.

"We have decided as part of our Strategic Implementation Plan for this year to prioritize the processing of tomato paste so as to become self-sufficient. The choice of tomato is predicated on our ability to produce tomatoes in large quantities several times a year as well as its extensive use in Nigerian meals. There is of course the opportunity to generate a large number of agricultural jobs and also as a means to adding value along the agro-allied chain," he said.



Participants cast their votes during the debate.

IITA Youth Agripreneurs shines at AEC

At a session dedicated to youth entrepreneurship in agriculture at the 2016 Africa Economic Conference in Abuja, the [IITA Youth Agripreneurs](#) in Nigeria delighted participants and other stakeholders present during the session.

Making their voices heard, the youth provided testimonials on the impact of the IITA Youth Agripreneurs on their entrepreneurial skills and also defended their positions on selected topics during the debate sessions.

Strongly defending their positions for and against the topic *Agriculture is a sector of economic opportunity for youth in Africa*, Dorcas Ogunwole highlighted that the ability of the sector to absorb large numbers of youth irrespective of their academic background or qualification can provoke the youths' innovative nature and bring development to the sector.

Waheed Oni, opposing the motion, said the risk involved in the sector, vis-a-vis the fact that the sector does not provide quick investment return, is not encouraging the youth to venture into the sector.

At the end of the session, participants led by Chiji Ojukwu, Director at the [African Development Bank](#) voted in support of the topic, affirming that agriculture is indeed a sector of economic opportunity for youth in Africa.

Speaking on the second topic *It is better to invest in loans than grants*, Olaniyi Tosin and Bajulaiye Tolu cheered the atmosphere in the conference center with their expositions.

While Tosin is of the view that loans should be given to youth to establish and expand their businesses, Tolu defended the opposition by saying the interest rates



Mercy Wakawa sharing her testimony.



IYA members with AfDB Director, Dr Chiji Ojukwu (middle) after the debate.

and collateral on loans requested by banks discourage youth from approaching banks for loans, but they are expected to do well if they have the opportunity to get grants to start their businesses.

Votes at the end of the session were in favor of loans as most participants stated that youth become more credible when given loans.

The personal experiences and testimony session created a spark in the conference hall. It started with the story of Oyindamola Asaaju, who related her story about not being able to get a job although she graduated with good honors and opted instead to be a bar attendant.

"I would like to thank the AfDB for the support. Like many other youths, when I graduated from the university, I couldn't find an ideal job, so I took on the job of a waitress. I was learning some skills. More than anything else, I wanted to engage in something more challenging. The job wasn't giving me that. I learned about the youth agripreneur program when I had to serve food and drinks to a group of young people at a party at IITA. I had the opportunity of joining the group. These young people happen to be the notable IITA Youth Agripreneurs that you see in the hall today, who today are my colleagues," she said.

Another Agripreneur, Ibironke Ifedayo, said his sojourn into agriculture was borne out of his inability to secure admission to study clinical microbiology. Obtaining a change of course form from 100 level to 400 level, Ifedayo was bent on changing his course but as fate would have it, he was denied that a couple of times. He said the opportunity and exposure given to him by

IYA and IITA has changed his mindset and he is now an agricultural "priest" ready to take the gospel of agribusiness to other youths in Africa.

Mercy Wakawa is now the CEO of Confiando Global Resources. Disqualified out of the million Nigerian youth who applied for the Nigerian Immigration Service job, Mercy was trained by IYA under the N2Africa Borno Project. She stated that the training, internship, and seed capital provided to her after the 2-week intensive training facilitated by IYA exposed her to the business opportunities in agriculture. Through that she was able to establish a ground processing oil cottage business. She said the business has employed 6 other youths.

Isuwa Zacchaeus, on sharing his experiences, said the continent is about to experience a positive shake-up and "insurgency" as IITA has bred a new set of billionaires who will compete on the Forbes list of billionaires in Africa.

The highlight of the session was a product exhibition and display of IYA knowledge materials.



IYA exhibiting their products.