

“Institute’s response to CGIAR reforms demands a change in the way we operate”



Menon addresses staff in Ibadan on IITA’s response to the changes occurring in the CGIAR

IITA staff have been urged to support the Institute’s responses to the reforms going on in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

The reforms, which began last year, are seeking to transform the CGIAR “by establishing a results-oriented research agenda, clarifying accountability across the System, and streamlining governance and programs for greater efficiency.”

Addressing staff on 17 July, Lakshmi Menon, Deputy Director General- Support, said the Institute was responding to the changes by adopting strategies that would cut wastes and make services more efficient.

According to her, some strategies that IITA has adopted include cost recovery and the zero budget approach, which some units in DDG-S have started this year.

She explained, “The zero budget strategy is not to be feared, but it should be seen as an opportunity... It simply demands that we closely monitor the resources we have and spend wisely.”

The DDG-Support also emphasized Management’s decision to give staff motivation and morale priority.

She cited the increase in staff remuneration and the upgrade of some staff positions as measures adopted by the administration to put smiles on the faces of staff.

While calling on staff to support their managers in the discharge of their duties, Menon said that staff’s positive contributions were needed to fight poverty and ensure food security in Africa.

She solicited suggestions from staff on ways by which the Institute would be more efficient.

Omoshalewa Sholola, IITA Chief Financial Officer, said the unfolding global events demands that IITA be more prudent in the use of its resources.

Emphasizing the DG’s announcement on plans to make Nigeria a research park for Africa, Sholola said the Institute is investing substantially in upgrading its facilities in Nigeria.

Staff were happy about having the dialogue to clear some misconceptions and misinformation, and also expressed their determination to support the Institute.

Experts call for more action against mycotoxins spread

Stakeholders have called on African governments to step up action against the spread of mycotoxins, which are ravaging health and trade of the people in Africa.

The appeal was made in a communiqué issued at the end of a training workshop on ‘Mycotoxin Analysis’ organized by IITA and the Nigerian Institute of Science Laboratory Technology (NISLT), Ibadan.

The communiqué, which was signed at the end of the workshop by Taiwo Samson and Jackson Osuh, NISLT, noted that the devastation caused by mycotoxins on trade was tremendous with negative consequences such as trade barriers.

Participants called on the relevant government agencies to mount massive awareness on the dangers of mycotoxin contamination and its attendant threats to food security, and improve capacity for monitoring mycotoxins in the continent.

During the training session, participants discussed factors that contribute to



Participants in the Mycotoxin Analysis Workshop pose for a group photo in Ibadan

mycotoxin contamination, the importance of monitoring, and methods to estimate mycotoxin contamination at various stages from farm to table.

Lava Kumar, Head of IITA’s Germplasm Health Unit, said the training course was demand-led and praised NISLT

for its interest to build mycotoxin diagnostic capacity in Nigeria. Twenty-five candidates participated in the course that included hands-on training on the application of HPLC, TLC, and Afla-ELISA for mycotoxin estimation in commodities.

Agricultural innovations are still needed to boost food production in Africa

Agricultural innovations are still relevant in transforming livelihoods in Africa, a stakeholder lecture on “Food and Culture” emphasized.

Using a case study of the cassava revolution in Africa, researchers estimate that resource-poor farmers in Nigeria alone, traded improved cassava stems—a part that is often neglected—worth more than US\$1 million (about N150 million) in five years.

Lateef Sanni, IITA Scientist, said that this increase in incomes of farmers came between 2003 and 2008.

Organized by the Public Affairs Section of the United States Consulate General, Lagos and IITA in Ibadan, the “Food and Culture” lecture brought together experts in the food and agricultural sector including a guest lecturer from Tufts University, USA.

Stakeholders reviewed the US agricultural experience and brainstormed on areas that Africa could tap into.

In his presentation titled “Roots and Tubers: Food Security Crops in Nigeria,” Sanni said cassava was a food security crop in Nigeria and a major provider of employment and income.

He said the crop appeals to farmers because of its affordability, ease of cultivation, and high return on investment.



William Masters of Tufts University speaks during the Food and Culture lecture in Ibadan

Apart from the stems, cassava roots and leaves are now offering additional income streams to farmers.

Despite cassava’s role in the food web, Sanni said more attention by way of support to research was needed. More importantly, cutting down postharvest losses through investment in processing technologies and the creation of an appropriate policy framework were necessary to sustain cassava’s role in ensuring food security in the future.

William Masters of Tufts University said that the US government was reviewing its commitment to African agriculture with

plans to increase funding for the sector and to achieve productivity growth, which IITA has stood for in the last four decades.

He noted that consumers in wealthy societies no longer need higher farm productivity for their own prosperity, but instead are seeking foods that embody their cultural values.

Earlier, IITA’s Director-General, Hartmann, who was represented by Mbaye Yade, said the Institute was delighted to share its knowledge and experience in the area of agriculture with partners.

IITA-UPoCA trains cassava processors on quality standards and regulations



Participants in the UPoCA meeting in Mozambique

To ensure that processed cassava products conform to established quality standards and regulations for human safety and customer satisfaction, UPoCA held a 3-day training on quality and safety standards and regulations for cassava processors and public extension agents from Nampula province in Mozambique.

Twenty participants, mostly emerging processors from different parts of the province where the project is being implemented, attended the training. It was conducted by Adebayo Abass, IITA’s Cassava Value Addition Coordinator based in Tanzania, and Nanam Dziedzoave of the Food Research Institute in Ghana.

The training looked at the potential hazards associated with cassava processing and identified critical control points to assure quality and safety from harvesting of the roots to washing, grating, chipping, drying and packaging to the last step of product handling.

The training also focused on principles of good manufacturing practice (GMP), which include plant layout and design, water supply and waste management, personal hygiene, cleanliness and maintenance of facilities as well as the establishment of standard operating procedures.

The participants said the major constraint to processing was lack of access to and availability of processing machines which, are not manufactured locally. As a result, they used manual labor, which resulted in low production capacity and quality of the cassava products such as gari and flour.

Prior to the training, Adebayo and Dziedzoave carried out a survey to identify quality management issues in cassava processing that clearly showed that the processors did not pay adequate attention to personal hygiene during processing. Also, they did not use protective clothing while working and, in most processing facilities, drainage for waste water at the processing facilities was poor or nonexistent.