



The stars are nicely aligned for Nigeria – DG Hartmann



Hartmann, IITA Director General.

Recent efforts to develop Nigeria's agricultural sector have sparked a ray of hope with the country's renewed attention to good governance, infrastructure and human resource development, says IITA DG Hartmann.

"The elections were a milestone, and agriculture appears to be getting the attention it merits especially with the caliber of people appointed to drive the sector and other segments of government," he emphasized.

According to the DG, the Federal Executive Council's focus on impact and its spotlight on investment-driven activities will attract investors.

On the growing youth population and the high unemployment among them, Hartmann says, "Nigeria is a young country, by the age of its population and like the youth

anywhere, they can be a powerful engine for growth, but if not productively engaged they pose complex challenges."

The rate of unemployment among the youth in Nigeria is high and millions more will soon enter the labor market, he explains.

Hartmann says the Minister for

Agriculture, Akin Adesina's clear view of the link between agriculture and the youth, as expressed at the recently held Nigeria Economic Summit is most encouraging.

He expresses optimism that investment in the agricultural sector and infrastructure - energy and transport, in particular rail, rural roads and internet bandwidth - that the government is now targeting provide a mix with which to

start tackling this youth factor.

"The President and Minister of Agriculture's pursuit of jobs via agrarian sector is to be celebrated. Everyone can find their place in this pursuit: the youth, financiers, farmers, traders, food processors, educators, advertisers, transporters, and all consumers, many of whom spend a large amount of their income on food," he says.

According to the IITA head, who will be completing his term in October, "The stars are aligning up nicely for Nigeria."

Some young trainees trying their hands on a motorized cassava grater. According to Hartmann, Nigeria's young people can be a powerful engine of growth for the country, but could also pose complex challenges if not productively engaged.



A decade of improving the 'king of crops' in West Africa

From 2001 and 2010, IITA and partners have released a total of 18 improved varieties in West Africa as part of collaborative efforts to improve the productivity of the crop and, consequently, the livelihood of smallholder farmers. This was contained in an achievements report presented by Robert Asiedu, R4D

Director, during a research-for-development seminar in Ibadan.

He reported that in the last decade, 18 varieties have been released by the National Root Crops Research Institute, Umudike, in Nigeria, while one variety was released by the Crops Research Institute, in Ghana, which was also released in Nigeria

in 2003. The improved varieties were developed in partnership with IITA.

He said that out of the 18 varieties released in Nigeria, 12 are improved varieties of white yam (*Dioscorea rotundata*) and six varieties of water yam (*D. alata*).

"For Ghana, only a variety of white yam (*D. rotundata*) received from IITA

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... A decade of improving the 'king of crops' in West Africa (continued from page 1)

was released in 2005," he said.

Commonly referred to as the 'king of crops', yam is important to West Africa due to its prominent role in food security, poverty alleviation, and in the culture and tradition of the people. However, the productivity of the crop has been limited by increasing pest and disease pressure and poor research funding.

Asiedu said the varieties released were resistant to most pests and diseases that attack yams in the subregion and also have good culinary qualities that farmers and consumers prefer. He, however, said that attaining the institute's vision for yam would require additional funding in the years ahead.

He also noted that research in yam has been particularly beneficial to

Africa through capacity building at the postgraduate levels, with some graduates now occupying strategic positions in government and National Agricultural Research Systems.

According to him, the capacity building programs had over the years strengthened the linkages between IITA and national partners. He called on the institute to sustain the initiative, suggesting that IITA explore funded initiatives for strengthening partners and strengthen the integration of training into projects.

He also lauded the efforts of the Communication Office in facilitating



Yams for sale. Improved varieties released in the last 10 years have enhanced productivity and incomes of growers of the 'king of crops' in West Africa.

and raising awareness on the activities of IITA research teams, as well as the scientists working on the various programs for their work passion and team spirit.

Finance Bits

Managing encumbrances for better budget monitoring

The Finance Office (FO) monthly advises budget holders and other users when accounts are ready for use – that is when they can check posted expenditure, including encumbrances, against their cost centre budgets.

An 'encumbrance' is simply a recording of a commitment and/or an obligation in the books of accounts, unlike actual expenses that involve cash movement or realisation of physical output. Encumbrances help balance budgeted and actual expenses: the total expenditure of a cost centre is equal to actual expenses plus encumbrances.

A 'commitment' is an estimated amount set aside for future spending. In Oracle, when a user generates a requisition, a commitment is made and recorded as an encumbrance against the respective cost centre. Requisitions may be for external purchase of supplies, internal store requisitions, travel cash advance, etc.

On the other hand, an 'obligation' is a legal bind with a supplier in the form of a Purchase Order (PO). When Supply Chain (SC) acts on a requisition through a PO, the system automatically converts the earlier created commitment into an

obligation and matches the estimated amount with the actual cost. System invoices also create encumbrances.

An encumbrance, made at the commitment stage, remains in place if no PO is generated. To release funds for other uses, the budget holder must cancel the encumbrance. Encumbrances are released when:

- Goods purchased through a PO are received and a receiving report posted by SC in the system;
- Requisitioned store items are received and confirmed by posting the Pick Slips in the system;
- Advances are fully retired and the requisition duly returned; and
- System invoices are fully utilized for payment by FO.

Unreleased encumbrances result in shortfalls in available funds. Budget holders must ensure that encumbrances that are no longer required (cancelled or partially utilized requests, contracts, or POs) are brought to the attention of SC and FO, who will:

- Cancel requisitions or POs when no payment or delivery receiving report is posted in the system;
- Generate System Receiving Report for fulfilled orders;



- Update Pick Slips for delivered store requests;
- Close partially delivered POs or requisitions; and
- Return retired advance requisition.

The system automatically releases encumbrances when ordered, received, and paid quantity is equal in the POs and internal requisitions.

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