

Cameroon launches the ENABLE Youth Program

Taking the lead in Central Africa, the Cameroon government launched the ENABLE Youth Program on 24 April.



Tola, a youth Agripreneur, explaining the IYA program to the Minister of Agriculture, H.E Henri Eyebe Ayissi.

The program, which was launched at Yaoundé, was attended by the country's Minister of Agriculture, Henri Eyebe Ayissi, accompanied by other top government officials and representatives of the African Development Bank (AfDB) and IITA.

Speaking during the launching, Ayissi noted that the ENABLE Youth Program is part of the country's efforts to ensure that every youth is provided an opportunity to earn a decent living through agriculture. He expressed satisfaction that IITA is partnering with the government in the nationwide implementation of the program. He also appreciated the AfDB for its support to the country.

The Deputy Director General for Special Duties, Kwame Akuffo-Akoto, representing IITA, stressed that the Institute, through the IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA) model,

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IITA hosts media as part of 50th anniversary celebration

Recently editors and senior journalists from nearly all the major media houses in Tanzania spent half a day at IITA's Eastern Africa Hub interacting with the researchers to get a better understanding of the Institute and its activities.

This was part of the Media familiarization tour, an event organized by the Institute as part of its 50th anniversary celebrations.

Over 30 journalists were welcomed to the hub by Victor Manyong, IITA Eastern Africa Hub Director, who gave a brief overview of the Institute, its past successes, and future areas of focus. They then spent the rest of the morning touring the Institute's facilities including the laboratories and interacting with IITA scientists.

Manyong informed the journalists that IITA had shifted its focus from nourishing Africa to transforming agriculture on the continent.



Media interacting with staff at the Eastern Africa hub.

“We will continue to work with governments in partnership with many other organizations, to transform their economies through agriculture. Here in Tanzania, as in many other countries where we work, the government is pushing the country to become industrialized and reach middle income level. And transforming the agricultural sector is one of strategies to achieve this goal.”

He said IITA has been supporting agriculture through developing sustainable solutions to address pressing needs in the sector. These include developing improved high-yielding drought-tolerant varieties, tackling new emerging pests and diseases, such as the [maize lethal necrosis](#) and [banana Tropical Race4](#). The Institute had also launched a program to attract the youth to agriculture to reduce unemployment, working closely with partners including the [African Development Bank](#) to support youth development projects.

“Unemployment is a big problem in many African countries. We have started a pilot program on attracting the youth to agriculture. We mentor them and provide them with skills to start profitable agribusinesses. Although we began with university graduates to use their skills and knowledge to transform agriculture,



Media having a feel of IITA's products during the Media familiarization event.

we are starting a new project in Tanzania and Nigeria to work with the most marginalized young people. This will be in partnership with the Michigan State University,” Manyong said.

“And in all the work we do, our partners are very important. We work with a wide range of stakeholders to deliver the technologies we develop to intended beneficiaries who are mostly smallholders. The media are also a very important partner and as we mark our 50th anniversary, we wanted to celebrate with you our successes and explore ways

to strengthen our relationship as we embark on our next phase.”

By the end of the visit, the journalists were very impressed with all the research at the Institute and requested more regular interactions with the researchers to update them on their progress as well as on new emerging issues in agriculture.

This was the second group of stakeholders the Institute has hosted at its Hub in Tanzania. In February, the Institute held a Donor Appreciation Day, a similar event for donors.

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has realized that with institutional support, training, financing, and mentoring, youth can be productively engaged in agriculture. He added that the Institute would introduce the concept used in attaining the success recorded with the IYA into the ENABLE Youth Cameroon Program.

The AfDB representative, Racine Kane, explained that the idea behind the introduction of ENABLE Youth was to increase food production and job creation among youth. He said the agricultural sector is vast enough to accommodate the many unemployed African youth.

The ENABLE Youth program in Cameroon is a component of the Agriculture Value Chain Development Program (PD-CVA) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINARD).

IITA is expected to lead and administer 16 Youth Agribusiness Incubation Centers (YABICs) over a period of five years and train 1536 Agripreneurs who will launch 560 new agribusinesses and employ about 6200 additional persons, including outgrowers. It will also organize and carry out the capacity development of technical personnel recruited in the framework of the agripreneurial strategy to establish and operationalize an effective monitoring and evaluation system in all participating YABICs as well as assist the Agripreneurs in preparing their business plans and submitting them to PD-CVA.



Kwame Akuffo-Akoto (rightmost), DDG Special Duties, with top Cameroon government officials during the launch.

Announcements

- IITA-Mozambique inauguration + IITA@50 local celebration, 8 May, Nampula, Mozambique
- IITA Board Meeting, 9–12 May, Nampula, Mozambique
- SARD-SC Maize Conference, 14–20 May, Livingstone, Zambia
- Africa RISING Science Advisory Group Meeting, 22–23 June, Arusha, Tanzania
- Congo Basin Grant Program application for admission now open. Deadline for application is 1 June 2017. Log on to www.conservationactionresearch.net/apply.php for more details.

Gates provides open research platform

As an institute implementing various projects with funds from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation ([Gates](#)), IITA will comply with the recent directives from the Gates requiring all institutions and projects that it funds to make discoveries from such research efforts immediately available without charge to others needing such information on its newly developed [Gates Open Research](#) repository.

This is part of IITA's plan of being Open

Access compliant. The year 2016 was dedicated as the year of Open Access at IITA. Since then, the Institute and its scientists have made considerable progress in creating, upgrading, and submitting all research findings on [CGSPACE](#)—a broader Open Access repository for CGIAR centers.

Explaining on the need for the Gates Open Research, Jennifer Hansen, Senior Officer & Open Access Policy Lead at Gates Foundation, said in a memo that the

collation and eventual use of data from invaluable research will “help promote equality in the world where we live”.

“The foundation is providing this open research platform because we want you to get your research out into the world as rapidly as possible. Free, immediate, and unrestricted access to your research will help create a world where every person has the opportunity to live a healthy, productive life. Gates Open Research complies with the foundation’s [Open Access Policy](#) and enables researchers to take control of the publishing process without barriers: immediate Open Access publication of articles and all associated source data, followed by a transparent invited peer review. Full transparency will enable reanalysis; replication attempts, and data reuse, and therefore increase research integrity and accountability.”

The new platform is expected to be fully operational by the third quarter of 2017; however, scientists can now begin to submit their research articles.



YIIFSWA-II hosts yam field day for farmers

During the [YIIFSWA-II](#) field day held at [IITA in Ibadan](#) on 2 May, yam farmers from Oyo and Osun States in need of high quality seed yam tubers witnessed and appreciated the vine cuttings-to-tuber technology that could potentially boost seed yam production of improved varieties for commercial distribution in the coming years. This will also release more tubers for use as food.

More than 85 participants including partners, collaborators, journalists, and farmers from yam growing communities participated in the harvest of tubers grown from one-node vines cut from plants of the improved variety TDr 95/19177 growing in the [aeroponics system \(AS\)](#). This variety is one of the three improved varieties being promoted by YIIFSWA-II.

The vines were planted in October 2016 at IITA, Ibadan and are being harvested after 6 months of field growth. Farmers were also given the opportunity to see the source of the vines growing in the aeroponic system.

According to [Norbert Maroya](#), YIIFSWA-II Project Leader and principal investigator of this technology, the essence of the event was to showcase the use of pre-rooted vines for seed yam tuber production. Vine cuttings from AS have proven to be quite effective for mass production of quality seed tubers of improved and released varieties in Nigeria and Ghana.



Balogun explaining how vine cuttings are used for seed tuber production.

The dense canopy of yam plants derived from the [temporary immersion bioreactor \(TIB\)](#) and grown in AS can generate on average 300 one-node vine cuttings per plant, which is the highest propagation ratio for yam. These cuttings are pre-rooted in nursery bags under shade and nurtured for 4 weeks to develop roots and shoots before transplanting in the field. Over 12,000 rooted vines were planted during 4-26 October 2016; tubers were harvested after 6 months in the field.

[Beatrice Aighewi](#), YIIFSWA-II seed system specialist, and [Morufat Balogun](#), YIIFSWA-II tissue culture specialist, briefed farmers on the importance of using high quality seed yam and promoted the IITA-developed technologies to boost the production of quality seed tubers.

Preparing and planting of vine cuttings was demonstrated to participants using vines from the field.

Farmers happily noted that the boost in seed production for commercial purposes is a timely intervention to reduce the production cost of yam given that farmers pay as much ₦2500 (\$8) for 3 seed tubers during the planting season. They were overwhelmed by the novel technologies exhibited. Joseph Fajimi, a yam farmer of 30 years, said:

“This new way of producing yam is very surprising. I can’t believe it. They are growing yam from vines and without soil. If you only told me this I wouldn’t believe it. But I have seen it and I am convinced. Seeing is believing! I have to experience it in my farm.”

MAFF Japan calls for more attention to basic research in root and tuber crops ...provides funds to drive an initiative aiming to increase productivity and use of food yam in Africa



The Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery (MAFF) has provided funds to roll into action a second phase of its collaborative MAFF-IITA yam project, as part of efforts to ensure that the productivity and utilization of food yam in Africa would increase.

Specifically, the initiative will enhance a broader understanding of the basic agronomic traits of yam among researchers and boost breeding activities on the African continent.

Consequently, three IITA scientists of the MAFF-IITA yam project, [David De Koeyer](#), Head of Yam Breeding; [Haruki Ishikawa](#), Plant Physiologist; and [Ryo Matsumoto](#)—the project's new Postdoctoral Scientist and Yam Agronomist — paid a courtesy visit to MAFF on 17–21 April to express IITA's appreciation for the support from Japan, not only in terms of funding, but also through various kinds of collaboration, exchange of ideas, and development of human capacities for scientists and students. They also shared

future plans of the project. The team was accompanied by Kohtaro Iseki, JIRCAS scientist based at IITA.

Ishikawa, Project Leader said, "Recently, IITA restructured its strategy to focus primarily on enhancing both the delivery and basic research of each priority crop. So balancing delivery and research is the new vision of IITA. This is why we visited our collaborators in Japan and had lively discussions through which various propositions for collaboration in yam research were established. It was a really fruitful visit. This project can contribute greatly to basic studies of yam aimed at improving productivity and nutrition."

To explore new areas of collaboration the team also visited partner institutions and potential partners such as the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) (MoFA), the [Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences](#) (JIRCAS) in Tsukuba, the [KAWABE Noken Sangyo K.K.](#) in Tokyo, the [Iwate Biotechnology Research Center](#) in Iwate as well as the [Tokyo University of Agriculture](#).

At the end of the visits, De Koeyer said, "Our travel was a great success and will enhance further collaboration and capacity building between IITA and Japan."



David De Koeyer in the greenhouse at IBRC, where yam clones used in sequencing the genome of *Dioscorea rotundata* are grown. IBRC is a key partner in the AfricaYam project led by IITA.

Harvesters from Japan soon to be deployed to Nigeria

Good news for yam farmers—there is now a new technology that can take off the stress of harvesting yam manually, and IITA scientists have begun discussions to accelerate mechanization in yam research

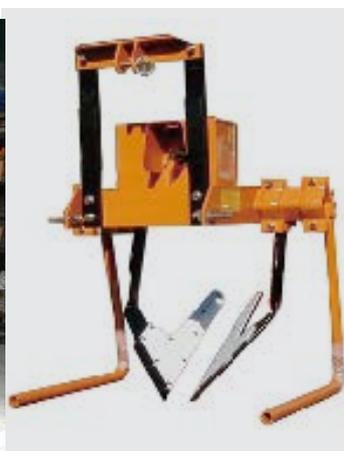
using "Made in Japan" technologies.

The scientists will soon test a new yam harvesting machine in Nigeria which has been successfully used to harvest

root and tuber crops in Japan. The machines were developed by [Kawabe Noken Sangyo K.K.](#), a private Japanese company that manufactures and sells yam harvesters.

Speaking during a courtesy visit to the factory in Japan last month, [David De Koeyer](#), Head, IITA Yam Breeding, who was accompanied by [Haruki Ishikawa](#), Plant Physiologist and [Ryo Matsumoto](#), Postdoctoral Scientist and Yam Agronomist, said they visited the company to partner with the Japanese private sector in finding a lasting solution to mechanizing production and harvesting yam, and also to purchase yam harvesting machines for testing in Nigeria.

They were received by the president of Kawabe Noken Sangyo K.K., who also shared knowledge on technology introduction for yam cultivation in West Africa.



IITA scientists at the factory. Right: Japanese yam harvester developed by Kawabe Noken Sangyo K. K.

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).

SARD-SC Maize conducts monitoring and evaluation in Zambia

The [SARD-SC](#) Maize component carried out its annual monitoring and evaluation exercise for the year in Zambia from 4 to 11 April. The aim was to ensure that activities conducted in the maize value chain were in line with the objectives of the project, and also to establish the effectiveness of the project. The seven-person monitoring team was led by [Sam Ajala](#), SARD-SC project Maize Commodity Specialist. The agenda for meetings and itinerary of site visits were developed and shared by Jeremiah Hantolo, Project Country Coordinator. The monitoring and evaluation exercise took the team to fields in target districts of the country to interact directly with project beneficiaries.



Researchers discussing in the field during the M&E exercise.

More importantly, the M&E exercise afforded the team an opportunity to assess the success of the various subprojects, including double density under various uses of fertilizers and good crop management options, on improving maize productivity and its rate of adoption among local farmers.

The team visited some large maize farms with double density planting, such as in Nambo Agricultural Camp, in Nkushi District and Kaloso farms, Kabwe, among others. The farmers said this had been very beneficial in terms of robust yield thus leading to increased productivity, and cost-effectiveness in eliminating intense weeding.

What then is the double density method of maize planting? "Double density is increasing plant and fertilizer application on a maize farm. Hand weeding is not needed because this method eliminates weeding on maize farms," Ajala said. He continues: "Double density and the use of

herbicide and other complementary crop management practices are the package that the SARD-SC project is selling to the local farmers. All these help to increase maize yield and reduce drudgery. Once herbicide is applied at the planting stage, the farmer does not need to apply it anymore."

The "gospel" of double density preached by the project is fortunately and rapidly yielding converts. With project demonstration plots all over the country's districts, there are worthy and inspiring testimonies from farmers who have embraced the method. Samson Mwale, one of the farmers under the supervision of Petronella Hamainda, Camp extension officer, Zambia Ministry of Agriculture, Kapital IP, has this to say: "I am proud of the double density method of planting, it gives me a good yield and the maize variety Adv637w planted close with spacing of 75 by 25 cm, boosted my yield."

[Issaka Amadou](#), SARD-SC Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, concluded that the project has been successful in the country for achieving its set objectives and outcomes. "Last year, we had a low rate of implementation but this has been corrected. There are demo trials all over the place, training of women in new product development for maize has been achieved, farmer training on double density and good crop management have been conducted, and field days have been held. Local farmers have been organized into Innovation Platforms and in many of the places we visited we saw that the farmers are very committed to executing what the project has taught them." Amadou also said quantity of resources used had been efficient and gave an assurance that the project had higher chances of being sustainable after the project ends because of the involvement of development partners such as ZARI.

Oracle training in Ibadan: In a continuous effort to improve financial and management processes across the Institute, the IT Unit at IITA successfully organized the first Oracle access training on 24-28 April in Ibadan. The sessions were attended by finance and procurement staff from Bénin, Kenya, Tanzania, and Zambia. The Unit plans to facilitate access to other Oracle system users outside Ibadan in phases.



DDG-Special Duties (7th from left), with HQ/Hub finance/procurement staff, and training facilitators.