

IITA50: Ago-Owu research farm inaugurated

As it turns 50, [IITA](#) inaugurated a new research station in Ago-Owu in Osun state, Nigeria, this week with about 2,000 farmers, students, research and development partners, government officials, and media in attendance.

training facility that will backstop the state's agricultural programs and offer training support to the youth.

To help transform the agricultural sector in Osun state, Governor Rauf Aregbesola had donated 205.5 hectares to IITA in 2015. IITA and Osun state signed a memorandum of understanding and IITA began investment on the land with the development of roads and other infrastructure.

During the launch program, Governor Aregbesola commended IITA for its research efforts in the last 50 years, adding that the research facility will advance research in Osun state with a spin-off effect on other parts of the country.

"We believe that this research facility will train and empower our youth in modern agriculture," he said.

At the inauguration researchers made presentations on new findings from cassava weed management, yam seed multiplication, banana breeding and multiplication, cassava processing, and Atlasafe—a technology for controlling

Continued on page 2



L-R: Deputy Governor, Osun State, Mrs Titilayo Laoye-Tomori; Governor of Osun State, Rauf Aregbesola; and Director General of IITA, Dr Nteranya Sanginga at the commissioning of IITA Research and Training Farm in Ago Owu, Osun State, and donation of seeds to Osun State Government on 1 June 2017.

This is part of efforts to expand its research agenda and create impact at the farm level.

The Ago Owu research station is located in Ayedade Local Government Area, and will primarily serve as a research and

IITA establishes two incubation centers for IYA initiative in Imo state, Nigeria

Youth-led agricultural development initiatives can play a key role in reaching out to young people in Nigeria, but conditions have to be suitable for them to realize their potential.

To drive this, [Nteranya Sanginga](#), IITA Director General, went on a 2-day site visit on 8–9 May to inspect the progress made on the development of two new agribusiness incubation centers spearheaded by the [IITA Youth Agripreneurs](#) (IYA) in Imo state.



Left: DG Nteranya Sanginga holds freshly laid egg. Right: Still empty greenhouse.

Seven members of the IYA core group were deployed from Ibadan and Abuja to Imo state in January to begin establishing the incubation centers, while another seven ex-IITA National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members were deployed in May to join the pioneer representatives there.

Development activities began with an extensive renovation by IITA's Facilities Management Service (FMS) of a greenhouse at the Anambra-Imo River Basin and Rural Development Authority (AIRBRDA), Agbala, for diversified crop farming and an animal husbandry facility for mixed or integrated farming at the School of Agriculture, Imo Polytechnic, Umuagwo, Imo state. Both facilities were abandoned due to lack of operational funds and left in a state of total disrepair.

The youths' progressive development is already creating a buzz on campuses and surrounding communities. The first batch of 1200 birds had been sold and profits were plowed back into the program for

further development. Currently the youth have planted hybrids of cucumber, squash, cabbage, tomatoes, pepper, and sweet corn at the AIRBRDA greenhouse.

At the integrated farming center, which is a zero waste system, the fish ponds have been populated with 10,000 juveniles and the poultry coops now contain 350 broilers and 1350 layers that can produce 200 crates of egg daily. All waste produced in the system will be used to fertilize the crop farms established by IYA in Imo state.

According to [Richardson Okechukwu](#), who heads the IITA Station in Onne, which oversees the Imo Station, the incubation center at Imo Polytechnic will also have a cassava and soybean section to be managed by the youth from IITA Onne station, Rivers State. With the support of the cassava transformation unit, the youth will establish about 40 hectares of cassava farmland which will be channeled to the Polytechnic's cassava processing factory.

"The market for these roots is here. IITA will also seize the opportunity to promote some new varieties...The soybean and maize grown in this facility will go into feed processing. So in a very short time the youth will not buy feed for their poultry but produce their own feed from the feed mill here. Basically the system here has been developed with sustainability in mind," Okechukwu said.

Through the agribusiness incubation program led by IITA and the African Development Bank (AfDB) educated but unemployed graduates will be trained and mentored for 18 months under the IYA. The purpose of the program is to change their perspectives about agriculture, develop and sharpen leadership, managerial, and entrepreneurial skills in agribusiness, and expose young people to the business opportunities along the value chains. After completing the program, they will develop bankable business plans along the value chains of any agricultural commodity. The business plans will enable them to access loans from financial institutions and organizations for starting up their independent agribusiness enterprise.

The first set of incubatees is the Green Wealth Agripreneurs who have completed their training in Ibadan in 2016. They have developed their business plans and are set to kick off their businesses any time soon.

During an interview, DG Sanginga stated, "Youth in agriculture is the future of Africa, IITA initiated this model which is now being adopted by states in Nigeria. What we have seen here shows the impact of changing mindsets and the provision of a platform to express those changes.

IYA has brought about a paradigm shift in the way young people view agriculture. And that's unprecedented in Africa because the motivation about agriculture has gained so much acceptance by young people...If the youth can make it happen for Nigeria food-wise, then the country will be saved."

The Government of Imo state, IITA, IYA, and AfDB will be launching the facilities on 20 July 2017.



Top: Newly renovated poultry and administrative offices. Bottom: Agripreneur shows propagation activities for cucumber.

IITA50: IITA inaugurates Ago-Owu research farm **Continued from page 1**

aflatoxins, among others. IITA also presented improved seeds of maize, cowpea, soybean, yam, plantain seedlings, and cassava stems for distribution to farmers, and some Purdue Improved Crop Storage (PICS) bags to the governor. The bag provides a simple, low-cost method of reducing postharvest losses in crops due to insect infestations. Hundreds of farmers were provided training on use of these new technologies and improved planting materials.

"This research facility is part of our strategy to take research closer to the people. Our plan is to make this station a one-stop shop where farmers' needs will be addressed," IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) said.

Singinga said the Ago-Owu research facility would primarily conduct research on cassava, maize, yam, soybean, banana/plantain and cowpea. "We will also be using the facility to train Nigerian youths in agribusiness," he added.

The inauguration of Ago-Owu research station brings to six the number of such facilities in Nigeria. Others are located in Onne (Rivers State), Abuja, Mokwa (Niger state), Minjibir (Kano), and Ikene (Ogun State).

Dr [Alfred Dixon](#), Director for Development and Delivery, IITA, said the inauguration of the research facility would assist the state in accelerating its agricultural reform agenda with a focus on increasing agricultural productivity and job creation.

Press release: <http://ow.ly/zLPO30cfGz3>
Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TwnWyNUt0>

IITA Onne will drive strong research and delivery projects, says IITA DDG

During a visit to inspect the facilities and progress at the recently reopened IITA station at Onne, Rivers State on 25 May, [Kenton Dashiell](#), IITA's Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery, pledged to preserve the legacies of the late Dirk Vuylsteke, Paul R. Speijer, and John B. Hartman—IITA renowned scientists who dedicated their lives to revolutionizing banana and plantain breeding in the region.

He said the Institute will achieve this by *“establishing strong and competitive research and delivery programs in plantain, cassava, yam, rice, maize, and an unbelievable, fantastic program on the youth who will make something out of nothing.”*

Commending [Richardson Okechukwu](#), Head, IITA Onne and his team for undertaking the task of rebuilding Onne, Dashiell said “IITA Onne has made unbelievably great progress compared to 5 years ago when it was a complete disaster. People in this room are the foundation of the team that rebuilt Onne. It makes me feel so proud, that at least I get to be a little part of that team.”

The DDG further recognized the visionary leadership of [Nteranya Sanginga](#), IITA Director General, whose prompt intervention reopened the Onne Station.

Okechukwu led the DDG on a tour of the station showing him the various renovations and facilities and also highlighting the challenges and prospects of the station. Dashiell assured the Onne team that he will do everything possible to make the station the shining star of IITA in the South-South zone of Nigeria.



Top: Extreme right, DDG Dashiell being shown around Onne Station. Bottom: DDG with the Agripreneurs showing off some of the products.

Announcements

- Media day, 22 June, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria
- **Africa RISING Science Advisory Group Meeting**, 22–23 June, Arusha, Tanzania
- **Africa RISING-INVC Bridging Activity Project review and planning meeting**, 29-30 June, Lilongwe, Malawi
- Ringing of the closing bell, Nigeria Stock Exchange, 30 June, Lagos, to mark IITA's 50th anniversary
- **Africa RISING-NAFAKA scaling project review and planning meeting**, 3-4 July, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- **Application for the Gender-responsive Cereal Grains Breeding course** is now open at www.greatagriculture.org/content/grains-application. Applications must be from teams of 2-3 researchers already working together on an existing project. In exceptional circumstances, individual researchers may be allowed to apply, but must first contact contact@greatagriculture.org. The application window will close on 9 June 2017. Read full details about GREAT courses [here](#).

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).

CIALCA—boosting livelihoods in Rwanda

Last week, Rwanda's leading English daily—the *NewTimes* cited IITA's progressive research on banana as a factor that helped households and farmers to meet up with their financial and nutritional needs.

It featured the stories of how the IITA-led Consortium for Improving Agriculture-based Livelihoods in Central Africa (CIALCA) project had transformed the lives of Eugene Rusanganwa—a traditional farmer who was associated with poor farming practices resulting in low yields and

Alice Kabanyana, a poor mother of three children.

Before the project's intervention, these farmers said they could not provide basic amenities for their households but thanks to the project, Rusanganwa is now able to afford a health insurance scheme, educate his children as well as provide for his family. Kabanyana's family now also lives well with an assured bounteous banana yield from her small farm.

CIALCA is also helping the entire Rukara Sector in Kayonza District in Rwanda and indeed central Africa to overcome the challenges posed by diseases and drought as well as promoting supporting activities such as training on how to improve nutrition and health.

Read the full story [here](#).



Rusanganwa in his banana farm in Rukara Sector, Kayonza District. / Jean d'Amour Mbonyinshuti.

IITA hosts workshop on CBSD

The project tagged *“Preventive actions against the propagation and expansion of Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD) in the Democratic Republic of Congo”*, has successfully organized a work plan development workshop on 20-21 April, at Mbanza-Ngungu, 150 km west of Kinshasa.

CBSD, a viral disease of cassava, characterized by brownish spots on the roots which make them totally or partially unusable, contributes to an estimated \$100 million annual loss in income of African farmers. CBSD was

first discovered in Eastern DR Congo and is rapidly spreading to other provinces in the country.

The 4-year project, which seeks to prevent field losses due to CBSD in the entire Congolese communities, was officially launched in Kinshasa, DR Congo, on 13 April, by the national minister of agriculture, His Excellency Patrick Mayombe, in the presence of the secretary general of the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as representatives from National Agricultural Research Institute (INERA), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), IITA, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), national and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the media.

The workshop was convened to discuss current project activities, exchange experiences, and develop work plans and implementation budget for 2017/2018.

Delegates from USAID, INERA, University of Kinshasa, the Ministry of Agriculture, the national Extension Service (SNV) and National Seed Service (SENASA), FAO, and IITA Kinshasa and Kalambo; attended the workshop.

The project is implemented by IITA in collaboration with FAO and INERA and is funded by a \$4.6 million grant from USAID. It is led by [Nzola Mahungu](#), IITA Country Representative in DR Congo.



Participants at the CBSD Workshop, DR Congo.

Ugandan journal says IITA's breeding efforts to benefit no less than 15,000 farmers

Recently, the NEW VISION journal of Uganda reported that IITA's laudable efforts in breeding banana with desirable characteristics will benefit at least 15,000 smallholder farmers in the country. This assistance will be channeled through a new \$5-million project, funded by the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) to boost the crop's productivity in the country.



Bunch of banana fruit.

The new 4-year project, run by National Agricultural Research Laboratories (NARL) Kawanda, will be piloted in three districts in Mbarara (Western region), Nakaseke district (Central region) and Kabarole district (Rwenzori region). A total of 5,000 households in each region are expected to benefit. The project, dubbed "Improving scalable banana agronomy for small-scale farmers in highland banana cropping systems in East Africa," will jointly be implemented in Tanzania, where 10,000 framers are also expected to benefit.

Speaking during the launch of the project in Kampala, Jerome Kubiriba,

Head of banana research program at National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO), explained that the project implementers will visit successful banana farmers, look at their best practices and use these farmers to demonstrate and teach other farmers in the region how to replicate the good practices.

NARO will also examine practices deemed unfit to improve production on the successful farms, do research, refine these practices, and go back to farmers and encourage them to use them. "We shall provide farmers with information on good banana management practices such as improving plant nutrition through applying manure or fertilizer, soil and water management, pest and disease control," he said.

The launch was attended by agricultural experts from Uganda and Tanzania as well as officials from NARO, [Makerere University](#), [Bioversity International](#), and IITA.

Kaphas Nawakunda from NARO said that in the past, priority in the banana sector has always been put on control of pests and diseases because it was the farmers' major problem. He said that now that there are banana hybrids that are resistant to pests and diseases, it is time to focus on improving productivity. Nawakunda said banana farmers in Uganda have the potential to yield over 30 tons per hectare per year, but some are getting as low as 5 or 10 tons per hectare per year. The project seeks to increase the yield to 25 tons per hectare per year.

In February this year, 10 million Ugandans were reported to be food insecure, and based on these statistics, Jim Lorenzen, program officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, had advised project implementers to

come up with innovative, but low-cost technology. He said the right skills will enable the farmers to achieve optimal banana production to address food insecurity and poverty, since bananas are one of the major food crops in the country.

Meanwhile, NARO and IITA have finalized breeding 48 new disease-resistant banana varieties under another \$14 million project funded by the Gates Foundation.

[Rony Swennen](#), IITA Banana Breeder, said these new varieties will also meet over 90% of the quality traits for consumers. He said 25 of the 48 new varieties are undergoing testing at five locations in Uganda and Tanzania. He explained that by the end of the project, they expect to develop hybrid banana varieties with a 30% higher yield and 50% higher resistance to at least three of the major pests and diseases.

The two major diseases to be addressed are [fusarium wilt](#) and [black leaf streak diseases](#) (*Sigatoka*). The pests are the parasitic nematodes and weevils borers (*Kayovu*). The two pests attack the comb of the banana plant and weaken its root, retarding its growth before it eventually falls when the wind blows. They account for between 30% and 40% of losses in banana plantations, although the damage can be heavier in poorly managed plantations.

Uganda is ranked the second largest producer of bananas at 11.1 million tons per year, after India with 29.7 million tons. However, Uganda is the number one consumer of bananas at 240 kg per capita per annum. In East Africa, about 50 million people depend on banana production for food and income and the crop also contributes \$4.3 billion, about 5% gross domestic product (GDP) of the East African region. Culled from the NEW VISION, 28 April 2017