

Special bulletin: Highlights of IITA50 celebration in the Eastern Africa hub.

## Partners in Eastern Africa praise IITA contributions to agric sector at 50th anniversary celebration in the region



IITA's 50th anniversary celebration moved to its Eastern Africa hub in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania with an exciting two-day program on 11-12 July. The first day brought together major partners and all staff from IITA stations in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda to mark this important milestone.

The event was graced by Ms Nkuviliwa Simkanga, the Director of Policy and Planning, who represented the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries in Tanzania; Dr Hussein Mansoor, the Director of Research and Development in the same ministry; Hon. Christophe Bazivamo, the Deputy Secretary, Productive and Social Sectors; and His Excellency Paul Cartier, the Ambassador for Belgium in Tanzania.



Mr Fred Kafeero, Country Representative for FAO, and Dr Betty Maeda, Agricultural Research Specialist, [USAID](#) Mission in Tanzania, were the other notable dignitaries at the event along with representatives from national research institutes, universities, private sector, farmers, and the media.

With the theme "Celebrating our past and looking ahead", the program combined plenary presentations, poster exhibits, and product exhibitions during which the staff showcased the Institute's progress and achievements and shared plans.



Top: The guest of honor, Ms Simkanga (in yellow), with hub Director Victor Manyong at the event. Center: Dignitaries visiting the exhibitions. Bottom: IITA-Kenya staff and scientists in a group photo with Deputy Director General May-Guri Saethre and guests of honor at the ceremony.

## Tanzania minister commends IITA efforts on crop improvement



Simkanga reading the Hon. Minister's speech.

The Minister, Hon. Dr Charles Tizeba, in a speech read on his behalf by Ms Nkuvililwa Simkanga, Director for Policy and Planning, congratulated IITA for this important milestone and thanked the Institute for its efforts in finding sustainable solutions to some of the critical challenges facing smallholder farmers in the country. These include lack of access to improved varieties, lack of modern agricultural production skills and knowledge, attack by pests and diseases, and postharvest losses.

"I take this opportunity to applaud [IITA](#) on the various successes it has had in addressing the challenges faced by smallholder farmers; from developing improved varieties of major crops such as cassava and banana and spearheading efforts to commercialize agriculture," he said.

He noted 20 improved varieties of cassava that are high yielding and disease resistant had been released in Tanzania in the last 10 years from efforts by IITA and the national breeding team.

## IITA aflatoxin prevention and control efforts in EAC praised

IITA's efforts to control aflatoxin contamination in food and feed in the East African Community region and in Tanzania were noted as major achievements of the Institute by Hon. Bazivamo from the EAC secretariat and Dr Betty Maeda from the USAID Mission in Tanzania.

Hon Bazivamo said that IITA was a global center of excellence in agricultural sciences, technology, and innovation, which had made conspicuous interventions in "addressing the pressing challenges of hunger, malnutrition, poverty, and natural resource degradation in Africa."

"I take this opportunity to acknowledge in a special way the contribution that IITA has made in the EAC integration process. IITA has provided tremendous support in implementing the aflatoxin prevention and control project. With IITA support we have been able to develop a robust EAC aflatoxin and prevention control strategy and action plan aimed at addressing the effects of aflatoxins along the food and feed value chains with the associated health, economic, and farm level benefits," he said.

Maeda highlighted the joint efforts between IITA and USAID in building



Hon. Christophe Bazivamo, Deputy secretary, productive and social sectors.

the country's research capacity and addressing aflatoxins.

"Together we have strengthened national research institutions paving the way for improved research products and services. And together we have built a lasting relationship by establishing partnerships with the donor community and local government and farmers' organizations to allow technologies to reach the beneficiaries," she said.

She said for the last four years, USAID had supported IITA to carry out research to develop [aflasafe](#), a biocontrol product to address aflatoxin contamination. She said the biocontrol product was awaiting official registration to be commercially available for use.

She said USAID had also provided funds to IITA for sensitization and awareness creation of aflatoxins that had seen hundreds of farmers as well as researchers and extension staff trained.



Delegates from government and development partners were also introduced to IITA's research and development work in agriculture.

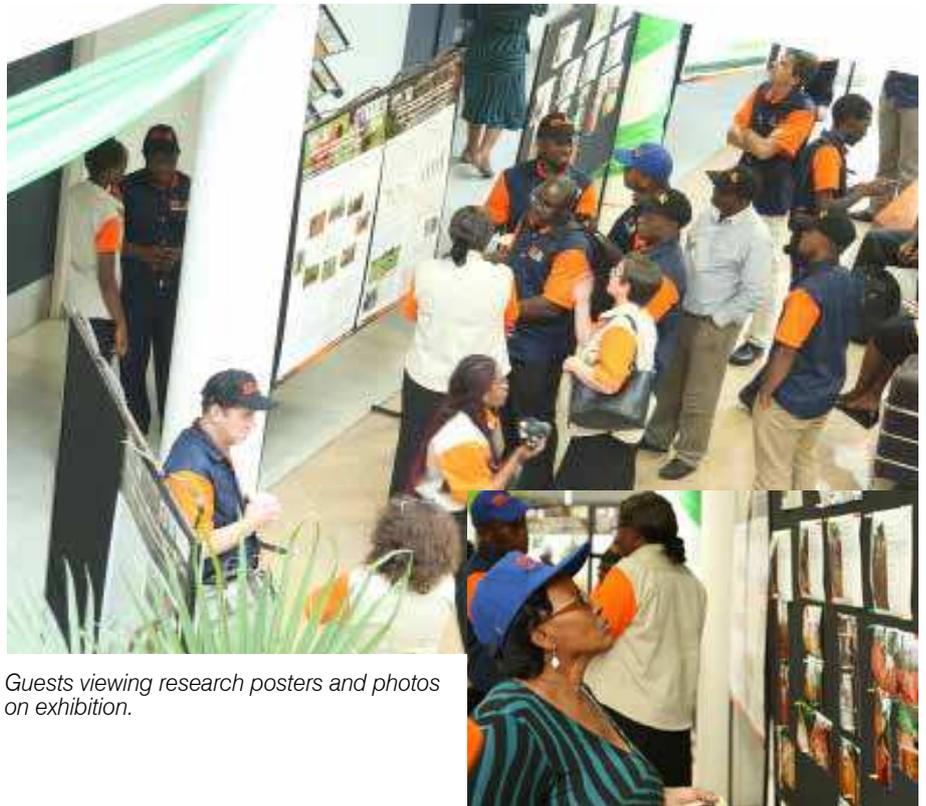
Got a story to share? Please email it with photos and captions every Wednesday to Katherine Lopez ([k.lopez@cgiar.org](mailto:k.lopez@cgiar.org)), Jeffrey T. Oliver ([j.oliver@cgiar.org](mailto:j.oliver@cgiar.org)), Catherine Njuguna ([c.njuguna@cgiar.org](mailto:c.njuguna@cgiar.org)), or Adaobi Umeokoro ([a.umeokoro@cgiar.org](mailto:a.umeokoro@cgiar.org)).

## Speed dating IITA scientists

The afternoon session of the program took the guests and staff on a speed date with scientists representing the key research themes at IITA. These were Crop improvement and biotechnology led by [Leena Tripathi](#), Plant health led by [James Legg](#), Social science and agribusiness led by [Shiferaw Feleke](#), Natural Resource Management led by [Danny Coyne](#), and Partnership and capacity development (PCD) led by [Regina Kapinga](#).

The teams shared their successes in Eastern Africa with the guests and visiting staff who went on a 20-minute “date” with each of them.

The speed date was highlighted as another exciting program of the event that all participants appreciated.



Guests viewing research posters and photos on exhibition.

## Hub holds retreat and honors long-serving staff

Day two celebrations were mostly internal and consisted of a hub retreat for all the scientists and senior staff at the hub followed by a dinner during which the long-serving staff at the hub were honored.

The hub retreat with the theme “Celebrating the past, building the future” had two sessions—a plenary session in the morning and team building in the afternoon.

The plenary session comprised six plenary discussions by each of the major themes at IITA and by the R4D support and Corporate service teams and focused on updating each other on the progress in implementation of the hub’s strategy and future priorities in the next 50 years. The retreat was kicked off by remarks from [Victor Manyong](#) who talked about the status of the hub in terms of staff numbers highlighting how staff strength had grown over the years.

Also present was the IITA DDG, Research for Development [May-Guri Saethre](#), who appreciated the two events as an opportunity for her to get quickly acquainted with the ongoing research activities at the hub.

The afternoon consisted of a team building exercise led by the Human



Godfrey Kasiye, long-serving staff from Uganda (top) and Sophie Swai from Tanzania (bottom) with Manyong, Saethre, and Tripathi.



*Left: Manyong speaking at long service award dinner. Right: Fredrick Nabahire, the longest serving support staff in the East African hub, receiving long-service award from Saethre.*



Resources team at HQ while during dinner five long-serving staff in the hub were honored. These were Fredrick Nabahire and Godfrey Kasirye, both Field Assistants in the Banana breeding program in (Uganda) who have worked for 24 and 22 years, respectively. Next were Sophie Swai, Office Assistant (13 years) and Charles Joram, Driver/Field Assistant from Tanzania (12 years), and Lornah Wanjiru Wamwiri, Office Assistant in Kenya (8 years).

They received certificates, plaques, and gift vouchers from DDG Saethre, hub Director Manyong, and Deputy Director Leena Tripathi who thanked them for their dedication and long service to the Institute.



*Scientists bonding through fun activities on the beach.*





## IITA reaffirms commitment to rural transformation as it celebrates its past

IITA's Director for Eastern Africa has reaffirmed IITA's commitment to transforming rural areas in Africa while speaking at Day 1 of IITA's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration at the hub.

[Manyong](#) noted that while the anniversary was a time to celebrate IITA's achievements, it was also time to critically reflect on its future role and identify its areas of focus in the years to come, particularly in the eastern African region.

On the successes, he highlighted how IITA's research had helped save cassava in Africa from two deadly pests—[cassava mealybug](#) and cassava green mite. Independent experts valued the impact of IITA's biological control against cassava mealybug between US\$15.6 and 27.8 billion. Similarly, another effort saw the cassava green mite brought under control with another predator from Latin America. This has saved the ECOWAS region an estimated US\$1.8 billion over 25 years.

In Eastern Africa, IITA spearheaded efforts to tackle major diseases such as the [cassava brown streak](#) and [cassava mosaic diseases](#) that had drastically affected the crop's production. [Banana Xanthomonas wilt](#) disease is a major threat to banana production in the Great Lakes region. IITA staff and partners had developed a new technology through genetic engineering to solve the problem.

He pointed out the main challenges that IITA will continue to address with its partners. These include the rapidly increasing population in Eastern African

that had more than doubled between 1990 and 2015 in the three major countries where IITA has research bases: Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The share of urban population also increased with a country such as Tanzania reaching more than 30% in 2015 while it was below 20% in 1990. It is projected that its urban population will jump to above 50% by 2050.

"Food imports are a major concern in the continent. Africa is spending more than US\$35 billion per year on food imports. Malnutrition is also widespread: between 26% and 38% of children in the region were found stunted between 2010 and 2015 although these figures are 5% lower than those in the previous period."

"With these trends, the collective goal therefore should be to achieve rural transformation in Eastern Africa. We need strategies that efficiently put under control biotic and abiotic stresses that continue to hamper the productivity of crops. This includes delivery of proven technologies to beneficiaries and development of appropriate R4D technologies to address emerging threats," he said.

IITA50 celebrations were attended by staff working in the three countries in the Eastern Africa hub—Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania and from Ibadan, Nigeria, led by Deputy Director General May-Guri Saethre and Head of Audit. The event was attended by partners of IITA and staff from East Africa.



*Cultural troupe perform to entertain guests at the celebration event.*