

YIFSWA-II, new yam seed systems development project launched

IITA and partners launched a new five-year seed yam system development project on 24 February 2017 at IITA-Ibadan conference center, Oyo State, Nigeria. The flagship initiative will ensure the timely availability of adequate quantities of high quality improved seed yam tubers on a commercial basis for smallholder farmers in Nigeria and Ghana.

the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research-Crops Research Institute ([CSIR-CRI](#)) Kumasi, Ghana; the Savannah Agricultural Research Institute ([CSIR-SARI](#)) Tamale, Ghana; the Yam Development Council; [IITA](#); and CEOs of three seed companies from Nigeria (Da Allgreen, Biocrops, Nwubudo) and one from Ghana (Heritage). The regional coordinator of CAY Seed Project and the Project Leader of AfricaYam also presented their Goodwill messages.

The unavailability and exorbitant cost of high quality improved seed yam is the foremost production constraint in West Africa. The formal seed yam system has been non-existent due to inefficient seed production, distribution, and quality assurance systems.

The issue of inadequate seed production has stalled yam development across West Africa. Yam multiplication ratios are low, and seed tubers are prone to contamination with pests and pathogens in the traditional systems of production. However, in the Yam Improvement for Income and Food Security in West Africa (YIFSWA) new technologies such as the Temporary Immersion Bioreactor System (TIBS) and

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DG Sanginga exhorts participants.

Present at the inaugural event were the highest authorities and representatives from Context Global Development /SAHEL Capital, All Farmers Association Nigeria (AFAN); the National Agricultural Seed Council ([NASC](#)), Abuja Nigeria; the National

Root Crop Research Institute ([NRCRI](#)), Umudike, Nigeria; the National Centre for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology ([NACGRAB](#)), Ibadan, Nigeria; Plant Protection and Regulatory Services Directorate (PPRSD) Accra, Ghana;

IITA appreciates donor support as part of year-long golden jubilee celebrations in Eastern Africa

IITA kicked off its golden jubilee celebration in its Eastern Africa hub with a Donor Appreciation Day. Representatives from various donor organizations attended the three-hour event, which was held at the region's hub offices in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 28 February.

The event was presided over by [Regina Kapinga](#), IITA's Head of Advocacy and Resource Mobilization, based in Tanzania and [James Legg](#), who was the acting hub Director in the absence of [Victor Manyong](#). Also in attendance and representing the



IITA scientists sharing on their research work to the visiting donor group during the lab tours.

host country, was Hussein Mansour, the Director for Research and Development at the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries.

The dignitaries were informed about current and future plans followed by a tour of the Institute's facilities that included the five state-of-the-art science laboratories where IITA scientists briefed them on ongoing research. They also met and interacted with the [Tanzania Youth Agripreneurs](#) who talked about their agribusiness activities. Finally, they were given appreciation certificates for their support to the Institute over the years.

Speaking at the event, Mansoor noted that IITA was one of the [CGIAR](#) centers that the government was working very closely with in Tanzania and together, they had tackled major problems in the country's agriculture sector including two viral diseases that nearly wiped out cassava production in the country.

["Cassava Brown Streak Disease"](#) and [Cassava Mosaic disease](#) had significantly reduced the crop's production in the country putting at risk the country's food security. However, through the work done by IITA together with researchers from my ministry, we are seeing cassava production coming up again. They have developed and released many varieties that are now with farmers," he said.

Kapinga briefed the visitors on some of the new initiatives IITA was carrying out to exploit new and emerging opportunities in the agriculture sector as part of its efforts to transform agriculture in Africa. These included the [ENABLE youth](#) initiative, the Business Incubation Platform, and addressing aflatoxin contamination across Africa with its safe and cost-effective biocontrol solution, [Aflasafe](#).

"We now have a new tag line. We have moved from Nourishing Africa, which has

been our theme for many years and are now working towards Transforming Agriculture in Africa," she said.

"We are tapping into the potential of the youth to transform Africa's agriculture through a program known as ENABLE Youth based on a pilot youth-in-agribusiness program, IITA Youth Agripreneurs. IITA started the program in 2012 in Ibadan, Nigeria, under the current Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) and now it is in more than five countries where IITA works. Together with the [African Development Bank](#) we have developed the continent-wide program that has been adopted by 32 countries across sub-Saharan Africa," she said.

The donors included the International Fund for Agricultural Development ([IFAD](#)), the [World Bank](#); [USAID's Feed the Future](#), Belgium Technical Cooperation ([BTC](#)) and Embassy of Switzerland, and the Korean International Cooperation Agency ([KOICA](#)). Other dignitaries included Geoffrey Kirenga, Chief Executive Officer of Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania ([SAGCOT](#)).

The visit was the first of many that will be organized at the hub as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations during which key stakeholders in the Institute will be invited and appreciated for their support. The next target group will be the policy makers, followed by the media, development partners, and the private sector, one group at a time.



Left: Geoffrey Kirenga poses for a photo with the staff at the soil lab. Right: Regina Kapinga issues an appreciation certificate to DRD Hussein Mansoor for the support received from the Government of Tanzania.

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Aeroponics system (AS) were developed for high ratio propagation to address some of the challenges.

Chairing the occasion, [Nteranya Sanginga](#) IITA Director-General welcomed participants to IITA and urged participants, particularly implementing partners, to contemplate on how to reach the masses with seed yam.

"In 2011, when I was DG elect, I had the opportunity of meeting with Bill Gates during his trip to Nigeria. In our discussion he asked me how I was going to reach millions of farmers with Aflasafe and rhizobium technologies that we have developed. In response to his question we built the Business Incubation Platform (BIP) center to showcase how to produce inoculum and [Aflasafe](#) at scale. It is a factory and it is probably unique for the moment in Africa. We are not experts in marketing and commercialization so we had to link up with the private sector.

With the institution of enabling policies, the transformation was rapid across Africa. So now the question is can we do the same thing for yam? I know that we have reduced the breeding cycle for yam; we have new seed propagation technologies like Aeroponics. All these things are admirable. Can we do exactly the same thing for yam that we did for Aflasafe technologies? The aeroponics system in the screenhouse can produce seed tubers for 10 hectares; what will it take to produce seed for 200,000 hectares? How do we scale these technologies and what means are we going to use to do it?" Sanginga challenged project implementers.

In his introductory presentation of the project, [Norbert Maroya](#) stated that "YIIFSWA-II will be based on the implementation and out-scaling of key breakthroughs of YIIFSWA specifically, the use and promotion of novel high ratio propagation technologies, i.e., TIBS for pre-basic seed yam production

by NARIs and AS for basic seed yam production by the private seed companies.

"To realize the vision of an economically sustainable, commercial yam seed system in Nigeria and Ghana the project through its partners will provide business advisory support towards the establishment of appropriate business models and strengthen the business skills of the private seed companies engaged in using AS for high quality basic seed production. This will be helpful particularly to women who are engaged or interested in seed production for commercial purposes" said Maroya.

Chief Tola Adepomola, Vice-president of root and tubers, AFAN, thanked the project for the much needed intervention. "I want to thank IITA and the Gates Foundation for this project. We farmers know what we go through to get seed yam. Seed is very scarce. This is a much needed intervention, getting improved seed tubers to farmers, I say thank you" he said.

SEMEAR wins 3rd place at the international Feed the Future photo contest!

A photograph submitted by Ana Filipa Couvinhas, Communication Officer for the IITA-led Feed the Future Mozambique Improved Seeds for Better Agriculture Project also known in Portuguese as [SEMEAR](#), won the third place in the latest edition of the [Feed the Future photo contest](#).

The winning image shows Teresa Augusto, a baker living in a Mozambican community where SEMEAR is disseminating improved soybean seeds and complementary crop management practices. Although not a farmer, Teresa and the whole

community are benefiting from the increased legume production by consuming soybean derivatives. Every day, Teresa supports local food security by selling 500 loaves of soybean bread to the community in general and the maternity health center; thereby helping to feed future generations with healthy food alternatives.

The photo contest was organized by Feed the Future as a way of using pictorial evidence to showcase how development works and how it is helping to shape and transform the lives of beneficiaries.



Teresa Augusto displaying her bread.

SARD-SC beneficiary declared best female wheat farmer in Zimbabwe

When Sabina Nyahuye, a wheat farmer from the Hwedza Innovation Platform of the [SARD-SC](#) Wheat project, started wheat farming 20 years ago, she says wheat harvests and the market were just okay. However, after years of farming the crop on her 2-ha farm, yields began to drop.

"I almost gave up wheat farming in 2009 when challenges became too many," says Sabina. Access to seed and other inputs coupled with poor agronomic practices were some of the main challenges she was facing. "I reduced my wheat farm from 2.0 ha to just 0.2 ha and in fact I know of many people from my village who gave up entirely," she adds. Sabina's farm is in Hwedza District, in the province of Mashonaland, 130 kilometers south of Harare, Zimbabwe.

proper land preparation (combining tractor with oxen plow), and proper seed spacing.

The farmers were given an opportunity to evaluate for themselves the performance of varieties in the demonstration farms and after that got farm inputs to try the varieties and practices on their farms. With this knowledge and new varieties and inputs, Sabina's wheat production has increased dramatically.



Sabina Nyahuye - female wheat farmer.

Three years ago (in 2013) the SARD-SC Wheat team in Zimbabwe, working with the country's Department of Research and Specialist Services ([DR&SS](#)) in the Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanization and Irrigation Development, visited Sabina's home area and shared with the local leaders their vision on how they could revive wheat farming. Once the local leadership accepted their proposal, they established demonstration sites for various wheat varieties and farming practices in schemes across the district. Sabina and several farmers in the area were trained on best practices of wheat production techniques. They were taught proper watering, soil nutrient management by rotation with legumes,

"By 2014 my output had doubled from 2 t/ha to 4.2 t/ha and by 2016 had risen further to 8 t! That is why I was declared the best female wheat farmer in Zimbabwe," explains Sabina. As a result, Sabina was one of the smallholder wheat farmers given fertilizers and other farm inputs by the country's Permanent Secretary for Agriculture, Mechanization and Irrigation Development Hon. Ringson Chitsiko, recently, for their achievement. Sabina sells her wheat produce for US\$15 for a 20-kg bag. She sells wheat to her neighbors and in the local market. Sabina plans to expand production. Her success is gradually influencing other farmers in Hwedza to return to wheat farming.

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).

Zambia traditional leader seeks IITA help to improve plight of people

The chief of an expansive district in the north of Zambia has sought the assistance of IITA to help improve the plight of his people through agriculture-based interventions. His Royal Highness Chief Kaputa (Chifumbe Chansa), traditional leader of Kaputa District in the Northern Province of Zambia, met with scientists and staff of IITA-Zambia led by [David Chikoye](#), Regional Director for Southern Africa, on 23 February, to discuss how the Institute could help the people of Kaputa get the most of their crops—particularly cassava—to better their lives.

Chief Kaputa is the first traditional leader or ruler to voluntarily seek the help of IITA in Zambia.

Chief Kaputa says that his district covers more than 100,000 hectares but with a population of only about 80,000. He added that the people are purely dependent on subsistence agriculture, mainly cassava but also maize, rice, and soybean with farms of less than 1 hectare each.

The chief, who was accompanied by his two sons, related that most of the development organizations and government agencies that they have approached directed them to IITA.

“IITA comes highly recommended by other agricultural R&D entities in Zambia, many of whom said that we meet with you especially with regard to cassava,” he emphasized.

“Our objective is simple: to help our people improve their incomes and livelihoods through the cassava value



Chikoye explaining to Chief Kaputa (in a suit) about the different cassava varieties being tested at the IITA-SARAH campus.

chain. I want to see my district transformed from subsistence agriculture into one that provides for both income and food security,” he added.

“It’s heartening when those who we are supposed help are the ones who come to us for such,” replied Chikoye. “It validates the value of what we do as a research institution. This occasion is made even more memorable as we are visited by a Chief and his sons,” he added.

In response to Chief Kaputa’s request, Chikoye promised for IITA to assist the district with the provision of planting materials of improved cassava varieties, as well as technical backstopping in terms of training on the cassava value chain, and the establishment of demonstration plots to showcase IITA-developed crop technologies within the locality.

“We would also like to help Kaputa youth with training in agribusiness and

agriprenurship, and help them establish small income-generating projects under the IITA Youth Agriprenurship program,” Chikoye added.

On their part, Chief Kaputa agreed to IITA’s proposition to set aside 20 hectares of land within the district where the institute could set up technology demonstration areas and also serve as a hands-on training facility.

“I am sure that together, we will help ensure a brighter future for my people,” Chief Kaputa related.

Chikoye and some IITA-Zambia staff also took Chief Kaputa and his sons around the SARAH campus to see the research facilities and have a feel of what could be in store for them under this partnership. The Chief was especially interested in the various improved cassava varieties and processing equipment being tested by IITA on-station.

AGRA Regional Head visits IITA-Abuja, explores areas of mutual collaboration

A 3-member delegation from the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa ([AGRA](#)), led by its West Africa Regional Head, Fadel Ndiame, visited IITA in Abuja on 23 February. The aim of the visit was to explore the possibility of situating AGRA’s operational office within the premises of IITA-Abuja. Receiving the visitors, [Gbassey Tarawali](#), Head of IITA station in Abuja, expressed the readiness of the Institute to host AGRA in Nigeria.

Tarawali also suggested several office accommodation spaces and options that AGRA could take advantage of.

Victoria Sabula, General Counsel and Board Secretary, AGRA, welcomed the choices presented by IITA and said that AGRA will review the available options.

Tarawali led the visitors around the facilities of the IITA research station at the end of which Ndiame thanked IITA for the warm

reception and assured IITA of AGRA’s prompt feedback.



Tarawali showing the AGRA delegation around the premises.

ATASP-1 intensifies production of planting materials at Onne station

The Agricultural Transformation Agenda Support Programme, Phase 1 (ATASP-1) under its Cassava Outreach Program, has intensified large-scale production of planting materials at the newly revitalized IITA High Rainfall Station in Onne, Rivers State.

Showcasing the expansive cassava farms of various species to the visiting ATASP-1 Outreach Project Administrator, Ijie Ben

Asuelimen, ATASP-1 Cassava Outreach Program Training Officers, Chukwuma Obiadinma and Jacinta Ezurike explained the strategic importance of the Onne Station cassava stem multiplication site as a key planting material source for farmers in the Adani-Omor Staple Crops Processing Zone of the project.

The IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA) are also on ground at the station,

taking advantage of the improved infrastructure and high rainfall in Onne to engage in all-year-round agricultural production.

Asuelimen inspected the various ongoing agribusiness enterprises in the Station and learned about IYA's strategy for scaling out the existing enterprises and at the same time future plans of venturing into new businesses.



Left: One of ATASP-1's newly established cassava stem multiplication farms at Onne. Right: IYA plantain/banana weaning section.

IITA DG is doing great work in the Institute—ACG Lawal

During a visit to update management of the new changes in the Nigerian Immigration Service, Olaseni Lawal, the Zone 'F' Assistant Comptroller-General (ACG) commended DG [Nteranya Sanginga](#) for elevating IITA to an enviable standard. He said the investment and facilities on ground at the Ibadan campus could compete favorably with counterpart institutions anywhere in the world.

"Before this visit, I had a vague impression of IITA, but now, my orientation has totally changed. I have never seen the level of investment I

saw in IITA anywhere else. The people here are well cultured, they take their duties professionally, and that is really impressive. The IITA Director General is doing a great work in this Institute," Lawal said.

Adebowale Idowu, the Comptroller of Immigration Services, Zone F, also praised IITA, saying the Institute is well structured and maintained, "I am so proud that after 50 years, IITA is still waxing stronger and adding value to farmers' lives. Everything here is perfect. Similarly I observed that the staff are well motivated. I am pleased to be here today," Idowu said.

The courtesy visit took place on 27 February and also created an avenue for the ACG and his entourage to discuss the new visa reforms with IITA staff.



ACG Lawal and his team at GRC Lab.

Announcements

13th International Symposium of the International Society for Tropical Root Crops - Africa Branch (ISTRC-AB) 6–10 March, White Sands Hotel, Dar es Salam, Tanzania

Nairobi Innovation Week, 6-10 March, Nairobi, Kenya

NextGen Cassava 2017 Annual Meeting 14–16 March, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria

AfricaYam annual meeting 20–24 March, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria

Project Advisory Committee and Steering Committee Meeting, BASICS project 23 March, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria

Annual Review & Planning Meeting of Cassava Weed Management Project 27–28 March, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria

Breeding conference to address the grand challenges facing sub-Saharan Africa 11 April, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria

West Africa Hub retreat 20–23 April, Cotonou, Benin Republic