

Special bulletin: 13th Symposium of ISTRC-AB, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

ISTRC-AB President speaks

The 13th Symposium of ISTRC-AB demonstrated sound collaborative and networking skills by the stakeholders in root and tuber crop development in Africa.

I salute and commend the Government of Tanzania, the Local Organizing Committee, the IITA-Tanzania hub, the Executive team, our Elders, and the media for adding value to our technical and social activities. I am humbled by your support and encouragement. We shall sustain our transparent and focused leadership in our quest for economic growth in Africa.



Prof Lateef Sanni, President, ISTRC-AB.

13th meeting of experts on roots crops in Africa a great success

The 13th International Symposium of the [International Society for Root and Tuber Crops - Africa Branch \(ISTRC-AB\)](#) that recently took place in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 6–10 March, was a resounding success, according to many participants.

The one-week event brought together over 300 researchers, development partners, private sector practitioners, and farmers from all over the world to discuss advances and new developments on root crops research and collaboration in Africa under the theme “Expanding collaboration and catalyzing innovation of root crops for accelerating Africa’s economic growth.”

A perfect beginning

The meeting was officially opened by Dr Hussein Mansoor, Director of Research and Development, in the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MALF) who represented the Minister, Hon. Dr Charles John Tizeba (MP), the Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries.

Mansoor stated that the meeting was very relevant not only for Tanzania but for the whole of Africa where root crops were very important for food, feed, and as sources of industrial raw material after processing.



Director Hussein Mansoor officially opening the symposium.

He noted that as with many crops, the yield of root crops was extremely low and he therefore hoped the event would provide practical hands-on solutions to help address farmers' constraints in the production of root crops.

Other speakers at the event included Dr Victor Manyong, IITA Director for Eastern Africa; Prof Lateef Sanni and Prof Keith Tomlin, the presidents of ISTRC-AB and ISTRC, respectively; Dr Geoffrey Mkamilo, Head of the Roots Program in Tanzania, and Dr Kiddo Mtunda, the chair of the local organizing committee. Mrs Rukia Liumba, a farmer and small-scale cassava processor shared her experiences on how production and processing of the crop had improved her life.

"Root and tuber crops are very important for ensuring food security in the continent. However, the need to address postharvest losses and markets cannot be overemphasized. If not well addressed, then all the work done to increase production through development and adoption of improved varieties, and good agronomic practices will not realize the anticipated benefits," said IITA's Manyong.

The keynote address was delivered by Dr Jan Low from the International Potato Center (CIP) and one of the 2016 World Food Prize laureates. She talked about the challenges and lessons learned in efforts to promote vitamin A-enriched, orange-fleshed



L-R: Victor Manyong, IITA Director for Eastern Africa; Rukia Liumba, a farmer and small-scale cassava processor; speaking at opening plenary and Jan Low giving, from CIP who gave keynote address.



Sweet potato and their products on display at the CIP exhibition booth.

sweet potato (OSFP) to address hidden hunger in sub-Saharan Africa. Low noted that healthy diets were very essential for the healthy population required for growing economies. She

pointed out that diversified use of root crops was important to grow future markets and it was thus necessary for breeders to develop varieties to meet different needs and uses.



Full house: symposium participants listening to guest of honor speak.

A perfect ending

The event concluded with a gala dinner where the society honored various researchers for their outstanding contribution to the development of roots crops in Africa (see story on page).

Prof Keith Tomlins, Director of Natural Research Institute (NRI) and ISTRC President, said the event had been delightful and thanked the local ISTRC-AB organizing committee and Executive Committee for organizing such a successful one.

And in between

Throughout the four days, participants presented their research and activities on various aspects of root crops in Africa such as on agronomy, integrated pest management (IPM), postharvest, socioeconomics, seed systems, and breeding. These were made during plenary and break-away sessions and were followed by in-depth discussions. There was also a poster session and an exhibition where organizations and projects displayed their activities and products.

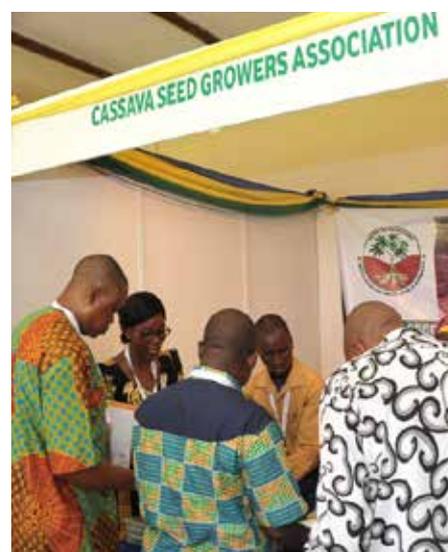
In addition, delegates took a break from the Powerpoint presentations and went around to see a little of the country. Three tours were organized for the researchers to see ongoing activities on root crops. The tour themes were: (1) Breeding for Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD) and pre-basic seed production for sweet potato and cassava at Chambezi field trials; (2) Touring research infrastructure at IITA,



Some of the awardees and their plaques.

Mikocheni Agriculture Research Institute (MARI), and a private biotechnology laboratory, KILMORGANO; and (3) Cassava processing and utilization in Mkuranga.

The organization of the meeting was led by Tanzania's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries. Other partners included IITA, CIP, the Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH), and the Cassava Adding Value for Africa (CAVA) project that is led by the Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre (TFNC). Tanzania had been selected as the venue of its 13th Symposium at ISTRC-AB's last meeting in Ghana in October 2013. The 14th ISTRC-AB will take place in Zambia in 2020.



Participants at the booth of the cassava seed growers association.



Group photo.

IITA researcher declared best oral presenter at the ISTRC-AB

IITA Research Associate, Rudolph Shirima, gave the best oral presentation at the recently concluded ISTRC-AB symposium.

His presentation “Assessment of the degeneration rates of selected cassava varieties under high cassava virus pressure in Coastal Tanzania” was declared the best presentation out of the over 50 oral presentations made.

Shirima’s study seeks to establish the number of times that farmers can recycle their cassava materials and still have a good yield before they succumb to Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD) and have to purchase new, clean planting material. CBSD is a major threat to cassava production in parts of Africa.

According to Rudolph, he is studying the degeneration of seven varieties: one clone (KBH2002_135) and six cassava varieties (Chereko, Kikombe, Kipusa, Kiroba, Kizimbani, Mkuranga-1). From



Rudolph Shirima.

these, five are elite varieties with good resistance to CBSD.

“The award was very inspiring. It was a shocking and at the same time exciting moment. This is my first time of being honored with this award,” Shirima said.

He said the award was not only due to his efforts but also from the teamwork which had played a huge part in the implementation and achievements of the study.

He further applauded the approach used by ISTRC-AB to support young scientists to participate fully in the event, which he said was good preparation for them to become competent young scientists in Africa.

“It is my second time of participating in an ISTRC-AB conference. The conferences provide opportunities for young researchers to grow,” he said.

Shirima is currently studying for his PhD at the University of Dar es Salaam Department of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (MBB) with support from the IITA-led New Cassava varieties and Clean Seed to Combat CBSD and CMD Project (5CP).

Other awards

Best Poster:

Agnes Achiaa Aboagye et al.

Seed yam production technologies in Ghana: Aeroponics technology, a novel commercial approach

Sanni is reelected as ISTRC-AB President for another term as many other key office bearers retain their seats

There were few changes to the Executive Committee of ISTRC-AB as many of the current office bearers including the current President, Prof Lateef Sanni, retained their seats for another three-year term as a result of their excellent performance in their first term of office.

Prof Sanni, who is the Dean, College of Food Science and Human Ecology at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria, will be assisted by Dr Kiddo Mtunda, a principal researcher at Tanzania’s Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries and the chair of the Local Organizing Committee of the 13th Symposium. Mtunda was elected as the Vice President as stipulated by the Society’s constitution.

Other officials who retained their seats were the current secretary Dr Pheneas Ntawuruhunga, a cassava breeder from IITA-Zambia; and the Treasurer, Dr Elizabeth Parkes and Editor-in-chief, Dr Richard Okechukwu,

both from IITA Ibadan. The Assistant Secretary, Dr Simon Eze from the University of Nigeria and the Associate Editor, Dr Godwin Asumugha from the National Root Crops Research Institute, Umudike, Nigeria were also reelected.

Dr Nzola Mahungu from IITA-DRC and Drs Robert Asiedu, Chief Alfred Dixon, and Peter Kulakow, all from IITA-Ibadan kept their positions as Ex-officio members. Dr Bosola Oladeinde from the Cassava Adding Value for Africa (C:AVA) project joined the committee as Fundraising Officer while Kanayo Chukwuka, Kwame Ogero, Moita Nassy Laurentine Marielle, and Vito Sandifolo, were elected as representatives



Prof Lateef Sanni, President ISTRC-AB.

for Western, Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa regions, respectively.

The elections took place during the organization’s business meeting.

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).

IITA marks 50th anniversary with ISTRC-AB participants

IITA hosted participants of the ISTRC-AB Symposium for a welcome cocktail at its offices in Dar es Salaam as part of events to mark its 50th Anniversary.

The IITA Director for Eastern Africa, Victor Manyong, and the Regional

Administrator Eveline Odiambo, led the celebratory event. Manyong welcomed the participants to IITA saying that the 50th anniversary was an important milestone for the institution.

“We have come this far due to your generous support. And that is why we

invited you to celebrate with us,” he said.

Manyong, together with the members of the local organizing committee and the ISTRC-AB Executive Committee, cut a cake for the anniversary. Everyone enjoyed the food, drinks, and entertainment planned for the evening.

Sanni, on behalf of ISTRC-AB, thanked Manyong and his team for hosting the participants and for their support in organizing the 13th Triennial Symposium.

Also present at the event were the senior staff of IITA in Dar es Salaam and hosted institutions including the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA).



Happy 50th birthday IITA! – Cutting cake to mark IITA's 50th anniversary.

IITA's DG and scientists honored for their outstanding contribution to development of root crops in Africa

Nine out of 10 scientists honored were current or former staff of IITA

The [International Society for Tropical Root Crops-Africa Branch \(ISTRC-AB\)](#) has appreciated the contribution of 10 scientists including the Director General of IITA towards the development of root and tuber crops in Africa. This took place at a gala dinner hosted by the Society at its recently concluded 13th Triennial Symposium held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 6–10 March 2017.

The IITA DG, [Nteranya Sanginga](#), received special recognition for his outstanding leadership and contribution to the development of root and tuber crops in Africa in the five years he's headed the Institute.

The other IITA scientists who received an appreciation award from the society were the Directors for Eastern and Western Africa, [Victor Manyong](#) and [Robert Asiedu](#), respectively; Head of Advocacy and Resource Mobilization [Regina Kapinga](#); [Alfred Dixon](#), Director of the Development and Delivery Office; and country Representative for the Democratic Republic of Congo, [Mahungu Nzola-Meso](#).

Also honored was the [2016 World Food Prize Laureate](#) and sweet potato breeder from the [International Potato Center \(CIP\)](#), [Maria Andrade](#), and two former staff of IITA, [Mpoko Bokanga](#), the founder of AgroTEQ, and [Malachy Akoroda](#) from the University of Ibadan. A posthumous appreciation award was also presented to the late Kenneth Nwosu, former Executive Director of [National Root Crops Research Institute \(NRCRI\)](#), Nigeria. Manyong received the special recognition award on behalf of the IITA DG.

While handing over the appreciation plaques, Society President Lateef Sanni said the awards aimed to reward and appreciate the hard work and dedication of awardees towards improving the production of root and tuber crops such as cassava, sweet potato, potato, and yam in Africa and, in turn, contributing to food security in Africa.

Sanni pointed out that the researchers at IITA had worked with their various national partners in Africa to develop high-yielding cassava varieties tolerant

of the two deadly viral diseases that had nearly wiped out the crop—Cassava Mosaic Disease and Cassava Brown Streak Disease—and addressed markets and postharvest losses through value addition and processing.

“IITA's work in the biological control of cassava mealybug—a pest that had ravaged cassava fields in Africa—helped put the crop back on the table for farmers and consumers alike. The development and dissemination of orange-fleshed potato by CIP and provitamin A cassava varieties by IITA have helped in addressing malnutrition in the continent,” he said.

IITA's DG noted that the awards to both serving and past staff of IITA demonstrated the importance and contribution of IITA to Africa's development agenda.

He pledged and restated IITA's commitment to eradicating hunger and poverty in Africa by transforming the continent's agricultural space.

Congratulations to all the winners!

Awardees

Nteranya Sanginga,

Director General of IITA. Prior to becoming IITA DG, Sanginga served as the Director of the Nairobi-based Tropical Soil Biology and Fertility Institute (TSBF) of the Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT-TBSF).



Asiedu was the President of ISTRC-AB from 2002 to 2004.

Alfred Dixon (also known by his peers as “Dr Cassava”) is the Project leader of the Cassava Weeds Management Project and Director, Development and Delivery Office at IITA. He served as the Pioneer Director General of the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute, Sierra Leone, for five years after leaving IITA in 2008. He pioneered the genetic improvement of cassava, and in collaboration with colleagues in national agricultural research systems (NARS), and through a combination of conventional and new approaches, developed over 400 improved cassava cultivars for a range of agroecologies and cropping systems as well as end uses in Africa.



at the International Year of the Potato in Peru and India in 2008. He has served as the 7th Executive Director of the Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria (CRIN) Ibadan. From 2004 to 2006, he was the Officer-in-charge of IITA substation at Onne, Rivers State, Nigeria. In 2000 to 2003, he served as President of the ISTRC-Africa Branch; and in November 2006 in Thiruvananthapuram [Trivandrum], Kerala, India, he received from the ISTRC-worldwide a Lifetime Award for his meritorious services to the society in ISTRC-AB. He is serving as Vice President for Fundraising for the ISTRC-worldwide.



Maria Andrade

is a sweet potato breeder working with CIP in Mozambique. She has 30 years of working experience in Africa, the first 10 of which she spent as a regional cassava and sweetpotato agronomist for the Southern Africa Root Crop Research Network, a program run jointly by IITA and CIP. She has released 30 biofortified sweet potato varieties of which 20 are drought tolerant. Andrade is also on the Board of Directors of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and served as the vice president for fundraising for ISTRC global for five years. She also is one the recipients of the 2016 World Food Prize.

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Victor Manyong

is an Agricultural Economist working for IITA as the Director for Eastern Africa and based at the regional office in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. He is also the Leader for the Social Science Research Group at the Institute. Manyong has about 23 years of experience at IITA working in various fields including adoption and impact studies, production and market economics, and research management.



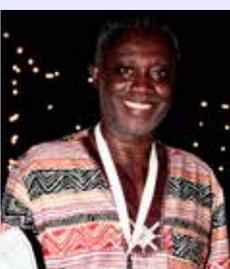
Mpoko Bokanga

is the founder and currently CEO of AgroTEQ, a consulting firm that provides technical expertise and feasibility assessment of agro-industrial projects to private entrepreneurs and development institutions in the agribusiness sector. Before that he worked for the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) as Representative to Kenya, Eritrea, and South Sudan. He was also the first Executive Director of the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) and head of the Biochemistry and Food Technology Laboratory at IITA in Ibadan, Nigeria, for 12 years.

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Nzola-Meso Mahungu

has worked for 21 years for IITA as a Scientist in several African countries including Tanzania, Malawi, and DR Congo. He is currently the Country Representative of IITA in DRC. As a cassava breeder, he has significantly contributed to germplasm development targeting various value chains.



Robert Asiedu

is a plant breeder working with IITA as the Regional Director for West Africa and the leader for Biotechnology and Genetic Improvement at IITA. Asiedu's research

partners have formally released new yam varieties based on improved germplasm from his program, e.g., 18 varieties in Nigeria by the National Root Crops Research Institute and one in Ghana by the Crops Research Institute.

Malachy Akoroda joined ISTRC-AB in 1980, i.e., 37 years ago. He has supported tropical root crop development in diverse arenas across 42 countries and represented the Africa region

Regina Emilian Kapinga

is currently Head of Advocacy and Resource Mobilization at IITA. She is also a focal person of the CGIAR Site Integration process in Tanzania. Prior to IITA, she was a Senior Program Officer with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, USA, where she was responsible for grant making and management in the Roots, Tubers & Bananas (RTBs) portfolio. Before that, she lived and worked in Uganda at the CIP-SSA regional office as a sweet potato breeder/agronomist for the SSA region from 2001 to early 2009.



Kenneth Iheanyichukwu Nwosu (posthumous)

The late Sir Dr Kenneth Nwosu started his career in 1975 as a young Pupil Research Officer at the Federal Department of Agricultural Research and later the National Cereals Research Institute (NCRI). From 1981 to 1992, Nwosu was the Head of NCRI Uyo/Amakama-Olokoru Station and from 1992 to 1997, he became the Project Officer at NCRI, for the World Bank-Assisted National Agricultural Research Project (NARP). From then Nwosu rose through the ranks to become the Assistant Director (Planning) at NCRI and in 2002 was appointed by the then President Olusegun Obasanjo as Executive Director of the National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI), Umudike, Abia State to October 2011. Nwosu made his painful exit from this world on 14 July 2014.



About ISTRC-AB

ISTRC-AB was created in 1978 to stimulate research, production, and utilization of root and tuber crops along various value chains in Africa. While the Society's headquarters are at IITA in Ibadan, Nigeria, its Executive Council comprises eminent root and tuber researchers from national, regional, and international bodies across Africa. Membership is open to everyone interested in root and tuber crops, from researchers, the business community, and government officials, among others.