

IITA reiterates the importance of alignment with agricultural goals of African countries

On 24 July, [Dr Kwesi Atta-Krah](#), Director of Advocacy and Country Alignment Function (ACAF), presented a seminar at [IITA-Ibadan](#) on “Country Alignment and Advocacy” in the context of ensuring impact and resource mobilization at country level. Alignment is necessary to ensure that IITA’s activities, including research, incubation, and delivery, contribute to the strategic goals of the countries in which the Institute operates.

The goal of this is to achieve accelerated impact through strengthened integration of Research and Delivery towards achieving country targets.

Dr Atta-Krah emphasized the importance of ensuring alignment between IITA’s research and delivery operations with the upper-level goals at country and regional levels, as well as positioning IITA as a lead center for research and delivery in sub-Saharan Africa. He said, “We need to offer the Institute as the African center for delivery on research technologies and products for agricultural transformation in Africa, and ensure that whatever IITA is doing contributes to the strategic goals of countries and also in the framework of [African Union Commission Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program \(AUC-CAADP\)](#).”

Country alignment would involve “broadening our scope of operations beyond specific project deliverables to also include country and regional public goods.” This allows host countries to see IITA as a partner in a process of strategic engagement. In this context, Alignment would enhance IITA’s legitimacy in host countries, strengthen partnership engagements with country institutions, and open opportunities for resource mobilization from countries, including donor groups based within countries.

Improved alignment of research to country goals also provides benefits for smallholders. “If IITA can work with the country goals, with the objective of



Dr Kwesi Atta-Krah making his presentation.

doubling the productivity and income of smallholders, there would be more food and more income for smallholder agricultural producers and value-chain actors.” This will also promote the image of IITA as key actor in African agriculture.

In addition, he said IITA should be engaged with agricultural institutions in the country so that the institute moves in the same direction as them. “We have been advocating on how the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN) can be supported to facilitate and perhaps coordinate the engagement of national agriculture research institutions to

strengthen the alignment of their R&D operations to country strategic goals, as well,” he said.

There have been challenges with integrating all the key actors and different projects that have been working by themselves. Dr Atta-Krah noted that steps are being taken to trigger the needed mindset change and position IITA and other research and delivery partner institutions, towards embracing the need for alignment. This would need to be underpinned through institute policy, with built-in elements of accountability and incentive mechanisms.

US and Nigeria launch GFSS Country Plan to improve food security

The Federal Government of Nigeria and the US Government have formally launched a Feed The Future (FTF) Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) Country Plan for Nigeria. The launch and signing of a Declaration of Partnership took place during an official ceremony at Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja on 18 July.

Following welcome remarks by the Director, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Food For Peace, Trey Hicks, US Charge d'Affaires, Ms Kathleen FitzGibbon, delivered a keynote address on the objectives of the GFSS Country Plan. "This plan will connect farmers with suppliers, improve agricultural extension services and inputs, and stimulate market growth to present new opportunities for millions of households to improve their standard of living and quality of life," she said.

The Nigerian Government representative, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Budget and National Planning, Mr Ernest A. Umakhihe, expressed the belief of the Government that this initiative will reduce hunger, malnutrition, and poverty among the Nigerian people.

The GFSS goal and objectives for Nigeria are in line with the [USAID/Nigeria Country Development Cooperation Strategy](#) (CDCS) development objectives of "Broadened and inclusive growth" and "Healthier, more educated population in targeted states". The GFSS aims to reduce global hunger, malnutrition, and poverty with a sustainable approach. The Nigeria Country Plan investments will address the challenges and obstacles limiting the optimal performance of the agricultural, health, and nutrition sectors in the country.

The ceremony culminated in the signing of the Declaration of Partnership by Umakhihe and FitzGibbon.

IITA, a long-time USAID partner, is aligning with the objectives of the GFSS to help implement the five-year policy project in Nigeria. Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery, [Dr Kenton Dashiell](#) and Director of



Drs Kenton Dashiell and Atta-Krah speaking with Governor Abubakar Atiku Bagudu..

Advocacy and Country Alignment Function (ACAF), [Dr Kwesi Atta-Krah](#) represented the Institute at the Launch.

The event also featured a USAID-organized exhibition for private sector vendors to their products. IITA's exhibition stand highlighted biofortified products such as pro-vitamin A cassava and maize that address nutrition deficiencies, technologies

for production, confectionary, and knowledge management products. The IITA stand recorded visits from dignitaries such as FitzGibbon, the Governor of Kebbi State, His Excellency, Abubakar Atiku Bagudu, deputy governors, and Permanent Secretaries of the Federal Government of Nigeria. They were treated to a taste of the displayed confectionary and commended IITA for all their achievements over the years.



Ms FitzGibbon accompanied by some Permanent Secretaries of the Federal Government of Nigeria at the IITA exhibition stand.

IITA and partners launch new project to improve cassava seed distribution and disease control in Rwanda

[IITA](#) and [Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board](#) (RAB), together with Dutch partners, SPARK and Wageningen University, launched the Cassava Agribusiness Seeds System (CASS) project on 18 July in Kigali. The CASS project's main objective is to help farmers have better access to clean cassava seed.

Farmers' access to clean cassava seed is identified as a major challenge in the cassava seed system in Rwanda. The CASS project will harmonize an efficient business channel for delivery of quality cassava seed that are resistant to the most dangerous viral diseases that affect cassava productivity in Rwanda: Cassava Brown Streak Disease (known locally as Kabore) and Cassava Mosaic Disease (known locally as Ububembe).

Controlling cassava viral diseases and ensuring effective cassava seed distribution will result into higher yields, food security, and incomes. "The project aims to catalyze commercial production and distribution of improved cassava varieties with strong resistance to viral diseases and diverse end-user preferred attributes in Rwanda," said [Silver Tumwegamire](#), the Project Leader.

RAB and IITA will consolidate commercialized multiplication systems for both pre-basic and basic cassava clean seed initiated under the ongoing Cassava Brown Streak Disease and Cassava Mosaic Disease Control Project. The two seed categories form the first critical foundation of the overall functional commercialized seed system in Rwanda. The most viable models will be identified and tested for the subsequent seed categories, certified and quality declared seed, which farmers source to plant root production crops.

"Commercialization of cassava seed will help ensure quality and real time delivery of seed to the farmers, and improve the quality and quantity of their produce. Cassava seed commercialization will also lead to sustainability and ownership," Dr Athanase Nduwumuremyi, Head of the Cassava research and technology transfer program at RAB explained.

A total budget of EUR1 million (over 1 billion Rwandan Francs) will be spent during the 3-year project operating in Rwanda and Burundi. Funding from NWO-WOTRO Science for Global Development will strengthen The Netherlands-CGIAR research partnership on generating insights that contribute to improving seed systems in focus regions within Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.



Stakeholders engaged in a group exercise.



Participants at the event.

IITA and the Chadian Government earmark opportunities to strengthen collaboration

An official delegation from [IITA](#) led by the Deputy Regional Director of IITA Central Africa Hub, [Zoumana Bamba](#), was in Ndjamena on the invitation of the Chadian Minister of Production, Irrigation and Agricultural Equipment, Mrs Lydie Beassemda, from 8 to 11 July. The visit came at a time when the Government is resolutely engaged in a process of revitalizing its agriculture to increase its contribution to national GDP, increase food security, and reduce youth unemployment.

Integrated Soil Fertility Management and System Agronomy Scientist, [Dr Laossi Kam-Rigne](#) and IITA-Cameroon Entomologist, [Kuate Apollin Fotso](#), were the other members of the delegation.

During their stay, they held discussions with national partners and identified areas that could serve as potential entry points for IITA in Chad. These were seed systems, capacity building, youth entrepreneurship through the [Global Agriculture and Food](#)

[Security Program](#) (GAFSP), aflatoxin contamination, mechanization and processing of agricultural products, integrated soil fertility management, and the development of the livestock sector (forage crops).

To enhance collaboration between IITA and the Chadian partners, some short- and medium-term plans of action were put in place. As part of this, both parties identified the need to establish a collaboration agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection and the Institute of Agricultural Research and Development (ITRAD) of the Republic of Chad. The medium-term actions identified include the training of researchers (MSc, PhD) as well as in-house training of researchers in priority areas such as varietal selection, diagnosis of diseases, and monitoring the fall armyworm.

Considering the wide field experience of IITA, the Chadian partners

encouraged its representatives to apply for participation in some upcoming projects. These projects include the Swiss Cooperation international call on resilient agriculture in Chad, the World Bank's plan to launch E-extension and E-voucher in Chad, as well as the [African Development Bank](#) (AfDB) revised strategy in Chad by the end of 2019.

Other activities carried out during the mission included a courtesy visit to the Ministry of Production, Irrigation and Agricultural Equipment, exchanges with the technical and financial partners (FAO, GIZ, Swiss Cooperation, AfDB, World Bank), and a general meeting.

The visit ended with the Chadian Minister of Production, Irrigation and Agricultural Equipment expressing her readiness to see IITA go operational in Chad with the immediate measure being its invitation to the validation meeting scheduled for 30 July.



Chadian Minister of Production, Irrigation and Agricultural Equipment, Mrs Lydie Beassemda (center) leads discussions with IITA's Zoumana Bamba (second right) and Fotso Apolin (first right).

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ATASP-1 project promotes commodity value chain products at launch of 2019 farming season in Anambra State

Sorghum, rice, and cassava value chain products of the ATASP-1 Project were displayed and promoted at the annual flag-off of farming season activities for 2019 in Awka, Anambra State. The event, organized by the Anambra State Government, was to encourage farmers and crop producers to intensify their efforts in production and other value chain activities to enhance food security for the development of the state and the nation.



Anambra State Governor inspecting ATASP products at the event.

The Governor of Anambra State, Chief William Obiano, declared the event open at the Dr Alex Ekwueme Square in the State capital. In attendance were government officials, traditional rulers, and community leaders. Multiple stakeholders involved in the agricultural value-chain activities from production to processing and consumption participated in the event.

Several donor-funded projects were present during the event displaying various commodity crops and other activities they promote. A team of

staff from the Adani-Omor Staple Crop Processing Zone (SCPZ), the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), and the African Development Bank (AfDB) represented ATASP-1. The Adani-Omor SCPZ team was led by Mr Egba S. Romanus, Zonal Program Coordinator ATASP-1 Adani-Omor SCPZ; Sorghum Agronomist, Dr Folorunso M. Akinseye, led the ICRISAT team; and ATASP-1 Task Team Leader, Dr Ibrahim Amadou, represented AfDB.

The team displayed seed of four varieties of sorghum (CSR 01, SamSorg 44, Sk 5912, and Zauna Inuwa), a hand-held motorized weeder promoted in Adani-Omor SCPZ by the Sorghum Outreach, and Sorghum flour processed by El-Shaddai Sorghum Processing Company at Enugu, Enugu State.

Chief Obiano was impressed to see that sorghum can be grown in the SCPZ and that there is an indigenous processor making whole grain flour out of it for consumption.