

IITA to participate in TICAD 7 and MAFF-JIRCAS Symposium in Japan

IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) will be taking part in [The Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development \(TICAD 7\)](#) scheduled to take place in Yokohama City, 28–30 August. Sanginga will be joining global leaders from different countries and organizations as they deliberate on ways to advance Africa's development through people, technology, and innovation.

The Government of Japan created TICAD in 1993 as a summit-level international conference to promote policy dialogue between leaders of African countries and development partners on pressing issues facing Africa. TICAD was held every five years until 2013 after which it adopted a new cycle of every three years.

At this year's TICAD, side events will include the [International Agricultural Research Seminar](#) organized by Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) and the [MAFF-JIRCAS Symposium](#), co-organized by the [Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences \(JIRCAS\)](#).

In a letter inviting Sanginga to the side events, JIRCAS President Masa Iwanaga expressed appreciation to IITA for the valuable contributions of the Institute in achieving sustainable agricultural development in developing regions including Africa. Iwanaga, also an IITA alumnus, noted that the symposium will be an opportunity to learn about the recent research and development activities of IITA towards improved nutrition in Africa.

"We hope this visit will pave the way to new research collaboration and stronger partnership toward our common goal of sustainable agricultural development in developing regions," Iwanaga said.

The Government of Japan co-organizes TICAD with the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the African Union Commission (AUC). All African countries are stakeholders along with many development partners such as international and regional organizations and partner countries. Private sector and civil society organizations also participate.



Biotechnology Society of Nigeria to improve Africa's agricultural system

The Biotechnology Society of Nigeria (BSN) held its 32nd Annual International Conference at IITA-Ibadan on 18–22 August. The conference assembled people from mainstream biotechnology and related disciplines to discuss ways to enhance food security in [sub-Saharan Africa](#) through [biotechnology](#).

BSN celebrated 38 years since its inception on 11 August 1981 at the University of Jos. It now has 16 working groups/thematic sessions representing the pool of experts reflecting the multidisciplinary nature of biotech. This allows for greater networking



Prof Vincent Ado Tenebe, Chairman, BSN Board of Trustees, addressing the attendees.

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and collaborative opportunities among researchers involved in those disciplines in Nigeria and the international community.

The Society has grown over its nearly four-decade history as a foremost scientific society of biotechnologists in Nigeria. One of the major functions of BSN is to encourage the exchange of ideas among scientists of different disciplines on the concept and application of biotechnology through meetings such as conferences, symposia, workshops, public lectures, exhibitions, and publications.

BSN, working towards achieving its goal of enhancing food security in sub-Saharan Africa, plans to replicate partnerships with CGIAR centers like [IITA](#) and the national agricultural research systems (NARS) of Nigeria, as this has always provided international focus and direction for productivity through research.

While delivering his keynote address, Benjamin Ewa Ebi, President of BSN, emphasized IITA's contribution and the strategic role it has played in BSN through capacity development and other deliverables. "IITA does not only give fish but also teaches how to fish," he said.

In validation of the relationship between BSN and IITA, [May-Guri Saethre](#), IITA Deputy Director General, Research for Development, noted that biotechnology is an integral part of IITA's research program. "I really hope this conference will provide an arena for group discussions and some new research topics to ensure productivity between BSN and IITA," she said.

In the course of the meeting, the keynote speaker—Executive Director of [Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa](#) (FARA), Dr Yemi Akinbami—highlighted the importance of food to man and importance of biotechnology to enhancing African agriculture. He said, "For the 800 million people going to bed hungry, food is medicine. Although there is a strong demand on Africa's agriculture



Participants at the conference.

to do twice as much with half the resources, this is doable if biochemists will rise."

Also stating the importance of biotechnology, the Chairman, BSN Board of Trustees, Vincent Ado Tenebe, mentioned the problems of food security and unemployment in Nigeria, and biotechnology being the only solution to these problems. "The major problem we have is jobs for the youth. If we can provide a solution to

unemployment through the different aspects of biotechnology and get the youth engaged, they will be productive," he said.

While addressing participants, [Michael Abberton](#), Head of IITA's Genetic Resources Center and Chairman, Local Organizing Committee, said he hoped the meeting, both in its formal and informal parts, would lay the foundations for new research and inspire a new generation to take that research forward.



BSN President Prof Benjamin Ewa Ebi giving a presentation.

Got a story to share?

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Group photograph of conference participants.

ENABLE TAAT engages Togolese youth in agribusiness opportunities

As part of efforts in extending agribusiness opportunities to more youth in Africa, ENABLE-TAAT, the youth enabler compact of the [Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation](#) (TAAT) in collaboration with the Togolese government, organized a 4-day comprehensive training for trainers at Centre Pilote des Techniques Agricoles du Togo (CPTA), in Lomé, Togo, 11–14 June.

The training, which was a follow-up on the sensitization and awareness creation carried out by ENABLE-TAAT at the National Farmers' Forum organized by the Togolese government in April 2019, is the first step leading to the implementation of the TAAT youth program in Togo.

It was organized to ensure that trainers, who would be training youth during the ENABLE-TAAT pilot phase, are well-equipped with the skills to run an incubation program, and enlighten them on the technologies promoted by TAAT.

With this expansion, ENABLE-TAAT will develop agribusiness skills, change counterproductive mindsets, and provide economic opportunities to rural youth in agribusiness, including young women.

The compact will also work with other TAAT commodity value chains to establish a range of innovative, youth-led agricultural enterprises and consolidate the gains along value chains, including higher-value crop production, marketing, value

addition, and a range of agricultural services.

In addition, it will support rural enterprise networks that provide youth-led initiatives with interactive agribusiness and financial information and raise the creditworthiness of aspiring youth going into agribusiness.

Addressing the participants at the training, the Head of TAAT Clearinghouse, Mpoko Bokanga, stated that the training marks the beginning of agricultural transformation in Togo.

“Africa has to feed itself. We cannot wait for other continents to feed us. We have the land mass, climate, and weather, but what is hindering us, I believe, is the technology. Hence, TAAT has come to introduce improved agricultural technologies so that there can be an agricultural transformation in Africa and in Togo especially,” he said.

The representative of the Minister of Agriculture in Togo, Mr Kpadenou Kodjoga, advised the trained youth to be dedicated and tap into the vast agricultural technologies being promoted by TAAT through the young people working under ENABLE-TAAT.

The training had about 54 participants who were trained on topics that included youth marginalization, its negative impact on the economy and ENABLE-TAAT as a solution, the Agripreneurs movement, youth incubation, and agribusiness rural enterprise which covers topics on Agribusiness and incubation, Value chains, Mentorship, Financial management, ICT in agribusiness, and Marketing.

One of the participants, Tsibi Blakeur, a trainer at Institut National de Formation Agricole (INFA) said the training had enlightened him about the available opportunities along the agricultural value chains focusing on improved technologies. He further said that he is ready to transfer the knowledge to other youth.



ENABLE TAAT Trainer Valentina Ekun facilitating one of the sessions. (Photo: TAAT/Valentina Ekun)

Private company explores cassava uptake in the Bida-Badeggi zone

One of the oversight functions of the commodity value chains in the Agricultural Transformation Agenda Support Program, Phase One (ATASP-1) is to link farmers and producers to off-takers of their products. Based on this, a team from Dufil Prima Foods Plc., Lagos, makers of Indomie Noodles, Power Oil, and Hypo bleach, was in Niger State a few months ago to explore the establishment of a cassava factory that will produce starch for their factory. ATASP-1 Cassava Commodity Specialist, [Dr Richardson Okechukwu](#), facilitated this trip and linkage.

Diwakar Yadavalli and Narayan Agarwal represented Dufil Prima Foods. The team arrived at Duma community for an overview and cognizance survey of cassava farms and land availability. They were happy with the cassava farms they saw and returned the following day for more discussions. The team met with the Permanent Secretary, Niger State Ministry of Agriculture, Dr Ibrahim Garba Musa, ATASP-1 Zonal Outreach Officer, Aishetu Aliyu, ATASP-1 Agribusiness Officer, John Yisa, and other officials from the Ministry's office at Minna.

At the meeting, Okechukwu explained to the Permanent Secretary the purpose of the visit which was to intimate the government of the choice of Niger State as a potential location for siting a cassava factory.

The Permanent Secretary welcomed the investors and informed them that Niger State has the largest land mass in Nigeria and that cassava is a main crop cultivated throughout the State.



Dr Okechukwu and officials of the Dufil Prima Foods Plc. on a field visit in Niger state.

He said the government would be glad if they invested in the cassava sector to solve the problem of off-take usually experienced by farmers in the State. Musa thanked IITA and ATASP-1 for this initiative and said that in addition to the Suleja zone, cassava is also abundant in the Wushishi zone of the State. The field visit took the visitors and ATASP-1 officials to Chadozhiko in Wushishi LGA and Duma in Suleja LGA.

They drove through Bida-Agaie-Gulu communities where cassava is also largely grown. There were group discussions with farmers and elders in both communities and cassava

samples were harvested from farmers' fields which the Dufil team took for further analysis. During the interaction with farmers, Dufil was told that farmers in Chadozhiko numbered about 1000, while those in Duma were about 1500. The average farm size was 1.5 ha in both locations. The Dufil team also asked the farmers if they had existing contracts for root supply with any off-taker and the answer was negative. The farmers requested the investors to visit again and spend more time in the field to see their farms. They enumerated their challenges in cassava cultivation including inadequate tractors for land preparation and lack of credit facilities to expand their farms.

Events

International Agricultural Research Seminar, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and MAFF-JIRCAS Symposium at the 7th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), Yokohama, Japan, 24-30 August

First Start Them Early Program (STEP) Planning Workshop, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, 10-12 September

AgResults Nigeria Aflasafe Pilot Project Close-Out Symposium, Abuja, Nigeria, 12 September

Launch, Start Them Early Program (STEP), IITA, Kalambo, Democratic Republic of Congo, 21 September

Commissioning of Pres. Olusegun Obasanjo Research Campus, IITA, Kalambo, Democratic Republic of Congo, 8 October

Board Meeting and R4D Week, IITA headquarters, 18-22 November

