

IITA joins partners to foster innovations in agricultural sector

[IITA](#) partnered with the organizers of the International Conference and Expo on Research and Innovations in Agriculture (ICERIA) to celebrate research milestones and innovations in agriculture while creating awareness to facilitate opportunities for networking, collaboration, and exchange of ideas with renowned leaders in agriculture.



The conference, themed “Harnessing Agricultural Innovations for Economic Development,” took place on 24 October, at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Victoria Island, Lagos. IITA was represented by [Katherine Lopez](#), Yinka Fasogbon, and Osunde Timilehin of the Communication Unit; Victor Saleh of the Business Incubation Platform (BIP); and the Yam Improvement for Income and Food Security in West Africa (YIIFSWA) team with Oyeyemi Azeez, Paul Emmanuel, Owoja Odihi, and Tunde Sulaiman.

Victor Saleh of [IITA-BIP](#) made a presentation on “Breakthroughs and Innovations in Agricultural Research,” on behalf of BIP CEO Frederick Schreurs, and participated in the panel session focused on commercializing innovations. The presentation shed more light on our innovative technologies/products and services of BIP; solutions provided to address agricultural problems, such as low legume yield, aflatoxin contamination, and poor quality seeds; and how well

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IITA Head of Communication Katherine Lopez speaking with reporters.

YIIFSWA-II seed yam production technologies displayed at ICERIA 2019

Agrobusiness Times kick-started its initiative for promoting agricultural innovations for economic development as part of the inaugural International Conference and Expo on Research and Innovations in Agriculture (ICERIA) which took place at the National Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) in Victoria Island, Lagos on 24 October.



YIIFSWA's Oyeyemi Azeez speaking with a member of the press corps.

The conference with the theme, “Harnessing Sustainable Agricultural Innovations for Economic Development,” was set up to promote innovations and attract funding for research institutes in Nigeria and the commercialization of sustainable agricultural research outcomes to boost the nation’s economy.

The [YIIFSWA-II](#) project was on ground to showcase some technologies including the yam High Ratio Propagation Technologies (HRPT) and Robust Diagnostic tools (RDT) for seed yam production. The project team displayed aeroponics single-node vine seedlings and related generated seed yam tubers seedlings ranging from over 1 kg to less than 50 g. Participants at the one-day conference were surprised at the use of Temporary Immersion Bioreactor System (TIBS) and the aeroponics for seed yam production.

Mr Moses Ajireloja from the Nigerian Seed portal initiative said, “I am amazed at what [IITA](#) is doing and how it is leading research and development in Nigeria. I am so happy to see that we now have quality seed yam tubers of improved varieties made available for farmers to buy.”

In his keynote address, Former President of [International Fund for Agricultural Development](#) (IFAD), Dr Kanayo Nwanze, urged Nigerians to stop talking and start doing. He said, “We can’t keep waiting and depending on foreign aid for development, we must invest our funds in realizing the revolution we want. There are too many technologies on the shelf gathering dust that need to see the light of day.”



Mr Oyeyemi Azeez illustrating the use of HRPTs for quality seed production.

Events

- 1st Aflasafe for Africa Conference**, Arusha, Tanzania, 4–5 November
- Food Security Synthesis Caravan Conference**, IITA headquarters, 5 November
- International Plant Protection Congress (IPPC) 2019**, Hyderabad, India, 10–14 November
- 5th Nutritious Food Fair**, IITA headquarters, 13–15 November
- Board Meeting and R4D Week**, IITA headquarters, 18–22 November



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BIP had been commercializing the technologies to benefit farmers.

Agricultural research and development play a key role in fostering innovation and productivity in agriculture. This can be successfully applied in the African continent if a concerted effort is directed towards adopting new technologies and approaches or modern agricultural practices.

In his welcome address, Baro Thomas, Editor-in-Chief, AgroTimes, the organizer of the event, said that the conference was organized as a way of contributing to the reportage of agriculture, and to showcase innovations in the sector. The event mobilized and pooled critical stakeholders who discussed issues on research funding on the continent, roles and mandates of research institutes, and recent trends in agricultural research and

its contributions to food security with a view to forging a clear road map to harness sustainable agricultural innovations for economic development.

Dr Kanayo Nwanze, former President, [International Fund for Agricultural Development](#) (IFAD), the keynote speaker, said: "For Nigeria's agricultural sector to be like that of Israel, The Netherlands, and other countries that have been successful, the government must, among other things, ensure sustainable financing of all sectors of society that are involved in agriculture research and development." He also said that "development is not something that somebody introduces to a country; it's not something that somebody does for you; it's something that you must do for yourself."

Occasion Chairman, Taiwo Obe, Founder, Journalism Clinic, noted that "Innovation

comes out of what is impossible." Another commenter at the event, Seye Oyeleye, Director-General, Development Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN) Commission, also called on the government to make agriculture attractive, especially to the youth.

Panelists at the event including Prof Lucia Omobolanle Ogunsumi, Victor Saleh, Dele Ibitoye, Dr Efem Ubi, Dr Rose Suniso Maxwell Gidado, Amaka Chukwudum, and others all agreed that Nigeria must "innovate its agriculture sector." The key suggestions given to achieve this include: Creating a market for agricultural products; rebuilding some of the ancient agricultural farms; having a long-term approach towards farming; addressing postharvest losses; constructing and rehabilitating road networks; providing adequate finance through decentralization of the sector; and establishing an exclusive bank.



Former IFAD President Dr Kanayo Nwanze (first from right) with other panel members at an ICERIA 2019 session.

Got a story to share?

Please send your story with photos and captions every Tuesday to iita-news@cgiar.org or Katherine Lopez (k.lopez@cgiar.org) and Uzoma Agha (u.agha@cgiar.org) for headquarters and Western Africa, Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org) for Eastern and Southern Africa, and David Ngome (d.ngome@cgiar.org) for Central Africa.

Scientists prepped for nutrition survey

A team of scientists has been trained to carry out a nutrition survey in selected communities throughout Nigeria. The week-long training workshop, which took place from 27 October to 2 November, focused on preparing the scientists for the field and designing a good survey. IITA Head of Administration, West Africa Hub, [Sylvia Oyinlola](#), welcomed the participants as she reiterated IITA's commitment to tackle malnutrition in Africa.

High levels of malnutrition, deficiency, and overweight are being recorded in African communities due to inappropriate proportions of nutritious diets. "IITA cares about the nutritious

value of what people eat, and works to fight malnutrition in Africa," said IITA Food and Nutrition Scientist and Team Lead, [Busie Maziya-Dixon](#). The survey aims to assess the prevalence, severity, and distribution of malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies.

At the workshop, participants were trained to collect standard recipe data through the preparation of recipes by local women. The results would be used to develop a recipe database that converts the quantity of a mixed dish (a meal) into the weight (in grams) of each ingredient consumed for the planned dietary component of the National Food Consumption and Micronutrient Survey.

Nutrition surveys are important because knowledge of proper diets is not common. The information from this survey will be critical to guide the government and development partners in the alleviation of malnutrition.

This field survey comprises data collection on recipes and food components of host communities in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The target population includes young children between 6 and 59 months old, non-pregnant and pregnant women between the ages of 15 and 49, as well as reproductive age adolescent girls from 10 to 14 years.



IITA Food and Nutrition Scientist Busie Maziya-Dixon addressing the scientists.

Cotonou hosts fruit fly recognition and impact training course

IITA-Benin hosted a regional training course on "Modern Taxonomy and Identification Tools of Fruit Fly Species in Africa" in Cotonou, 23 to 27 September. The training course, jointly funded by the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#) and [International Atomic Energy Agency \(IAEA\)](#), was conducted in close collaboration with the University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin and the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium.

Fourteen participants from 10 different African countries—Benin, Eswatini, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe—attended the training.

The course focused on the proper and accurate recognition of fruit flies and their economic impact in Africa, including morphological and molecular approaches. Unambiguous and correct identification of any pest species is considered imperative for any

subsequent monitoring, suppression or eradication activities, as well as for the development of relevant research activities addressing different ecological and applied aspects. The objective of the course was, therefore, to provide the participants with basic taxonomic knowledge of the target group (tephritid fruit flies), to have hands-on experience in the use of modern taxonomy and identification tools, and to acquaint them with the most recent online and offline resources available.

The program covered areas such as theoretical modules on morphological terminology, introduction to the family of tephritid fruit flies and the most important genera and species of economic importance, fruit fly trapping and sampling methodologies, and the use of online and offline taxonomic resources and additional information sources. Other subjects

included the technique of molecular identification through DNA barcoding, the importance of proper handling of reference material, including the development of associated databases and reference specimens and image collections. This was supplemented with practical sessions on the use of fruit fly identification tools, proper preservation and imaging,

as well as field work (for trapping methodologies) and visits to molecular laboratory and biotaxonomic research collections of the IITA biodiversity center. In addition, lectures provided touched on more general topics such as diversity and distribution of fruit flies in Africa, biological control, and taxonomy and host-plant relationships.



Participants learning to identify the fruit fly.

IITA staff and partners trained on statistical analysis using R

The [IITA](#) Capacity Development Office (CDO) facilitated a 4-day training on “Statistical analysis using R programming” from 27 to 30 August. The training taught participants about ‘R’, the commonly used statistical package for data analysis.

The trainees were IITA staff and partners from Abuja, Ibadan, Kano, as well as others from Ghana and Mali, who have hands-on roles in managing data.

IITA Training Manager Stanley Nwachukwu said, “A needs assessment carried out at the end of 2018 revealed that statistical analysis software is becoming more expensive to run. However, unlike other analysis software, R is an open-source program; it is free and allows users to run any program of choice.”

Resource persons for the training were Research Fellow Moshood Bakare,

Fola Agboola, and Yusuf Muyideen, all staff of the IITA Cassava Breeding Unit. They highlighted the fact that “R programming helps researchers to process data into a meaningful form for decision making.”

According to Bakare, “Statistical analysis software is not new to IITA. However, R has many features that other software do not have, which can simplify results from scientific research.”



Training participants at the statistical analysis training.