

Virologists discuss alleviating plant virus disease impact on food security in Nigeria at first national conference

The Nigerian Society for Plant Virology (NSPV) held its maiden conference at the [IITA](#) Ibadan campus to inaugurate the society and discuss ways plant virology can improve food security in Nigeria such that its impact spreads throughout Africa. The conference, which was held from 28 to 31 October, assembled over 70 scientists and students from the field of virology.

For 48 years, Prof Stephen Soyinka—initiator and founding president of NSPV—has been passionately canvassing for a dedicated society for plant virologists to address the various issues associated with plant virology in Nigeria. “I am happy to see the realization of this goal and witness participation of so many virologists congregated here today,” he said.

to page 3



IITA DDG R4D, May-Guri Saethre, presenting an award to Prof. Stephen Soyinka for his contribution to virology over the years.

“Let’s train more youth in agribusiness,” Senator of Oyo South calls

On 1 November, Senator Kola Balogun of Oyo South senatorial district visited [IITA](#) to explore partnership opportunities in the agricultural development of Oyo South senatorial district, Oyo State.



Senator Balogun in a round-table discussion with top management of IITA.

He was welcomed by [Kenton Dashiell](#), IITA Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery who said, “We have partnerships with federal and state governments, and private organizations.”

Senator Balogun expressed his desire to justify his mandate as a representative of the people, by supporting government policies for wealth creation. He said, “We must bring the dividends of democracy to our people through an efficient and effective service delivery system.” According to him, capacity building, value addition, and youth and women empowerment are some of his plans

for the senatorial district, but his main objective is “to use agriculture to drive the economy.”

Dashiell told the Senator of previous failed attempts at partnering with federal ministries on organizing trainings in agribusiness for 1000 youth in every state. In response to this, Senator Balogun said, “I also serve as the Deputy Chairman of the House Committee on Youth. It will not be difficult for me to drive the proposal into fruition.” He said he will immediately begin to liaise with federal ministries of agriculture and finance, as well as seek the support of the senate

president on how 1000 youth will be empowered through the trainings in agribusiness.

Currently, Oyo State is one of the largest producers of cassava in Nigeria. According to [Alfred Dixon](#), Director of the Development and Delivery office, “Oyo State can become a model for others if agriculture and agribusiness are capitalized upon.”

To this end, a roadmap to actualizing agribusiness in Oyo South is being developed. Senator Balogun is confident that this partnership will yield the desired results.



Kenton Dashiell and Senator Balogun shake hands.

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



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.gha@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.

Virologists discuss alleviating plant virus disease impact on food security

He appreciated IITA for its support and for hosting the event on its campus, which has played a significant role in developing virology capacity in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa.

Prof Okon Ansa, Vice President of NSPV, accompanied by Prof E.I. Ayo-John (Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta), General Secretary of NSPV and Prof B.O. Odu (University of Ife), Chair of the NSPV conference organizing committee, formally inaugurated NSPV. Prof Ansa welcomed and appreciated all the participants, especially the young generation virologists, for their commitment to attend and ensure success.

[May-Guri Saethre](#), IITA Deputy Director General Research for Development, representing IITA Director General, [Nteranya Sanginga](#), inaugurated the 1st NSPV conference themed “Plant Virology for Food Security.” Saethre mentioned that Nigeria is one of the few countries in sub-Saharan Africa to hold a plant virology conference with over 70 people in attendance. She congratulated NSPV and added: “IITA is proud of its virology contributions achieved in collaboration with a number of partners in solving some of the most pressing virus diseases threatening food security in SSA.” She continued, “I believe through this conference, knowledge will be exchanged for greater works.”

[Michael Abberton](#), Head of Genetic Resources Center, welcomed participants on behalf of the IITA Director for West Africa hub and appreciated NSPV efforts and its emphasis on virology studies in relation to climate change.

While giving his keynote address, [Lava Kumar](#), Head of IITA Virology and Molecular Diagnostics Unit, highlighted emerging challenges to food security. “The African population is about 1.1 billion and will likely cross 2 billion by 2050. We have 30 years to increase production to meet food demand, and one way to address it is by controlling yield-limiting factors such as virus diseases,” he said. “Virus diseases have the greatest impact on food security in Africa,” citing the examples of cassava mosaic disease, cassava brown streak, maize lethal necrosis, banana bunchy top, and rice yellow mottle. He also mentioned that virology research helped to find solutions to several virus diseases, such as maize streak and cassava mosaic, but more needs to be done to increase adoption. He also mentioned the need for coordinated efforts to tackle viruses and emphasized the need for strengthening capacity to enable R&D programs to find solutions to virus diseases.

IITA is the bedrock of virology in Nigeria as virology research started in the Institute, especially on food crops. As an institute whose mission is to enhance food security in Africa, IITA has trained virologists from inception “including most of those present at the conference,” said Kumar. However, not just IITA but CGIAR is also making huge contributions to African virology.

Prof Ansa, in his lead presentation, noted the historic developments of virology in Nigeria, starting from the outbreak of cocoa swollen shoot disease in the 1940s, and the role played by Prof Soyinka and the support

of IITA. He highlighted the need for regional centers of excellence in virology in the four sub-regions of Nigeria.

Despite the challenges virologists have faced while carrying out virology research, ranging from funding to infrastructure and weakness of the national capacity in virology, there have been major successes and contributions not only in Nigeria but also in Africa. Some areas of note are capacity development, the development of diagnostic tests for viruses, international collaborations, and fund mobilization for virology research to mitigate viruses in the field.

According to Prof Ansa, the conference achieved its goal of improving the discipline of virology through training such that trained virologists can contribute to the virus/disease management in the country, so enhancing food security. Almost 70% of the participants are in the age group of 20 to 35, which is a big positive for the future of virology, said NCPV Vice-President, Prof Ansa. Members of NSPV shared the progress that has been made in virology through presentations of their research work. This was meant to help virologists foster new partnerships and find useful information for application. In addition, future needs such as facilities and funding requirements for virology research were identified.

The conference concluded by adopting a draft constitution, executive board, and recommendations for future actions, including hosting of the 2nd NSPV conference at IITA in 2020.



Group photograph of participants.

IITA Eastern Africa Hub sets out agenda for Institute's future in the region

The [IITA](#) Eastern Africa Hub organized a two and a half-day retreat for its staff in Nairobi, Kenya, with the theme 'Beyond our vision—shaping our future, together!' During the event, the hub team with members drawn from Kenya, Madagascar, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda, looked at their past achievements, including the development of the first-ever East Africa highland banana hybrids, identifying the first-ever sources of resistance to deadly plant diseases and developing a mobile app for detecting pests and disease of major staples.

In addition, they generated ideas for building on these successes, amidst uncertainties such as changes in the [CGIAR](#) and climate change threats, for more significant impact in the region.

Speaking on the last day of the retreat that was held in Manzoni lodge, 50 km from Nairobi, IITA hub Director [Victor Manyong](#) expressed his satisfaction with the outcome of the retreat, as they were able to cover the agenda despite having a very ambitious program.

"We have spent time to take stock of what we have done in the past, we had a fun team building afternoon, and spent over a half of the time strategizing about our future in the hub and anticipating the new CGIAR changes.

"We hope we are all leaving this place with a common understanding of our work, what we have achieved, and the challenges we experienced. We also had good presentation and updates from the Communication, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), and Data Management teams."

Manyong further identified areas that the Eastern Africa hub team should focus their efforts on. These were science and delivery of research outputs, country and regional alignment, data management, resource mobilization—by identifying new opportunities in the new future; increasing visibility by submitting successes stories to the communication team—and cooperating with the M&E team to support efforts to show IITA's scorecard. The last two being key in fundraising.

On the first day of the retreat, the team shared on their activities and



Top: Eastern African Hub Director Victor Manyong giving a presentation on the proposed changes the CGIAR system. Bottom: Participants listening to Marc Schut sharing on the science of scaling innovations in East Africa.

achievements along the five themes the Institute's works across: Biotechnology and Genetic Improvement; Natural Resource Management; Plant Production and Health; Social Science and Agribusiness and Special Initiatives such as the ENABLE Youth program. Presentations were also made on scaling of innovations and data management.

The following day, Manyong presented on the possible new direction of the CGIAR that is pushing towards the formation of one CGIAR with a mission to end hunger by 2030 through science to transform food, land, and water systems in a climate crisis. The new five impact areas are Nutrition and food security; Poverty reduction, livelihood and jobs; Gender

equality youth and social inclusion; Climate adaptation and greenhouse gas reduction; and Environment, health and biodiversity.

The hub staff looked at how the current activities in the hub were aligned to these impact areas, the gaps, and partnerships and how to strengthen the activities. They also discussed main disciplinary areas within the new GCIAR. There were 21st century breeding; Circular economy and gender; Plant health and digitalization; Excellence in agronomy; and Nutrition and food security looking at how well their activities in the hub were aligned to this areas. They also identified what could be the priority for intervention for each disciplinary area.

IITA GoSeed launches first e-commerce site for breeder and foundation seed in Nigeria

[IITA](#) GoSeed, a unit of the IITA Business Incubation Platform (BIP), launched the first e-commerce website in Nigeria, making breeder and foundation seed of the best varieties of important food crops available. The website was officially unveiled at a promo day highlighting IITA's smart tools for smart farming, and buyers can now order online at www.iitagoseed.com.



Generative crops available to purchase on the website.

IITA GoSeed is responsible for the commercial promotion of the early generation seed of improved crop varieties generated by IITA and other international (CGIAR) centers across the globe. Focus crops include banana and plantain, cassava, cowpea, maize, rice, soybean, and yam. IITA GoSeed produces and sells high-quality breeder and foundation seed of these crops to seed producers in the seed system in Nigeria and across Africa at affordable prices. Working with seed experts, seed producers, seed regulators, and other stakeholders across the various value chains, IITA GoSeed ensures the movement of seed to farmers to help transform their productivity, income, and livelihoods.

Access to clean, improved varieties of seed is a major challenge to achieving high

productivity and profitability in agricultural production in Africa. Improved seed varieties may be unavailable, sold at high prices, or sold in adulterated forms to smallholder farmers in rural areas, thereby promoting the use of farmer-saved seed. This has contributed to consistently low yields and reduced income levels, increased rural poverty, and underdevelopment in the sector.

IITA GoSeed is passionate about improving farmers' access to clean seed and creating a viable seed ecosystem in Nigeria and across Africa. This first e-commerce site for breeder and foundation seed of the best varieties in Nigeria will take away the headache of locating a source of quality seed, and the stress of traveling from one part of the country

to another to purchase seed. Locations of IITA GoSeed fields can be accessed on the Seed Tracker via the website and buyers have the option of pick-up or home delivery.

Visit the IITA GoSeed website at www.iitagoseed.com for updates on relevant information about the seed system and agriculture in Nigeria and to place orders. For further enquiries and to learn more, contact info@iitagoseed.com or follow IITA GoSeed across these platforms:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/iitagoseedltd

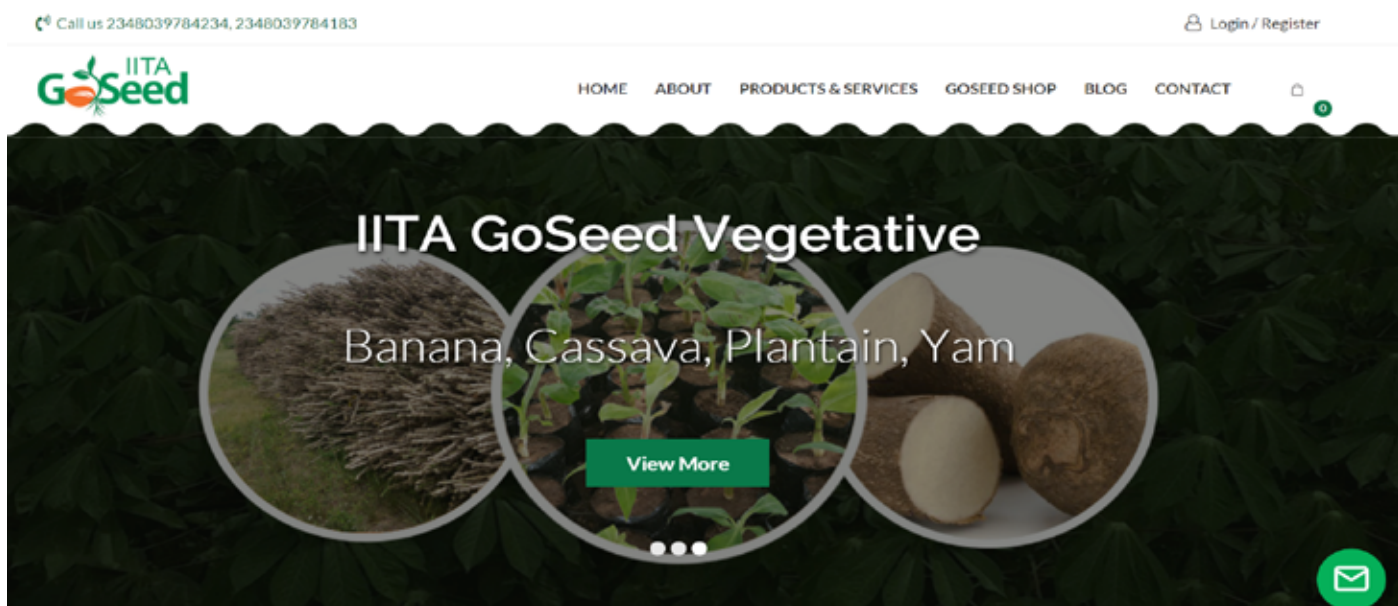
Twitter: www.twitter.com/iitagosedltd

Instagram: www.instagram.com/iitagoseedltd

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/iitagoseedltd/>



Welcome to IITA GoSeed.



The homepage of the IITA GoSeed website.