

## IITA Board of Trustees approves DG-led growth initiatives to transform agriculture in Africa

For the eighth time, the [IITA](#) Board of Trustees (BoT) has given a vote of confidence and commendation to the Institute's management under the leadership of its Director General, [Dr Nteranya Sanginga](#).

Board Chair, [Dr Amos NamangaNgongi](#), expressed great pleasure over the management and growth of IITA over the

last eight years, and in particular, the vast array of agricultural research works currently being implemented by IITA in Africa.

The Board also appreciated Sanginga for initiating the Start Them Early Program (STEP)—an intervention designed to take agribusiness studies to primary and secondary school students, engaging them in club participation, course work, and experimental learning.

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Members of the IITA Board of Trustees.

## Malawi farmers and processors enjoy increased revenue after C:AVA and IITA training

Farmers and processors in Malawi have registered increased incomes after participating in capacity-building training carried out by the Cassava: Adding Value for Africa (C:AVA2) project under the auspices of [IITA](#), in partnership with Chancellor College.



Members of Nsanama Women Cooperative demonstrating products made from HQCF.

The training was undertaken as part of the [GIZ](#)-funded project on “Promoting Cassava Commercialization for Increased Income, Employment and Food Security” between 2017 and 2018. The main objective of the project was to contribute to poverty reduction and economic development in Malawi through the promotion of the commercialization of cassava for increased incomes, employment, and food security.

Market studies conducted by C:AVA2 project showed that market opportunities for processed cassava products existed, including for high-quality cassava flour (HQCF), especially in the confectionery and tomato sauce industries. However, farmers were having challenges in accessing these markets due to a lack of knowledge in business management, quality control, marketing skills, and coordination.

The project assessed farmer groups, processor cooperatives as well as small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and then provided training based on gaps identified. Six groups of farmers and processors (CMRTE, Nsanama Women Cooperative, Tiyanjane Bakery, Mathiya Cassava Cooperative, Mgwirizano Cooperative, LEFORD) and three SMEs (Maloko, BERCA, and Robert Mgumbila) participated in the training.

One of the groups, the Nsanama Women Cooperative comprises over 70 women and is located in Machinga District. The group installed HQCF processing machines, supported by C:AVA and had started benefiting from improved cassava varieties through GIZ Green Innovation programs for further multiplication. The Cassava Commercialization project facilitated training on HQCF processing and quality management, group dynamics and leadership skills, marketing, business management, and product development through end-user demonstrations. In all, 35 members of the group were trained and participated in end-user demonstrations.

The Nsanama Women Cooperative is now able to process HQCF of consistent quality, which has enabled them to access a wider market. Initially, they sold HQCF to rural bakers and users from surrounding



*Top: Mr Joseph Pumbwa (left) owns the JoeClean Tomato Sauce Factory, a big customer of the Nsanama Women Cooperative. Bottom: Tomato sauce made using HQCF as thickener.*

locations, especially for mandazi and doughnuts. As many farmers started selling fresh cassava roots to the group, they have had to expand their fields using released high-yielding improved varieties and more farmers joined in the production of cassava, as there was a readily available market for the roots. This enabled the group to expand processing activities and identify additional markets.

Nsanama Cooperative is one of the groups that supply HQCF to JoeClean Tomato Sauce Company in Blantyre. This has injected energy into the group and they are now able to process over 2 tons per

month using sun drying operations. They plan to expand operations by installing a hybrid solar dryer to enable them to process even during the rainy season.

This initiative has impacted multiple stakeholders including the farmers who were able to increase their revenue from selling fresh roots to the Nsanama group. Members of the group have also registered increased incomes from selling processed products to various market segments. With the additional income, people have been able to send their children to school, pay for medical services, and buy other household assets, and food requirements.

## Got a story to share?

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



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Another area of excitement to the Board was the infrastructural development that will drive agricultural research to a higher level. One of these developments is the recently inaugurated IITA Kalambo research station in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and its subsequent renaming as President Olusegun Obasanjo Research Campus in October 2019. The facility now features a first-class tissue culture lab for the multiplication of cassava, banana, cocoa, yam, and potato.

According to the BoT report, trustees were also highly impressed with the partnership and delivery efforts of the Institute that has led to successful collaborative efforts to tackle hunger and poverty on the continent.

Specifically, the BoT gave kudos to the collaborative relationships IITA had formed with the Nelson Mandela University, the Tanzanian Government, and other national governments and institutions.

Making an assessment of the IITA 2019 annual meeting tagged: "Research for Development Week," NamangaNgongi said that the quality of the presentations was highly commendable, and expressed delight that they came mainly from early to mid-career scientists. He stressed that the rigorous

studies on impact conducted by IITA's socioeconomic staff were impressive. The BoT chair expressed hope that IITA would reach the target of lifting 11 million out of poverty.

Sanginga expressed his appreciation to the Board, the management team, directors, and staff for their dedication to IITA.

He indicated that for the remaining part of his tenure, which ends in 2021, IITA

would increase the role of women in science and leadership positions while strengthening and modernizing the research infrastructure. He also listed training in soft skills, expanding IITA's expertise in human nutrition, protecting the research initiated under the CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health (A4NH CRP), and expanding IITA's coverage of the continent as some of his next areas of focus.



*The STEP initiative, engaging primary and secondary school students in agriculture.*

## How the right planting season can boost cassava yields

Every farmer wants high yields from their crop to get more income. But, do farmers know the best planting time if they are to reduce losses and maximize returns? Do they also know what happens when they replant stems from the previous cassava crop year after year?

Answers to the questions above can be found in a paper that was published in the scientific journal [Plant Disease](#) which shows "Masika" is the best planting season for cassava farmers and seed producers in coastal Tanzania. Masika is the long rainy season which occurs from March to



*Farmers with recycled stem cuttings.*

June. Although some farmers plant cassava in Masika, it's more common for them to plant during the short "Vuli" rainy season, which runs from October to December. The new research shows that there is a much higher degree of infection by cassava brown streak disease (CBSD) in Vuli than in Masika. This is why yields are lower in Vuli and higher in Masika.

According to the researchers led by Rudolph Shirima, an [IITA](#) plant virologist, "CBSD-causing viruses are transmitted by insects called whiteflies. The viruses causing CBSD are generally referred to as cassava brown streak ipomoviruses. During the Vuli season, cassava plants are infested by higher numbers of whiteflies leading to more virus transmission and higher CBSD incidence, whereas in Masika there are much fewer whiteflies, which also means that there is much less CBSD infection. CBSD causes rotting of the tuberous roots, which results in a reduction of marketable yield. So, farmers can maximize their yields by planting in Masika. Conversely, for researchers working to breed resistant varieties, it is very important to also plant in Vuli as this is when the plants will be challenged most strongly by CBSD.

The *Plant Disease* study also presents the first evidence for cassava degeneration caused by the cassava brown streak ipomoviruses. Degeneration refers to the increase in CBSD incidence and reduction in marketable root yield over time that results from the repeated planting of stem cuttings sourced from the previous crop. Most smallholder farmers reuse stem cuttings from previous crops for planting in the new season. Recycling planting material in this way can lead to "degeneration" as virus infection increases from one season to the next. To study this effect, the researchers compared seven cassava varieties (Chereko, KBH2002\_135, Kipusa, Kizimbani, Mkuranga1, Kiroba, and Kikombe) under conditions of high CBSD pressure in Bagamoyo, coastal Tanzania from 2013 to 2017. The experiment was run in both the Masika and Vuli seasons. At the end of the 4-year study period, the most important result was that CBSD infection increased, and yields decreased in the susceptible varieties, while there was little change in the performance of the

resistant varieties. This confirmed that there is degeneration in cassava in coastal Tanzania resulting from CBSD infection.

However, planting season was shown to have a big effect on this phenomenon, as degeneration was more rapid and severe when cassava was planted in the Vuli season compared with Masika plantings. In other words, if a farmer plants cassava in the short rainy season using recycled stems or new ones, the crop will be more severely affected by CBSD and yields will be lower. These results have important practical implications for farmers

in coastal Tanzania and elsewhere, and an important next step for the research team will be to develop communication messages so that farmers are made aware of the right season to plant.

The research was carried out by researchers from IITA Tanzania in collaboration with the University of Dar es Salaam and Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute.

Read the full open-access Plant Disease article at: <https://apsjournals.apsnet.org/doi/10.1094/PDIS-05-18-0750-RE>



Top: Planting cassava during the "Masika" season.  
Bottom: Rudolph Shirima, an IITA researcher with a farmer and her children in a cassava field.