

DG Sanginga calls for intensified youth engagement in agribusiness at “Future of Food Forum”

About 250 professionals from six countries and 19 states attended the [University of Florida “Future of Food Forum”](#), sponsored by the [Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences](#). The forum comprised farmers, researchers, chefs, aquaculturists, students, and academics. One-third of the registered audience were from the private sector.



Dr Nteranya Sanginga addressing forum.

The forum had five panels, each comprising recognized experts from various fields with many years of experience. They shared their perceptions of the future of food up till 2050.

[IITA](#) Director General, [Dr. Nteranya Sanginga](#), was on the “Food from the land” panel with four other experts in agricultural research. Being the only African on the panel, he discussed how new agricultural challenges of Africa be solved, as well as his role of supporting

agribusiness entrepreneurs for providing food solutions and creating employment for youth in Africa.

DG Sanginga noted two challenges of African agriculture: (i) Africa is importing almost 35 billion dollars’ worth of food, which can be produced locally. If such importation persists, by 2025, Africa’s food importation would have risen to 110 billion dollars; (ii) the farming community of Africa is old. The average age of farmers in Africa is 63 because young people take no interest in farming despite an unemployment rate of 60%.

He narrated cases of youth unemployment in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria, and IITA’s intervention to create employment through the [IITA Youth Agripreneurs \(IYA\)](#) model. He said, “Through this model, over 7000 youth have been trained in agribusinesses, and about 70% of them have become self-employed. Agriculture

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IITA signs major project agreement with the EU to enhance livelihoods in Northern Uganda

[IITA](#) has signed an agreement with the European Union and Uganda Government to start the implementation of a three-year, multidisciplinary program that seeks to enhance food and nutrition security, increase household incomes, and improve maternal and child nutrition and health in Northern Uganda.



Perez Muchunguzi (left) with Christine Guwatudde, Permanent Secretary of the Office of the Prime Minister.

The project will, among others, promote diversified food (production; commercialization of agriculture; improved postharvest handling, food preparation, and consumption; and encourage family planning for improved and sustainable livelihoods in Northern Uganda.

The program is funded by the European Union Uganda Delegation through the Development Initiative for Northern Uganda (DINU) and coordinated by the Office of the Prime Minister. It is a flagship program of the partnership between the EU and the Government of Uganda to support the consolidation of peace, stability, and socioeconomic development of Northern Uganda.

In this project, IITA is leading the consortium of different actors contributing to the delivery of the project's multi-sector objectives. These include Killimo Trust and Rikolto (for commercialization and trade); Volunteer Efforts for Development Concerns (VEDCO) that together with IITA are jointly responsible for the production of diversified foods; and Bioversity International and Ernest Cook Ultrasound Research and Education Institute (for nutrition, maternal and child, and reproductive and public health).

The project specifically targets over 50,000 households from the vulnerable farming households in Lango Region (Amalator, Apac, Dokolo, Kwanja, and Otuke districts) and Teso Region (Amuria and Kapelebyong districts). The overall budget is 5,578,949 Euros (EU contribution = 5,021,054 Euros and co-funding by IITA and Consortium members = 557,895 Euros).

The signing event was held on 14 January 2020 in Kampala, Uganda, and was chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), Christine Guwatudde. IITA was represented by [Perez Muchunguzi](#), a multi-stakeholder specialist at IITA-Uganda on behalf of all actors involved in the IITA-led consortium.

The project is one of nine others led by different organizations being implemented as part of the DINU program—five are contributing to enhancing livelihood with a total budget of 26 million euros and four to good governance with a budget of one million euros.

“The project is an extremely exciting one for IITA. We are leading a team of development partners to make a difference among the vulnerable communities in Northern Uganda. We will be disseminating our

proven technologies that address major challenges facing agriculture in the region. We will also address other critical aspects such as maternal and child health and nutrition,” says [Regina Kapinga](#), IITA Uganda Country Representative who led the mobilization of partners to develop and bid for the project.

The project's specific objectives are to a) improve nutrition and health of the general population, b) increase access to markets for agricultural products hence increase household incomes, and c) increase adoption and production of diversified foods.

IITA will lead efforts on the introduction of new improved varieties that are high yielding, disease-resistant, and nutrient-dense such as Orange fleshed sweet potato and soybean and improved agronomic practices to boost production for commercialization.

The initiative will also focus on improved production of vegetables and biofortified foods such as iron-rich beans to improve the nutrition of the people of the two sub-regions of Lango and Teso. Specific agribusiness activities will target women and youth.



Participants at the project signing event.

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.



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ought to be a business in Africa as much as it is in the US.”

Half of the world’s population is on the wrong side of nutrition; 1.9 billion people are overweight, 820 million people are hungry, one-third of all food produced for human consumption gets lost, and there’ll be more than two and a half billion more mouths to feed in the next

40 years. The world must transform its food production systems to cater to people’s changing tastes and health requirements/challenges.

James Anderson, Director of the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems, said, “We need a new kind of agriculture. Our work must address who produces food, where it is produced, and how it is produced.”

Some of the recommended solutions include getting governments to support agriculture, protect farmlands, and encourage farmers to use new techniques that scientists discover. Participants were charged to keep on providing innovative solutions for a healthy and productive world.

Students of Afe Babalola University benefit from hands-on molecular biology training in IITA

The IITA Bioscience Center organized a training program for 41 students of [Afe Babalola University](#), from the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics, College of Medicine and Health Science. The 5-day Basic Molecular Biology Techniques and Bioinformatics workshop took place from 13 to 17 January at the [IITA](#) Ibadan Campus. The purpose of the workshop was to equip students with the basic knowledge of Biotechnology and Bioinformatics and allow them to have hands-on experience.

Yemi Fasanmade, Bioscience Laboratory Manager, said the IITA Bioscience Center organizes hands-on molecular biology training twice a year to allow students and researchers to gain practical knowledge of biotechnology. Although this is not one of the usual annual trainings, IITA seizes every opportunity to help students go beyond their theoretical knowledge, to gain practical experience through the Institute’s world-class laboratory facilities. Many students have theoretical knowledge but have not been exposed to first-hand experience due to a lack of facilities.

Accompanied by the Acting Head of Department (AHOD) and a lecturer, the students received a warm welcome from [Melaku Gedil](#), Molecular Geneticist, on behalf of the Head of the Bioscience Center, [Michael Abberton](#). Gedil encouraged the students to take the opportunity seriously as IITA is one of the best places in Africa for this training because of the availability and functionality of its facilities. “It’s not about wanting to know the techniques of genomics or biotechnology, passion and hard work is required in understanding why we do these things,” he said.



Students during a practical lab session.

The students visited the DNA and RNA laboratories for the practical sessions, working in teams. For the first time, they were exposed to genomic DNA extraction, amplification using the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) machine, sequencing using the genetic analyzer, and interpretation of results.

Describing their experience, two students—Igwe Philip Chinonso and Solomon Okon Rejoice—recalled that they have been exposed to the theoretical aspects of Biotechnology and Genomics since their 200 Level but have never practiced it. They both agreed that their expectations were exceeded, seeing the kind of facilities the Institute has and the way the staff handled the training. Okon explained

that she not only learned how to extract DNA but also how to check the quality of the genomic DNA for impurities.

Dr Olusegun Adeoluwa, AHOD of the Pharmacology and Therapeutics Department also commended IITA for the effectiveness of the training, adding that he also benefited from it. “I realized that my students needed to be exposed to hands-on training and I discovered that IITA is the best place for this training.” He also mentioned that the training will be continued for every set of final year students in the department henceforth.

Certificates were awarded after evaluating the effectiveness of the training through question and answer sessions and team assignments.

Golden Heart Foundation seeks partnership with IITA on youth empowerment

On 17 January, a team from the Golden Heart Foundation (GHF), led by the President, David Ogbueli, visited [IITA Ibadan Campus](#). The purpose of the visit was to seek partnership with IITA on youth empowerment.



IITA DDG-P4D, Kenton Dashiell (center), speaking with the Golden Heart Foundation's team.

GHF is an NGO with a focus on youth value reorientation, leadership, youth empowerment, and entrepreneurial development. GHF believes that partnering with IITA would foster the development they seek through agriculture. Emphasizing this, Ogbueli said, "We are strong in national transformation; we want to bring youth out of unemployment and poverty,

that's why we have come to find answers here in IITA."

[Kenton Dashiell](#), Deputy Director General, Partnership for Delivery, related IITA's success story to inspire the team on the possibility of getting youth out of poverty through agriculture. Referring to [IITA Youth Agripreneurs](#) (IYA), he said, "IYA, an innovation of the current IITA DG, is an avenue where youth get experiential

learning experiences across all value chains". This has made youth become actively involved in agribusiness and independent."

Realizing that IITA had gone past their present phase, the GHF team requested that IITA help draft a proposal and budget for empowering a thousand youth in Ebonyi State, for a start. "The youth would be a mix of graduates, rural youth, and youth who have started their own business," Ogbueli said.

Dashiell promised to send a concept note including a budget, in two weeks, after a series of discussions, questions, and plans for an IITA team to visit the site for a survey. However, Dashiell advised that the project starts with a 3-year plan as it will be difficult to measure success in one year. This was especially because the team had earlier highlighted that the Ebonyi State Government is interested in the initiative, but there must be a solid independent program, before the government can be involved.

Dashiell also introduced the team to the Start Them Early Program (STEP) in IITA, which involves changing the mindset of students from a young age towards agriculture. In response to this, the team requested that IITA attend their 2020 National Youth Summit in Anambra State as a guest speaker, to change the mindset of youth concerning agriculture.

"We look forward to a long-term partnership with IITA so that we can cause a change in Nigeria," Ogbueli said.



The Golden Heart Foundation's team with Kenton Dashiell, DDG-P4D and representatives of IITA Youth Agripreneurs.