

IITA-BIP sets record for maize production per hectare in Nigeria

The [Business Incubation Platform \(BIP\)](#) of [IITA](#) has set a new production record for maize in Nigeria. BIP exceeded the previous record through its Youth Out-growers team in an outgrowers program with Nestlé, Nigeria.



Left: The IITA-BIP Youth Out-growers maize field. Right: Ejitola Azeez, a member of the Youth Out-growers team, displaying the harvested maize grains.

Maize is one of Africa's dominant food crops, rich in vitamins A, C, and E, carbohydrates, and essential minerals as well as 9% protein. Africa harvests 29 million hectares, and as the largest producer, Nigeria produced 1.69 tons per hectare in 2019, its highest production rate. However, the Outgrowers team has achieved an average of 6 tons/ha, a massive development compared to the achievable value across Nigeria.

Despite the vast number of maize farmers in Nigeria, the crop harvest is little due to low yields. The Out-growers program, with the help of IITA, was initiated to investigate ways to increase maize yield and maize farmers' income in Nigeria and Africa. To help achieve this, the BIP team carried out a trial with some varieties under certain conditions before the launch of the scheme in 2020. At harvest time, the team got far

to page 2

IITA and Bells University of Technology sign MoU to establish Agricultural Centre, Incubation Hub in Ota

[IITA](#) and [Bells University of Technology \(BUT\)](#), Ota, Ogun State, have signed an agreement to join forces on various aspects of agriprenurship development.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed last week in Ota, will see IITA and BUT collaborate on the establishment of an Incubation Hub in Ota to train youth in Agriprenurship. The two institutions also agreed to make BUT an agricultural center for farmers in Ota metropolis and environs.

The partnership also includes the development of an Agriprenurship curriculum with input from the already established MBA program in Agriculture run by IITA with the University of Ibadan, as well as the facilitation of joint research and grant proposals.

According to [Kenton Dashiell](#), IITA's Deputy Director-General, Partnerships for Delivery, the MoU will foster cooperation for the development and implementation of collaborative programs. These include technical backstopping to BUT's Centre for Agricultural Technology and Entrepreneurial Studies (CATES) that will equip graduates

with theoretical and practical knowledge in agriculture and entrepreneurship.

He added that Nigeria and Africa as a whole would benefit hugely from the partnership between IITA, which in the past 50 years, has been generating agricultural innovations to address hunger, malnutrition, poverty, and natural resource degradation. BUT will also leverage on IITA programs such as the IITA Youth Agriprenur (IYA) program aimed at addressing widespread youth unemployment using agriculture; and the Start Them Early Program (STEP), designed to take agribusiness studies to primary and secondary school students.

Prof. Jeremiah O. Ojediran, BUT Vice-Chancellor, described the MoU as the dawn for a new era for the university and the country to harness the international expertise of IITA.

The partnership between IITA and BUT was initiated by former President Olusegun Obasanjo and IITA Director-General,

[Dr Nteranya Sanginga](#) to fast-track the transformation of agriculture in Africa.

Officials from IITA and BUT witnessed the signing of the MoU. Those from IITA included [Alfred Dixon](#), Director for Development & Delivery; [Chrys Akem](#), Coordinator, [Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation](#) (TAAT); [Christian Fatokun](#), Scientist; [Sore Zainatou](#),

Head of Capacity Development Office; [Godwin Atser](#), Digital Extension & Advisory Services Specialist; Ezinne Ibe, Project Administrator; and Adetola Adenmosun, representing ENABLE-TAAT. BUT was represented by the Registrar, Mr Lamidi Tafa; Bursar, Mr Sina Adepoju; the Acting Director of CATES, Dr J. A. Daramola, and other faculty members of CATES and Administrative Staff.



Members of both teams after the signing of the MoU.

Continued from page 1

IITA-BIP sets record for maize production per hectare in Nigeria

beyond the usual production rate, a result that seemed to achieve its goal of increasing maize yield in Nigeria and Africa.

After a meeting with the outgrower team, Victor Saleh, BIP Communication Executive, highlighted the key measures applied to achieve this huge harvest. They included the selection of quality seed, proper land preparation, planting under good weather and soil conditions, continuous field maintenance, pest scouting and quick eradication, and site-specific fertilizer application as recommended by Agriserve, a unit of IITA-BIP. Farmers were advised to take note of these key measures and implement them for better yield.

This achievement will indeed help the team to work with farmers under this scheme for better maize yield. Also, youth with limited resources thinking of agriculture can have a soft landing in maize cultivation, because it requires minimum capital, low risk of exposure, and has an excellent propensity for a relatively higher return on investment compared to other crops. The scheme also ensures a guaranteed market and higher farmer earnings, as they will sell directly to Nestlé.

[IITA GoSeed](#), an early generation seed production company that produces breeder and foundation seeds for seed producers, can link farmers with seed producers to enable them to access

improved varieties of seeds, necessary for better yield.

BIP has focused its platform on linking research, development, commercialization, and capacity development. The unit is open for possible collaboration and partnerships that will create jobs, reduce hunger, and increase the availability of raw materials for industrialization, thereby leading to higher income for farmers.

For more information, visit www.iitabip.org or contact the Out-grower Unit through Aramide Seriki (A.Seriki@cgiar.org) on +2348039784177 or Victor Saleh (victorsaleh@iitagoseed.com) on +2348039784176.

IFAD-CARE sponsored study focuses on Agribusiness to tackle unemployment in rural Africa

Policymakers in Africa have been called upon to adopt sustainable ways to address the rate of employment among youth across the continent.

In a study carried out by Esther Lombe Kwaambwa, under the IFAD-sponsored CARE project being implemented by [IITA](#), youth unemployment, currently estimated at 23%, is projected to double with Africa's youth population expected to exceed 830 million by 2050. This projection is based on the current trend of 10 to 12 million youth entering the workforce each year in Africa.

This has created a situation where the number of youth seeking employment surpasses the number of job opportunities available on the continent. This is in keeping with the low rate of job creation due to general trends of low economic growth across the region. This study on the employment status of youth in an agribusiness rural area used Livingstone, a town in southwestern Zambia, as a case study.

With scant employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for young

women and men in rural Africa, the study reveals that creating jobs for these young people requires urgent government intervention at the policy level.

Using agriculture as a peg, Kwaambwa's study explored the significant role it has played in the area of addressing unemployment in rural Zambia. The study states that a key focus should be placed on young agribusiness entrepreneurs, who combine the skills and talent, personal ambition, willingness to take risks, and resourcefulness needed to set up businesses that create much-needed jobs and improve the welfare of farmers and their community.

The study suggests that Governments across Africa create policy measures that provide financial and tax incentives for new, youth-led agricultural companies while providing incentives to improve the quality of education and skills-based learning.

Kwaambwa's study shows that providing opportunities for youth-led enterprises to showcase successful agribusinesses could go a long way to address the challenge of unemployment

in rural Africa. In addition, governments should institute training programs for financial management skills, credit-worthiness checks, and provision of access to capital for young farmers and entrepreneurs, in conjunction with funding bodies and financial institutions to increase the impact on youth unemployment.

The study, sponsored by the [International Fund for Agricultural Development](#) (IFAD), under the IITA-led [Enhancing Capacity to Apply Research Evidence \(CARE\) in Policy for Youth Engagement in Agribusiness and Rural Economic Activities in Africa](#) project, is targeting policymakers towards developing effective policies and agribusiness development in Africa.

The CARE project is engaging media intermediaries and policymakers to create and strengthen policy-making as well as programs targeting youth to ensure that the issue of youth unemployment is tackled in rural Africa. The project is implemented in Benin, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, and Zambia.



IITA Agripreneurs during land preparation activity.

Over 400 applications received for CARE fellowship from across Africa

Following the call for applications, the [Enhancing Capacity to Apply Research Evidence \(CARE\) in policy for youth engagement in agribusiness and rural economic activities in Africa](#) project received over 400 applications from across Africa for the three-year research grant.



Top: CARE awardees in a workshop breakout session. Bottom: CARE fellows during a write-shop.

The fellowship under the framework of the CARE project, funded by the [International Fund for Agricultural Development](#) (IFAD) and implemented by [IITA](#), targets 30 research fellows annually who are young academics and professionals, and graduate

students at the post-course work/research stage of their program.

The fellowship program is part of IFAD and IITA's approach contributing to policy development on youth engagement in agribusiness and

rural economic activities in Africa. It is designed to provide opportunities for the rural youth by improving the availability and use of evidence for inclusive and "youth-friendly" policies to enhance youth engagement in agribusiness and rural economic activities.

After final selection, the fellows will receive funding, technical support, the expertise of IITA's socioeconomists, skills and competencies in social and economic research, and the opportunity to network with other fellows.

The selection, which is a closed-review process, will produce 30 research fellows who will undergo weeks of mentoring and capacity building by selected mentors in the project.

The research areas the fellows will be looking at include impact and evaluation, incentives, markets and institutions, policy engagement, ICT and youth employment, rural dynamics, innovations and scaling up. At the same time, they will be offered training on areas such as the production of research evidence for policy-making, research methodology, data management, and scientific writing.

IITA's socioeconomists will supervise the 30 fellows in close collaboration with their national/university supervisors.

The CARE project is seeking to close the knowledge gap in understanding factors influencing youth engagement in the rural farm and non-farm economy in Africa.

As results from research influence policymaking, interventions targeting youth self-employment in Africa can have a much greater impact by ensuring data and information, evidence, experience, and lessons learned are used.

The three-year program directly contributes to the goal of the IFAD Strategic Framework 2016–2025 and, in particular, supports the strategic objectives of increasing poor rural people's benefits from market participation to improve their engagement in markets and increase their productive capacities.

IITA builds six cassava-processing factories in Liberia

The former President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, entrusted [IITA](#) with a project to build six processing factories in Liberia within two months. It was the end of her tenure and the close of the financial year, but Mrs Sirleaf wanted the factories built and commissioned before her retirement, as it was her brainchild.

IITA successfully installed five of the factories within the stipulated time but could not build the sixth as the location was inaccessible due to bad roads during the rainy season. However, the factory was eventually completed and Mrs Sirleaf commissioned one while declaring all the factories open.

According to [Michael Edet](#), Liberia Country Representative and Cassava Extension Agronomist, "All six factories are functioning, although not to the full capacity of 20 tons of fresh cassava roots per day." Thus, Liberia becomes the only country in Africa with six of these factories running smoothly. However, the Country Representative has initiated discussions with the [Food and Agricultural Organization](#) (FAO) and [World Food Programme](#) (WFP) and soon with the [United Nations Development Programme](#) (UNDP) in Liberia for further collaborative projects to bridge the gap.

The project was carried out under the Smallholder Agricultural Productivity Enhancement and Commercialisation (SAPEC) program sponsored by the Liberian government in collaboration with the [Global Agricultural Food and Security Program](#) (GASFP) and [African Development Bank](#) (AfDB) with IITA as implementing partner under [Robert Asiedu](#), Director R4D, IITA-Western Africa Hub and the CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas.

SAPEC was launched by the Liberian government to help farmers gain access to increased productivity through agricultural training and commercializing agriculture in Liberia. Through SAPEC, IITA has introduced high-yield, disease- and pest-resistant cassava varieties to Liberia. IITA also trained farmers on the processing of cassava roots to produce High Quality Cassava Flour (HQCF) for confectionery and odorless fufu and improved existing methods of garri and starch.

Increased productivity was necessary to meet growing demand due to cassava being the second staple food and business product coupled with the involvement of the cassava hubs in school feeding programs in collaboration with the government and WFP as well as recent export-driven initiatives. Consequently, an out-growers scheme has been crafted within a 10km radius around the cassava hubs as a sustainable approach to feed the factories.

Farmers have been trained to plant cassava all year round, with 300 farmers per hub planting a minimum of 2 hectares of cassava. Right now, the hubs are exporting cassava products such as chips, odorless fufu, and HQCF to China and Australia. IITA also played a major role in linking the factories to markets and service providers for the maintenance of the factories.

According to the project schedule, IITA Engineers are preparing to move to Liberia for the final round of backstopping of the cassava hubs.

Impressed with the result of the first phase of the project, the Minister of Agriculture, Jeanine Cooper, has approved the second phase to commence in June 2020. The second phase will leverage on the factories and IITA cassava technologies established, with plans in store for the youth and physically challenged to be actively involved in agribusiness.



Top: Diallo Thierno, Michael Edet, and some factory workers at the factory in Bomi Gari hub, Tubmanburg. Middle: Cassava and beans flour processed in the factory. Bottom: Falama Inc., the factory built in Gangama hub, Liberia.

Publication showcases 50 years of IITA's plant health research

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH), with the objective to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment, and boost economic development. [IITA](#) joins the rest of the world in commemorating this.

In 2019, a new book, titled "Critical issues in plant health: 50 years of research in African agriculture," was released. Published by [Burleigh Dodds Science Publishing](#), the book focuses on plant health issues which play a major role in the overall food production in Africa, affecting both quality and quantity of crop yields.

Over the past 50 years, IITA has been leading research on plant health issues in Africa ranging from the safe handling and movement of germplasm and seed to identifying and managing threats to crops in the region.

The publication puts a spotlight on plant health issues in sub-Saharan Africa which are key to improving yields and summarizes 50 years of research on plant health by IITA to improve the health of crops in the continent. The book also reviews ways of improving the health of key African crops such as cassava, maize, and grain legumes, and brings together leading experts on plant health in sub-Saharan Africa to review progress in dealing with the range of biotic threats faced by African farmers.

The book is edited by Benin-based IITA Emeritus Scientist [Peter Neuenschwander](#), who is also the former Director of IITA's Plant Health Management Division, and [Manuele Tamò](#), Insect Ecologist and IITA-Benin Country Representative. Several scientists and researchers from IITA and partner organizations have contributed to the book's contents.

The book has four parts, namely: Managing threats to plant health; Plant health in practice: Managing threats to key African crops; Integrated pest management: Putting it all together and exchange of knowledge with farmers; and Conclusions and future challenges.

[Speaking in the lead-up to the book release](#), Francis Dodds, Editorial Director at Burleigh Dodds said: "... IITA has been a particular pioneer in biological control, starting with programs against the cassava mealybug and the cassava green mite. IITA has been a world leader in the use of entomopathogenic fungi against locusts and grasshoppers and the use of entomopathogenic viruses to combat pests of cowpea, for example."

Dodds also quoted the [International Association for the Plant Protection](#)

Sciences President, [Prof Geoff Norton](#), who noted that "This book should be essential reading for those involved in all aspects of plant health in tropical agriculture, as well as elsewhere."

It aims to be a standard reference on improving the management of pests and diseases in developing countries.

Use code IITA20 at checkout via <https://bdspublishing.com> to receive 20% off your purchase of [Critical issues in plant health: 50 years of research in African agriculture](#).



Front cover of the publication from Burleigh Dodds Science Publishing.

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.

