

## IITA launches BASICS-II project

On 25 June, [IITA](#) launched the second phase of the project [Building an Economically Sustainable and Integrated Cassava Seed System \(BASICS II\)](#). With a duration of 5 years, [BASICS II](#) will be led by Project Manager [Lateef Oladimeji Sanni](#), former Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Development), Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria.

The BASICS project was first launched in November 2015 to serve as a channel for delivering better quality and more productive cassava varieties to farmers. Thus, leading to improved productivity and food security, increasing the income of cassava farmers and village seed entrepreneurs as a result. Building on this solid foundation, the second phase of the project will focus on Nigeria and Tanzania and replicate the cassava seed system model to other African countries.

In his opening remarks, [Kenton Dashiell](#), IITA Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery, said that in the second phase of the project, BASICS is looking to create a value chain for cassava planting materials where everyone will make an income. "It is all about business," he said.

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Left: DG Nteranya Sanginga talking about the transition of the BASICS project from phase I to II. Right: BASICS II Manager, Lateef Oladimeji Sanni outlining the agenda for the second phase of the project.

## Integrated Agriculture Activity trains trainers on climate-smart and improved agricultural practices in North-Eastern Nigeria

As part of its mandate to facilitate improved agro-input and extension advisory services to serve vulnerable populations, the USAID-funded Integrated Agriculture Activity project

under Feed the Future Nigeria recently conducted a training of trainers (ToT) for selected participants from Adamawa and Borno States. The training focused on climate-smart and improved

agricultural practices, with trainees drawn from Agricultural Development Programs (ADPs) Extension Agents, their supervisors and desk officers, and some agro-input dealers from both states.



Participants at an Adamawa training session.

The training took place between 18 May and 4 June in four different locations (Yola and Gombi in Adamawa State; and Kwaya Kusar and Biu in Borno State). Multiple locations were chosen to have fewer participants per training, in compliance with the physical and social distancing and other precautionary guidelines issued by WHO and the Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC) against the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

The training aimed to update the participants' knowledge of Improved Crop Production and Climate-Smart Agricultural Practices, use of new technologies, and step-down training methodologies. It was also intended to familiarize them with improved varieties of crops for each ecological zone, recommended pesticides in the Activity's Safer Use Action Plan (SUAP),

and a better understanding of their roles on the activity.

IITA Senior Systems Agronomist Nkeki Kamai and his team led the sessions with support from ICRISAT (International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics) agronomists. They trained participants on good agricultural practices (GAP) on these seven intervention crops of the Activity (maize, sorghum, rice, cowpea, millet, groundnut, and soybean), including planting period, variety selection, fertilizer requirements and method of application, pests and diseases, weed management using both manual methods and herbicides, use of harvesting methods for both fresh consumption and grains with best storage practices, and marketing to get good value for produce. Other training focuses included the use of Aflasafe on maize/groundnut and Nodumax on

soybean, effects of striga and how to control it, using both resistant varieties and cultural practices.

Participants had the opportunity to ask questions. They also received instructions on how to step down the training to the smallholder farmers who registered with the Activity in the 12 implementing LGAs in the two states.

At the end of the training, participants expressed satisfaction with the exercise, which introduced them to new technologies and improved practices.

In Adamawa State, 56 participants (43 male and 13 female) and two representatives of one of the two off-takers, Green Eagles Agribusiness Solutions Limited, attended the training while 50 participants (44 male and 6 female) participated in Borno State.



Tukur Abdulazeez of ICRISAT training participants on GAP in Sorghum at Kwaya Kusar, Borno State.

## Take responsibility! Stop the spread of COVID-19!

Wash your hands regularly with soap and water; practice physical and social distancing; wear face masks; avoid crowds and public places; keep a 2-meter distance from the next person; practice general sanitation and hygiene.

### 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.agma@cgiar.org](mailto:u.agma@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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Commending [Hemant Nitturkar](#), Project Manager for BASICS I, and welcoming the manager for BASICS II, IITA Director General, [Nteranya Sanginga](#) said that the project transitioned well from phase one to two. "I have seen a lot of 'revolution' in the cassava system for these past five years through this project. The proof of the concept is that what we do in these two countries can extend to other countries. Thanks to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for giving us the opportunity and for the support to Africa," he said.

Participating virtually, Lawrence Kent, Senior Program Officer from the Gates Foundation, also expressed his satisfaction with the progress of the project. He said, "I am excited about the achievements of phase 1 and look forward to seeing phase 2 take it further."

Laurence Good, Senior Program Officer from the Gates Foundation, reminded the project implementers to look at the end

point—what would be different for farmers as a result of the project, e.g., in the area of improved seeds, best varieties and quality, strong businesses, engagement in the value chain, establishment of competitive seed entrepreneurs or foundation seed growers.

Dorothy Nyambi, President and CEO of the Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) in Canada, echoing DG Sanginga, pointed to the importance of scaling—taking the work to other countries and leveraging on private sector solutions. She applauded the strong message of collaboration, sustainability, commercialization, and scale forwarded by various partners.

Martine Fregene, Director, Department of Agriculture and Agro-Industry of the African Development Bank, said there is still a "huge room for improvement in cassava production... and the project needs to ensure that farmers have access to healthy stems."

In his goodwill message, [Dr Dara Akala](#), Executive Director of Foundation for Partnership in the Niger Delta (PIND), indicated the commitment of PIND in partnering with IITA on the project since both institutes have cassava as one of their priority crops. "The partnership will focus on scaling and sustaining the seed system in the Niger Delta region," he said.

Giving the keynote address, Honorable Minister [Alhaji Sabo Nanono](#) of the Federal Ministry Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) of Nigeria, stated that the government would continue to support the BASICS project by providing all resources needed for its execution.

"The work has just begun, and it started on a good note," said Ezinne Ibe, Project Administrator and Administrative Support for Partnerships for Delivery at IITA, while wrapping up the launch program.



COVID-19-related restrictions meant only a few participants were present at the IITA conference center.

## IITA uses digital tools to improve delivery of research products and knowledge

Digital communication is the present. That is why IITA is continuously working to improve its digital delivery system for increased impact. In the last decade, ICTs have emerged as frontline tools for transforming agricultural systems in sub-Saharan Africa. The present COVID-19 pandemic has made it necessary for the government and non-governmental agencies in Africa to adopt digital technologies for the smooth delivery of knowledge and services to end-users.

IITA is using over 50 ICT applications (apps), mostly developed in-house and with various partners for research and data management, agritech requirements, delivery, knowledge



One of the workshops, introducing IITA-developed digital tools to extension workers, media and collaborators.

sharing, marketing, and other uses. The Institute had organized two interproject workshops at the end of 2019, to showcase these digital knowledge platforms but also to harmonize ICTs and state extension services for better delivery.

The first workshop brought together IITA teams and collaborators to highlight various apps developed in IITA, while the second introduced IITA-developed digital tools to extension workers, the media, and collaborators working in the same digital space offering agricultural solutions. The workshops showcased the

various ICTs in use at different levels of the agricultural value chain.

Recently, the Institute set up an institute-wide working group to bridge various interest groups and harmonize work on digital delivery and realize objectives for greater efficiency and impact. Development of apps and digital tools is now being coordinated and harmonized across the Institute.

This coordinated approach will enable IITA to serve its beneficiaries better through co-creation, and faster and more efficient knowledge sharing to

help transform agricultural systems in sub-Saharan Africa.

Knowledge and product sharing for adoption by end-users are critical in achieving research and development outcomes. Together, they present opportunities for collaboration and resource mobilization, especially with the current challenges of limited mobility and physical distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Streamlining the development of apps and creating a community of interested practitioners provide IITA with an opportunity to lead in product delivery in Africa.

## Package delivered to fight COVID-19 crisis in South-Kivu

As part of its social responsibility activities, [CGIAR-IITA](#), in collaboration with the Catholic University of Bukavu (UCB), delivered donations to South Kivu administrative division in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to combat the effects of the coronavirus pandemic in the country. The relief package, delivered on 23 June, is part of a short and long-term action plan to assist the provincial government of South Kivu during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

This first batch of relief materials included mattresses for medical use to facilitate the extension and creation of a new reception center for persons infected with COVID-19. Also among items supplied were bags of rice and beans, oil, and protective masks, for

people affected by COVID-19 in South Kivu.

During the handover ceremony, IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) highlighted IITA's framework of corporate social responsibility as the foundation for this action. He said it also constitutes an opportunity for the Institute and its partners, such as UCB, to demonstrate their capacity to support the Congolese government in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic and its associated food security risks. The Governor of South Kivu, His Excellency Mr Theo Ngwabidje Kasi, received the donations from IITA Scientist Kokou Kintche.

Governor Kasi thanked IITA for its support to the province. He noted that while

IITA is a long-term partner of the DRC government, the Institute is increasingly becoming the strategic partner for South Kivu development. The Governor cited as an example the fish project funded by the DRC government, which IITA is co-implementing with Fond pour la Promotion Industrielle (FPI).

In the coming days, IITA will commence the distribution of a second batch of materials, which will consist of 500 rapid test kits and 3000 swabs (secretion collection tools). The rapid test kits will be handed over to UCB and the General Hospital, while the swabs will be given to the provincial ministry of public health to facilitate use of polymerase chain reaction (PCR), a method or tool for diagnosing viral diseases.



The IITA team, led by Dr Kokou Kintche, IITA DRC, with Governor Theo Ngwabidje Kasi at the South Kivu governor's office.

# Validating results of coffee and vanilla baseline survey in Uganda

Early this year, 25 participants from the local government, civil society, private sector, research, and the NGO community came together in Kampala, Uganda, to validate the results of a baseline survey conducted on coffee and vanilla diversified systems in Central and South Western Uganda.

IITA conducted the study in collaboration with [Catholic Relief Services](#) (CSR), supported by [Sustainable Food Lab](#) (SFL).

All the participants contributed to the study, which explored effective approaches for resilient coffee and vanilla farming systems in Uganda. The study aimed at promoting multi-commodity and food crop diversification of smallholder farmers. It covered existing coffee and vanilla farming systems in two districts of Buikwe, Central Uganda, and Kasese, South Western Uganda. It also explored elements of climate change effects on the cropping systems, climate-smart agriculture practices applied by farmers, and challenges faced by farmers in crop diversification. Analysis of data collected informed a set of recommendations that were validated by the workshop participants.

One significant finding of the study is limited up-to-date knowledge or information on diversification methodologies among farmers and

stakeholders. This lack of knowledge and information, according to the participants, can be remedied by conducting further research and disseminating results quickly and in easily accessible formats.

The three recommendations given are to:

1. Conduct a cost-benefit analysis and living income study to assess the value of coffee and vanilla diversification for smallholder farmers;
2. Explore the use of fertilizers and their potential effect on organic vanilla production;
3. Explore organic or natural methods of crop disease and pest control.

The full report can be accessed here: <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/108596>.

The workshop included a keynote presentation and plenary sessions that discussed the findings and validated the recommendations. Participants obtained insights on emerging issues such as the need to identify diversified incomes on and

off-farm and their contribution towards the living income of each household. Participants also agreed to the need to explore new alliances for food security.

The study concluded that crop diversification is an effective strategy to deal with climate variability in which farmers increase the range of potential food and cash crops amid climate change. This diversification spreads production and income risks over a broader range of crops, thus reducing livelihood vulnerability to weather and market shocks. Therefore, in diversification, it is vital to look at other income-generating enterprises accessible to a household such as crops in the intercrop, off-farm activities such as commercial motorcycle also known as boda-boda riding, businesses, and selling of labor as a collective term to improve the living income of households in farming communities. In doing this, the different actors, including development partners, government, private sector partners, cooperatives, farmer groups, and NGOs need to consolidate efforts to improve farm household livelihoods.

The workshop recommendations have been shared with private sector partners globally to facilitate investment in coffee and vanilla diversified farming systems in Uganda.

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IITA-Uganda Field Technician inspects a vanilla plant in a coffee, vanilla, banana diversified farm during a field study.