

Africa Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) special edition

AGRF 2020 highlights Africa's internal \$250 billion agricultural trade opportunity

In its 10th anniversary summit, the recent [African Green Revolution Forum \(AGRF\) 2020](#), which took place in Kigali, Rwanda, focused on Africa's rapidly expanding cities and food markets. Multiple speakers talked about the current African city markets that represent a US\$250 billion opportunity, a value five times bigger than our present export markets.



Dr Agnes Kalibata, President of Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), giving the opening remarks.

A video montage at the start of the opening ceremony posed a question to the forum: "How do we feed our cities with nutritious diets, with an ever-growing number of consumers, diversity of incomes, diversity in diets, and therefore diversity in demand for food?"

With the theme "Feed the cities, grow the continent," the conference highlighted the need for a significant transformation in Africa's food systems to achieve the continental goals laid out in the Malabo Declaration and

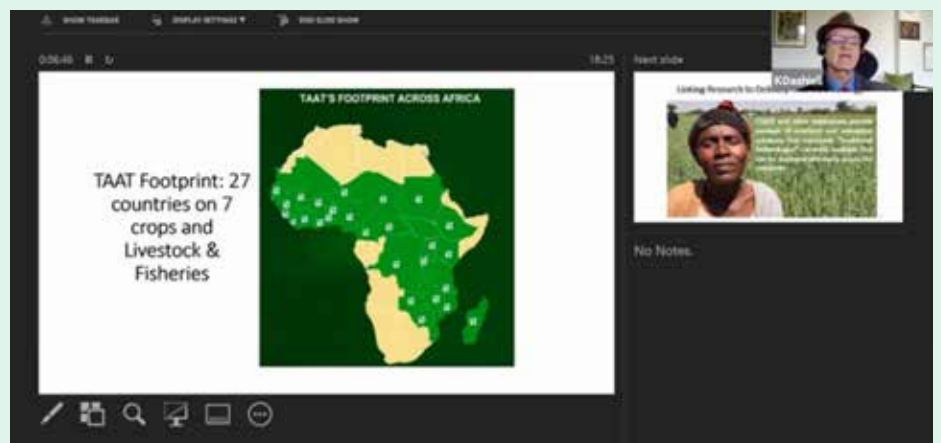
the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. With the rapidly expanding urban population set to reach a billion people by 2040, achieving this transformation is now a matter of urgency.

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TAAT @ AGRF2020: To feed the cities, Africa must close the yield gap, experts say

With the rains growing heavier, oceans rising and rural inhabitants migrating to cities on an unprecedented scale, leaving African cities under dual pressure from uncontrolled urbanization and hunger worsened by climate change, experts have identified closing the yield gap as a way out.

This came out strongly at the just concluded [African Green Revolution Forum's \(AGRF\) pre-session on "Agricultural technologies to feed the cities."](#)



Dr Kenton Dashiell highlighting TAAT's role in transforming Africa's agriculture.



TAAT panelists for the 2020 AGRF pre-session

Organized by [Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation \(TAAT\)](#), the pre-session was held under the overarching theme of “Feed the Cities, Grow the Continent: Leveraging Urban Food Markets to Achieve Sustainable Food Systems in Africa.”

In his keynote presentation, Dr Martin Fregene, [African Development Bank \(AfDB\)](#) Director of Agriculture and Agro-Industries, underlined that Africa must close the yield gap and build a robust agribusiness sub-sector to sustainably feed its growing population.

Citing maize yield in the United States as an example, Fregene revealed that the USA and Africa have the same amount of land under maize (approximately 350 million ha). However, the USA produces 400 million tons while Africa subsists around 60 million tons. “With this productivity deficiency mirrored across commodities, the consequence is a food import bill of \$50 billion per year for Africa,” Fregene said.

“It is therefore fundamental to close the yield gap through significant investments and deployment of appropriate technologies to transform Africa’s agriculture and meet the Feed Africa objectives,” he added.

Dr [Kenton Dashiell](#), [IITA](#) Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery, highlighted TAAT’s role in leveraging research partners’ technologies to transform Africa’s agriculture through strategic partnerships. He lauded the package of practices and innovative solutions that supersede “traditional technologies” currently being deployed efficiently across the continent by CGIAR and other institutions in the TAAT program.

According to Innocent Musabyimana, Head of the TAAT Clearinghouse, productivity increase stimulates agriculture food systems to bring real change in the agriculture sector. “Robust country coordination and engagement for alignment with national priorities are crucial to feeding African cities,” Musabyimana added.

Other experts at the well-attended AGRF pre-session included Dr Irene Annor-Frempong, Director of Research and Innovations at [Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa \(FARA\)](#), Dr Zewdie Bishaw, TAAT Wheat Compact Coordinator at [International Centre for Agriculture in the Dry Areas \(ICARDA\)](#), and Dr Abass Adebayo, TAAT Cassava Compact Coordinator at IITA. They all linked TAAT’s success stories revolutionizing wheat in Africa, intensifying cassava production and commercialization, and building the capacity of African Farmers through Technology Outreach.

The 2020 AGRF virtual summit, which ended on 11 September, was co-hosted by the Government of Rwanda under the leadership of H.E. President Kagame and the AGRF Partners Group.



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Participants of the AGRF2020 summit.

In her opening remarks, Dr Agnes Kalibata, President of the [Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa](#) (AGRA), acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic had challenged the continent's food systems making it evident changes must be made to strengthen them. Despite being the fastest urbanizing continent, she pointed out some reasons hindering Africa from taking advantage of the opportunity.

"Many of those are lack of what experts call wholesale markets," Kalibata said of the drawbacks. "Lack of those means that farmers don't have predictability of markets. The other thing that experts talked about was the lack of competitiveness of the agricultural sector itself, as well as the lack of competitiveness of agricultural commodities," she continued.

Rwanda's Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources, Dr Gérardine Mukeshimana, in her welcome

address, spoke of the complexity of urban food systems in producing sufficient food for the populace. With the coronavirus crisis happening when hunger on the continent was already rising, Mukeshimana expressed hope that the AGRF summit will develop implementable tools to help feed Africa sustainably.

AGRA Board Chair, His Excellency Hailemariam Desalegn, noted that after 10 years of the AGRF, "the forum is committed to taking its agenda and impact several notches higher," to be able to achieve Africa's food security goals.

"With five years left to achieve the vision and goals laid out in the Malibu Declaration, and 10 years left to achieve the SDGs, AGRF recognizes that it must drive a more international agenda, with more partners, because all of you can understand that we are

only left with five years to achieve zero hunger in Africa," he said.

The AGRF is the foremost forum bringing together stakeholders, including [CGIAR](#) and several multilateral organizations, to take practical actions and share lessons to improve African agriculture. Because of the COVID-19 restrictions, most of the more than 10,400 participants attended the conference virtually, making this year's conference the largest AGRF summit so far.



Dr Gerardine Mukeshimana, Rwanda's Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources, giving the welcome address

Nine CGIAR centers come together to deliver agronomic solutions at scale

During the [African Green Revolution Forum](#) (AGRF) virtual summit, [CGIAR](#) centers, supported by the Big Data Platform, launched the Excellence in Agronomy 2030 (EIA 2030) initiative.

In his opening remarks, Dr Martin Kropff, Director General of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and Co-chair of the One CGIAR Transition Advisory Group, said that CGIAR

is undergoing significant changes. He explained that it is evolving and becoming more united. That it is consolidating all its partnerships, knowledge, and assets, which is an important step in CGIAR's existence.

"Solving hunger is still a core mission of CGIAR, but it must address it in a broader way, including all sustainable development goals (SDGs), to embrace the system transformational approach for food, land,



Bernard Vanlauwe, Director of the Central Africa Hub and Director of the Natural Resources Management Research Team of IITA

Nine CGIAR centers come together to deliver agronomic solutions at scale Continued from page 3

and water systems in delivering access to affordable, sufficient, and healthy diets.

“EiA2030 will play a key role in this. Agronomy to help crop improvement is crucial. The tasks of agriculture have evolved beyond food security. Now they include a broader range of SDGs like sustainable land management, climate change, provision of healthy diets, inclusive economic growth. None of this will be achieved without the widespread adoption of improved and adapted agronomic and agroecological practices. This was the reason why we created the Excellency in Agronomy initiative, aiming at reducing yields gaps for major crops at scale,” noted Kropff.

EiA2030 is proposed as a central channel to bring coherence to CGIAR efforts globally. It will assist millions of smallholder farmers in intensifying their production systems while preserving key ecosystem services under the threat of climate change. This initiative, co-created with various scaling partners, represents the collective resolve of CGIAR’s agronomy programs to transform the world’s food systems through demand- and data-driven agronomy research for development.

EiA 2030 will combine big data analytics, new sensing technologies, geospatial decision tools, and farming systems research to improve spatially explicit agronomic recommendations in response to demand from scaling partners. Our science will integrate the principles of Sustainable Intensification and be informed by climate change considerations, behavioral economics, and scaling pathways at the national and regional levels.

“EiA 2030 will use agronomy as an entry point addressing key challenges of our time: productivity in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, sustainability, and climate change. EiA will also cooperate directly with the Gender platform to generate evidence on how gender interacts with agronomy services,” said Bernard Vanlauwe, Director of the Central Africa Hub and leader of the Natural Resource Management Research team at IITA. He also leads the team from CGIAR, and the private sector and public sectors in getting EiA 2030 going.

The EiA2030 incubation phase started in August 2020 and will last 24 months. This

phase will demonstrate the added value of demand-driven R&D, supported by novel data and analytics and increased cooperation between centers in support of a One CGIAR agronomy initiative aiming at the sustainable intensification of farming systems. During the incubation phase, alignment of EiA 2030 with the One CGIAR reform process is expected to identify the optimal housing of EiA 2030 in relation to the overall research agenda, while respecting the bottom-up nature of the initiative and its decision-making processes.

CGIAR centers involved in the EiA 2030 initiative are [AfricaRice](#), the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), International Potato Center (CIP), International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF), International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), IITA, and International Rice Research Institute (IRRI). The official launch took place during a pre-AGRF session on 7 September.

Youth empowerment key to African agricultural transformation

“Investing in young people is never a waste,” and to achieve the required agricultural transformation on the continent, Africa’s youth must be empowered and mentored. Training Coordinator of Young Africa Works-[IITA](#), [Evelyn Ohanwusi](#), asserted

this at the [Generation Africa](#) panel, which took place on 9 September during the AGRF in Kigali, Rwanda.

Ohanwusi joined other panelists to discuss how to strengthen the young African agripreneur ecosystem. “Young

agripreneurs across the continent are recognizing untapped opportunities in the agri-food sector, yet ideally, they would be fostered by a supportive ecosystem to progress faster,” said panel anchor Fredrick Swaniker, CEO of African Leadership Academy.



Panelists at the Africa Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) 2020

The panelists spoke of ways to strengthen national ecosystems to support young entrepreneurs to drive inclusive growth in the agri-food sector. They discussed possible measures to unlock the potential, creativity, and imagination of African youth agripreneurs.

Another panel anchor, Syngenta Foundation Executive Director, Dr Simon Winter, noted that past initiatives were not adequately coordinated, with many of them designed to attract high net worth individuals, “but not to support young people from low income, vulnerable rural communities who also could be trusted to transform their regions and grow large businesses in the future.”

Ohanwusi and Bonolo Monthe, Managing Director of Maungo Craft, which won the 2019 GoGettaz Prize, highlighted multiple areas in which

young agripreneurs require support to thrive, including shared spaces and incubation hubs, distribution channels and access to markets, and access to funding.

Monthe spoke of the need to form alliances with distributors willing to work with agripreneurs starting small operations.

“The funding mechanism is extremely important. We can have an excellent training program; we can have excellent business plans; if there are no funds or access to finance or credit, there will be no entrepreneurs. There will be no agripreneurs. There would be no business, and there will be no startups,” Ohanwusi concluded.

Other panelists were Sharon Cromer, USAID Mission Director in Ghana; Dr Kanayo Nwanze, CEO of FAYODE, Nigeria; Dana Bolden,



Evelyn Ohanwusi, Training Coordinator of Young Africa Works-IITA

Chief Communications Officer, Corteva Agriscience; Anne Maria Makhulo, Chief of International Cooperation AGRA; and Edson Mpyisi, Chief Financial Economist and Coordinator, ENABLE Youth, African Development Bank.

Generation Africa is a collaborative network of more than 40 organizations with a vision to strengthen the ecosystem for youth agripreneurs across Africa.

DG Sanginga’s tenure extended to ensure stability

The [CGIAR-IITA](#) Board of Trustees (BoT) has announced a one-year extension for Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#)’s leadership tenure. Board Chair, Dr [Christian Borgemeister](#), disclosed this to the Institute’s staff in a video address, where he explained the rationale for the decision to have the DG stay until November 2022.



Dr Nteranya Sanginga, IITA Director General

“Our reasoning as the IITA Board was that this would assure stability for the center during a period of unprecedented uncertainty because of the current COVID-19 pandemic as well as the transformation of the CGIAR to the One CGIAR,” Borgemeister said.

“We know that it would have been far too risky for the center to experience a transition in leadership during such a moment of volatility and a health crisis, and we strongly believe that this extension will assure a much smoother succession to new leadership,” he continued.

Echoing those sentiments, members of the IITA Senior Staff Association welcomed the new development. In an earlier meeting with the former Board Chair, Dr Amos NamangaNgongi, some staff also spoke of the possibility of an extension of DG Sanginga’s

contract because they believed he had been good for the Institute.

During his tenure, Sanginga has overseen the large-scale delivery of research solutions to end-users, through partnerships with both public and private sector actors. He has also championed youth empowerment through agriculture, setting up the IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA) and the Start Them Early Program (STEP) to teach young Africans about agricultural value chains from a “foundational” age.

Singinga has accepted the extension offer and plans to build new initiatives on the foundation of the successes already achieved. “Obviously, Dr Sanginga will need your continued support to successfully steer our center through this very difficult time. And we on the board are absolutely convinced that this will happen,” Borgemeister concluded.

Take responsibility! Stop the spread of COVID-19!

Always clean your hands; 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.