

2019 Annual Board Awards recipients named

The 2019 Annual Board Awards for Excellence was held virtually on 12 November 2020 after the Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga's townhall meeting with staff.

The annual Awards aims to recognize and reward the outstanding achievements of deserving individuals and teams working in IITA. The awards also aim to provide incentives to staff and motivate them to excel at work. Awards were given for Outstanding Scientist, Outstanding Support/Specialist Staff, Most Promising Young Scientist, Outstanding Publication, and Outstanding Team.

Outstanding Scientist

The objective is to recognize the outstanding scientific impact of an IITA scientist. The award may be based on a single achievement in 2019 or an accumulation of outputs over a period.

The award for Outstanding Scientist was presented to Dr Alpha Kamara (Savannah Systems Agronomist) of IITA-Kano, Nigeria.

Alpha Kamara was recognized as an experienced systems agronomist with an outstanding record of achievements in the savanna agroecologies of West Africa, especially Nigeria. He has had a consistently high performance over the years—rated as outstanding in PAR over the past 4 years (2016–2019). He has an excellent publication record—11 articles in Thomson journals in 2019, 8 in 2018, 11 in 2017, and 4 in 2016. He has an excellent record in capacity building—consistent in the supervision of several postgraduate students and organizing group training events with partners each year.



He has a very good record in resource mobilization and is active in collaborating with other scientists in this effort. He contributed to raising funds over \$10 million in 2019. He has a good record as station manager/representative with excellent connections with senior government officials in a volatile area of Nigeria. Under his leadership, Kano station has grown into a very strong multidisciplinary center making a significant contribution to agriculture in the savannas of West Africa.

Outstanding support/ specialist staff

The objective is to recognize outstanding service by a member of the support/ specialist staff in achieving IITA's goals. The award will be based on performance and delivery on workplans, dedication to IITA's goals, respect of fellow staff members, customer orientation, consideration of others, and integrity.

The award for Outstanding Support/ Specialist Staff was presented to Ms. Edda Mushi, a Research Supervisor of IITA-Tanzania.

Edda Mushi was nominated for the Outstanding Support Staff award for her exemplary work service to IITA's East Africa Cassava Breeding Program. She is enormously respected for her dedication. She has been described to be very intelligent, dependable, efficient, and very trustworthy. She has always delivered beyond what is required of her. Her willingness to take on heavy workloads is almost legendary. The breeding program in Tanzania has only two NRS staff: herself and a colleague,



who is a Field Technician. They carry out all the breeding activities from making hand pollinations, field trial design and establishment to taking data. She also goes a step further and does the data analysis and writes good reports.

She is very proactive at finding solutions to work challenges. For instance, she has learned from colleagues' molecular diagnostic techniques and she is now almost an expert who can be relied upon, thus getting lab results quickly because the molecular diagnostic experts have a heavy workload. Edda's skills do not end with her field and office work. She also projects a warm, cheerful attitude to her colleagues. She easily and cheerfully works with other staff of all categories and programs. Her respectful ways and her teamwork have ensured that she gets things done with collaborators both within and outside IITA.

Most promising young scientist

The objective is to recognize a young scientist who has shown great potential in his/her field of expertise; is receptive to all learning opportunities, and already making a significant contribution to IITA's research agenda.

The award was presented to (also the winner last year) Alejandro Ortega-Beltran (Plant Pathologist) of IITA-Ibadan, Nigeria

Alejandro has been able to turn around scientific paper publishing within the short time that he joined IITA. He is innovative, as reflected in the development of Aflasafe dry inoculum, which was his idea. The concept has



been applied in a few countries as it is proven to have enhanced speedy production and convenience in shipment. He is an inspiration to young, science-oriented people in the Institute.

Outstanding Publication

The objective of the award is to recognize an IITA publication in the previous year, which has the potential for significant impact. Only peer-reviewed and published articles were considered, and the selected publications came from different thematic areas. The committee then rated the consolidated list of the top



publications from the Hubs as submitted by the Hub Directors.

The award was presented to the publication titled *Promoting the use of locally produced crops in making cereal-legume-based composite flours: an assessment of nutrient, antinutrient, mineral molar ratios, and aflatoxin content* published in Food Chemistry. 286, 2019. 651–658. (ISSN: 0308-8146) by Pat Udomkun, C. Tirawattanawanich, J. Ilukor, P. Sridonpai, E. Njukwe, P. Nimbona, and B. Vanlauwe.

Outstanding Team

The objective is to recognize the contributions of an outstanding IITA team. The nominations were evaluated based on impact or potential impact on IITA's audience. The award may be based on a single significant achievement or on achievements over a period.

The award for Outstanding Team was presented to IITA's KPI Team on Poverty with Victor Manyong, Alene Arega, Shiferaw Feleke, Tahirou Abdoulaye, Tesfamichael Wossen, Julius Manda, Paul Dontsop, Djana Mignouna, Adane Tufa, and all their research associates and technicians.

The team was assigned the responsibility of tracking progress in achieving IITA's commitment to lift 11 million people out of poverty by 2020. The team took on this difficult assignment as a research opportunity and saw it to successful completion.

The team mobilized both the required financial and human resources for conducting studies and identified broadly adopted technologies with significant potential impact on poverty reduction. The team applied innovative tools and approaches, including DNA fingerprinting for accurate identification of crop varieties in farmers' fields, GPS-based area measurements, and combined use of household and market data to track the KPI. The quality data were subjected to rigorous econometric and partial equilibrium analyses resulting in the successful documentation of the KPI.

These efforts led to more than 10 high quality published articles documenting the impact of IITA's work on poverty reduction in Africa in the Journal of Agricultural Economics, World Development, and Food Policy and 20 presentations in diverse fora.



Long Service Award: IITA celebrates staff



In keeping with COVID-19 protocol, IITA held a virtual Long Service Award ceremony to appreciate the hard work and contributions of staff to the Institute's work over the years. The 2020 Long Service Award ceremony was held in two separate sessions on 26 November 2020. The morning session featured awardees in the 10-year category while awardees in 20- and 30-year categories had their turn

during the afternoon session. Twenty-eight staff received awards in the 10-year category, while the 20- and 30-year categories featured 15 and 10 awardees, respectively. Five staff of IITA stations outside Nigeria were also recognized for their dedicated service to the Institute. The 2020 Long Service Award Ceremony was unique.

Guests included Hilde Koper–DDG–Corporate Services, who represented the

Director General; Sholola Shalewa, former Director of Finance (DOF); Dennis Mulenga, DOF; Ken Dashiell–DDG, Partnerships for Delivery; Michael Abberton–R4D Director, West Africa; Lilian Mendoza, Head of HR; and Lade Oke–HR Manager, among others.

To view photos, click <https://www.flickr.com/photos/iita-media-library/albums/72157717337556391>.



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