

NAQS honors IITA with “Service Support Award” for phytosanitary capacity development

A long-time collaborator and partner, the Nigerian Agricultural Quarantine Services (NAQS), honored [IITA](#) with the “Service Support Award” for excellent support and collaboration towards the achievements of its mandate. The plaque was given during the passing out ceremony of new NAQS staff on 16 April 2021, at the Regional Post Entry and Diagnostics Centre, Moor Plantation, Ibadan. Dr Vincent Isegbe, NAQS Director General, gave the award in the presence of the Head of Post-entry Plant Quarantine Station, Mr Akindele Ogunfunmilayo, and the NAQS management team. [to page 3](#)



DG Sanginga celebrating the award with Koper-Limbourg, Abberton, Dashiell, and Kumar.

ENABLE-TAAT Open Day: Reaching out to youth and farmers in Awe

The youth-in-agribusiness compact of [Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation \(TAAT\)](#) organized an Open Day for youth and farmers on 27 April. The event took place at Oyo state-IITA Youth Agribusiness Incubation Park Center (Agri-Park), Awe.



Former beneficiaries of ENABLE-TAAT showcasing their product.

The youth compact, also known as [ENABLE-TAAT](#), presented modern agricultural technologies to participants through an exhibition of various agricultural value chains and a tour of the park.

Giving the welcome address, [Chrys Akem](#), Coordinator of TAAT Program Management Unit, stated that the event was sponsored by TAAT, a project funded by the African Development Bank (AFDB) to demonstrate the technologies that have been developed and up-scaled throughout Africa. The project is meant to reach out to the community and demonstrate some available technologies to improve the livelihoods and well-being of the people. "The park is meant to train youth in various aspects of agriculture so that they can create businesses for themselves," he said.

One key objective of ENABLE-TAAT is to operate technology and innovation centers

for young people on specific commodity value chains through a mechanism called "Food Basket Outreach." The Open Day provided an opportunity for farmers of all ages, youth in agribusiness, partner groups, organizations, agricultural experts, and mentors to rub minds on new technologies that can aid the farming system and agribusiness.

Representing Fausat Fadekemi Akande, Secretary to the Oyo State Agribusiness Development Agency (OYSADA), Adewale Babatunde gave the opening address. Following the address, former beneficiaries of ENABLE-TAAT shared testimonies about the program's effectiveness, their journey into agribusiness, and the number of youth they have employed. Seun Ogidan, CEO of F-STEP Cassava, which is into stem multiplication and production, emphasized how her business has grown from 1 hectare of cassava to 15 hectares. "I have 10 permanent staff and other casual staff," she said.

On behalf of Oba Cornelius Abiola Taiwo, the Alaawe of Awe, Chief Apostle Samuel Taiwo Oladipo gave a remark for the Awe Kingship-in-Council. He appreciated the OYSG for the opportunity to have the park at Awe and mentioned that IITA is helping Awe transform into a more orderly community. "With this program, things are taking shape and we know that agribusiness will become a reality here," he said.

A representative from Sterling Bank spoke about the availability of credit facilities for agribusiness enterprises. She mentioned that the bank is partnering with IITA to provide various loan packs for funding agribusinesses. In the closing remarks, Bernadette Fregene, Compact Leader for Sustainable Agriculture, WorldFish, said, "We encourage youth to get in touch with the Awe center and be trained on agricultural production and processing." ENABLE-TAAT Communication Officer Dolapo Ogunsola closed out the event with a vote of thanks.



*Top: ENABLE-TAAT team with IITA Women's group, Awe Kingship-in-Council members and Former beneficiaries.
Bottom: Cassava field at the Awe Park Center.*

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This recognition highlights the work of the Germplasm Health and Virology Units of IITA, headed by [Lava Kumar](#), which have made IITA proud through the “outstanding services and contributions to phytosanitary capacity development and biosecurity procedures that ensure safe transfers of plant germplasm between Nigeria and other countries around the world.”

NAQS is a regulatory agency under Nigeria’s Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), responsible for implementing phytosanitary (plant health) measures to control the introduction and spread of foreign pests and pathogens, which can pose a severe risk to the agricultural economy, food safety, and the environment. NAQS and IITA’s Germplasm Health Unit (GHU) have been collaborating on preventing and combating emerging plant pests and pathogens, such as banana bunchy top, through the development of surveillance and diagnostic capacity.

In a ceremony to present the Service Support Award to IITA Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#), Kumar said IITA had maintained partnerships with NAQS to ensure prompt import and export of its planting materials. Apart from the Unit’s contribution to the training of recruits at the Regional Post

Entry and Diagnostic Center, IITA also contributed to improving its diagnostics and surveillance capacity. He added that the institutional partnership between IITA and NAQS has been mutually successful.

[Michael Abberton](#), Director, R4D West Africa, commended Kumar’s efforts in leading a successful team and fostering partnerships in the larger CGIAR, saying that “the award is well deserved.” He said Kumar (who leads the GHU platform in CGIAR) has played a key role in strengthening GHUs’ capacity and enabling the linkages between the GHUs across CGIAR as part of the CGIAR Genebank Platform.”

[Alfred Dixon](#), Director, Development and Delivery, commended the solid working relationships and collaboration among GHU, the Genetic Resource Center, and NAQS, saying, “Without this collaboration, the work of breeders like me would not be successful, as clean germplasm are needed to develop new, improved varieties. We also need them to introduce our varieties to various countries across sub-Saharan Africa.”

The IITA DG gladly welcomed the award and congratulated the GHU team for their meritorious services. He said, “In the wake of the daily challenges

the Institute has to overcome and in proffering solutions to agricultural problems, the giving of this award is very welcome. It is the best news coming in this year.” DG Sanginga added that the award helps not just the unit but the whole institution. The honor of being recognized by an important institution and a key partner such as NAQS speaks volumes about the impact of IITA. He thanked the NAQS DG and management for the excellent collaboration.

[Kenton Dashiell](#), Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Development; Hilde Koper, Deputy Director General, Corporate Services; and Sylvia Oyinlola, Head Administration, West Africa Hub, lauded the excellent work of the GHU team in fostering institutional partnerships, which are key drivers in delivering agricultural solutions and sustainable development. They also praised Kumar for being a good leader and training an excellent team.

In his vote of thanks, Kumar attributed the Unit’s success to having a great team and a very supportive Management, adding that the collaboration and support received from the NAQS team is an important driver in their success. He profusely thanked the management teams of IITA and NAQS for the trust, support, and collaboration.



Group of IITA celebrating the awards.

IITA Director General in return visit to Baale of Araromi

The Baale of Araromi Idi-Ose, Chief Rahman Adebayo Sakariyau, chiefs, and members of Idi-Ose land—the host community of [IITA](#)—welcomed IITA’s Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#), Deputy Director General Corporate Services [Hilde Koper](#), and other management staff, as they paid a return visit to the Baale, and his community.

In his welcome remarks, Chief (Engr.) O.W.A. Ajagbe, one of the kingmakers, thanked the DG and his team for returning the visit. He appreciated the genuine interest and acceptance of the hand of friendship the community extended to the Institute after 50 years of IITA’s existence in their land, Idi-Ose. He said the community looks forward to a smooth and more committed relationship with IITA.

The Baale paid a courtesy visit to IITA’s DG on 15 April 2021, along with nine

representatives from Idi-Ose land, one of the Institute’s host communities, to acknowledge the Institute’s contributions and support to the community. At that meeting, the Baale conferred a chieftaincy title of “Bobajiroro of Idi-Ose land” on the DG to show the community’s appreciation and gratitude to IITA. He also requested IITA’s help in doing more for the community by providing a public health center, public toilets, regrading of their roads, IITA shopping plaza, employment for indigenes, and water points.

Sanginga, in response to the requests, proposed that a meeting with the Baale and his chiefs be scheduled for another time to enable IITA management to carry out a needs assessment to decide on IITA’s further contributions to the community.

During deliberations at the meeting, Hilde Koper, who went over the list of requests by the community, said IITA management added ‘solar power supply’ to the list after its team carried out some needs assessment in the community. She also emphasized that some requests like ‘IITA shopping plaza’ were replaced with ‘a training center’ for the community.

Sanginga explained that the needs are long-term projects and have to be prioritized by the community while the Institute helps in the execution one at a time.

Closing out the meeting, DG Sanginga presented his letter accepting the chieftaincy title by the Baale, after which he was presented with the Yoruba traditional beads for his neck and wrist as a sign of his new status as the “Bobajiroro of Idi-Ose land”. The Baale also announced the conferment of “Iya Bobajiroro of Idi-Ose land” on the wife of the DG, Charlotte Sanginga.

Resource Mobilization, Protocol and External Liaison Manager Toyin Oke, made closing remarks on behalf of the IITA team, including the Head of Security David Oluwadare, FMS Head Waheed Quader, Deputy Head Femi Akeredolu, and Heavy Equipment/Fabrication Services Office Head Buraimoh Bamidele. She thanked the Baale and members of the Idi-Ose community for their warm reception and interest in IITA.

The IITA team was given a tour of the proposed site for some projects by the Baale, chiefs, and community members present at the event.



Top: DG receiving his chieftaincy beads. Bottom: A tour of the proposed site for some of the projects.

SEFAN/SWEAN stakeholders develop empowerment strategies for women in agribusiness

The Support to Women Entrepreneurship in the Agri-food Sector in Nigeria (SEFAN/SWEAN) project hosted a writeshop for stakeholders from several institutions to brainstorm practical training solutions to empower women in agribusiness in Kaduna and Oyo states from May 2021. The training is in line with the fulfillment of the project's mandate over the next 16 months.

Stakeholders from Federal Institute of Industrial Research (Oshodi), Nigerian Stored Product Research Institute (NSPRI), Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON), Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC), National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), and IITA came together in the two-day writeshop organized by the SEFAN/SWEAN project in collaboration with IITA on 27 and 28 April. They identified key messages and strategic support to pass on to women in the agrifood sector to empower them in their food production, processing, and business ventures.

The project is in partnership with Oyo and Kaduna State Government Development Programmes and is

funded by the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs in Nigeria. The project manager, [Zainatou Sore](#), said, "The project targets women entrepreneurs from often marginalized groups who are involved in different sectors of the agricultural value chain from farm to table." [Prof. Lateef Sanni](#), a Professor of Food Science and Technology and Project Manager of the BASICS-II project in IITA, moderated the writeshop, interactively engaging and getting contributions from the participants. He said the training manual to be developed at the end of the writeshop would cover the specific sectors women in agribusiness had requested training on. Presenters from the different institutions brought out developmental issues in the areas requested by the women in the agrifood sector, notably: food processing and fortification, branding and packaging,

regulation and certification, standards, market and export opportunities, leadership, team building, and financial management that would help the women advance and become successful in their agribusiness ventures.

In May, the first set of women would be trained in two locations in Ibadan by experts in the various fields highlighted. Collaboration with cooperatives was also suggested to be incorporated into the deliverables for the women to enable them to access loans and other cooperative benefits to drive their business successfully.

[Kenton Dashiell](#), IITA's Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery, was present briefly to get feedback on the role IITA has played in developing agriculture and what IITA should do better. He appreciated the participants for their involvement and contributions to the empowerment of women in agriculture.

The Oyo State Permanent Secretary, Mrs Bolatumi Oloko, who was present on both days, expressed her enthusiasm and positive support for the project's success and expansion. She said in her closing remarks that the content of the training being prepared for the small and medium-scale women agripreneurs is rich.



Participants in brainstorming session at the write-shop.

Improving human health with plant extracts

Healthy eating starts with healthy food choices, improving health, and preventing malnutrition and a range of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and health conditions.



Banana plant showing the leaves that is used for traditional medicine.

However, increased production of processed foods, rapid urbanization, and changing lifestyles have led to a shift in dietary patterns. Also, the exact make-up of a diversified, balanced, and healthy diet varies depending on individual characteristics, cultural context, locally available foods, and dietary customs.

Banana - *Musa* species, one of the first staple food sources in the tropics, is

valued globally for its flavor, nutritional value, and availability year-round. [Studies](#) have shown that several parts of the banana plant, such as the leaf, pseudostem, flowers, fruit, and peel, have been used in traditional medicine in Asia and Africa for centuries. Traditionally, the stem juice, flowers, and fruit are commonly used to treat diarrhea, dysentery, ulcer, and apthae in children.

While banana increases the production of hemoglobin in the blood and reduces the cause of anemia due to its high iron content, almost every part of the plant has curative purposes both scientifically and traditionally. Scientifically, a fully ripe banana consists of antifungal and antibiotic properties present in the peel and pulp.

A group of scientists led by [KU Leuven](#), and including IITA's [Rony Swennen](#), a banana breeder, examined the microbial activity of the different parts of selected banana cultivars against food-borne clinically important human pathogens, including *Candida albicans*.

The study used three parts of different banana cultivars—the corm, pseudostem, and leaves to test antimicrobial properties. The study revealed genetically closely related banana cultivars with genome ABB have better antimicrobial properties against food-borne and clinically important pathogens, with antimicrobial activity stronger in the pseudostem and leaves than in the corm. Hence, this supports the traditional use of banana extracts for treating infections, including diarrhea and dysentery. A parallel study showed that these banana extracts also inhibit the growth of several human pathogenic viruses. As part of IITA's goal to ensure food safety and security in Africa, identifying the high value of banana cultivars to treat human ailments and infections is a major scientific breakthrough that has the potential for sustainable economic development. Banana is a major crop grown by millions of smallholder farmers across Africa, ensuring improved livelihoods, food security, and enhanced health systems.

The full article, Antimicrobial activity of selected banana cultivars against important human pathogens, including *Candida* biofilm, is available in Foods: <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods9040435>.

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.



Take responsibility! Stop the spread of COVID-19!

Always clean your hands; practice physical and social distancing; wear face masks properly; avoid crowds and public places; keep a 2-meter distance from the next person; and practice general sanitation and hygiene.