

Bayer develops herbicides for cassava to tackle weeds and raise yields

Bayer has developed and launched a new crop protection product known as Lagon to help farmers tackle the problem of cassava weeds in cassava and boost yield. Tested on more than 200 trials and demos across Nigeria and Tanzania, users rated Lagon among the best preemergence herbicides for controlling grasses and broadleaf weeds in cassava. [to page 3](#)



L-R: Cassava farmer Marcos Antonio Dalevedove; Country Sales Manager, Bayer Nigeria Limited, Temitope Banjo; IITA Director for Development and Delivery, Alfred Dixon; Nigeria Cassava Growers Association representative, Simeon Adetunji during the launch of Lagon for weed control in Cassava in Ibadan.

ENABLE-TAAT Kenya beneficiaries hail life-transforming experience

After a training and mentorship period of 15 months, ENABLE-TAAT beneficiaries Jonathan Mutinda and Ian Mambo created their own enterprise in Kenya.

At the beginning of their venture, they leased one-eighth of an acre at Dukuma Dam, Makueni County, where they began planting and selling orange-fleshed sweet potato (OFSP) and other vegetables. Within a year, their customer base had increased so much that they needed to expand their business. The team acquired two acres of land for production to meet the demand.

Mutinda and Mambo have attributed their success to their encounter with ENABLE-TAAT in Kibwezi. "If it were not for the experience we had with the ENABLE-TAAT in Kibwezi, we could not have started our journey of agripreneurship and doing agriculture as a business," they said.

"We learned practical skills like land preparation, making a plan for our businesses, proper record keeping, good agricultural practices, and integrated pest control mechanisms. We also learned a lot about group dynamics and how to deal with various customers," they continued.

According to Elizabeth Muema, ENABLE-TAAT Liaison Officer in Kenya, "The two youth have displayed great performance in their areas of operation, and we all meet monthly to share experiences and updates. We have an incubation center at the University of Nairobi, consisting of 12 graduates split into groups from various disciplines and specializations. Ian and Jonathan can help the group with valuable ideas from their own enterprise," she said.

Shortly after, they were inspired to train two other graduate youth. Since then, the team has focused on transforming other youth groups with their expertise and knowledge.

Currently, they are networking with three more groups who are practicing agripreneurship despite the few challenges they meet as startups. Many of their trainees have shown massive improvement after getting business advice and mentorship from Mutinda and Mambo.

Although they are both graduates of agricultural studies from the University of Nairobi, ENABLE-TAAT introduced them to agribusiness and profit-making. The compact connects youth to the agricultural transformation process necessary to secure economic prosperity through youth-led agribusinesses.



Jonathan Mutinda and Ian Mambo (second and third from right) with youth mentees in Kenya.

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“The launch of Lagon today provides a big relief to farmers,” said Bayer Nigeria Country Sales Manager, Temitope Banjo. “These are exciting times for cassava farmers, and they need not worry about weeds anymore,” he added.

Weeds are a major challenge to increased cassava productivity in Nigeria and Africa in general, with women spending about 500 hours annually to keep a hectare of cassava weed-free using hoes. The manual method of weed control compromises the health of resource-constrained farmers, and in some cases, children are pulled out of school to support weeding.

When left uncontrolled, weeds compete with cassava for water, nutrients, and space, reducing yields by 40 to 90%. To tackle the menace of weeds, the [IITA](#)-managed Cassava Weed Management Project has screened more than 40

preemergence herbicides in the last eight years, both on-station and on-farm. The trials and subsequent demonstrations were conducted in Abia, Benue, Ogun, and Oyo states in Nigeria and in Tanzania.

Across the four states, which represent the key agroecological zones that predominantly grow cassava in Nigeria, cassava yields from Lagon-treated fields were more than double the national average and above 20 tons per hectare. Furthermore, cassava plants treated with Lagon were more robust than those on untreated fields or where the product was not used.

IITA Director for Development and Delivery [Alfred Dixon](#) said that the Cassava Weed Management Project team also conducted residue analysis on cassava leaves, stems, and roots. “The residue analysis provided negative results, meaning that Lagon

is safe for application on field crops, particularly cassava,” Dixon added.

Farmers who use Lagon commended the Bayer preemergence herbicides for their efficacy.

According to Chichi Ngufan, using Lagon on farmers’ fields was doing “wonders” and helping farmers increase their yields and profits. Ngufan, a cassava commercial seed producer, said the use of Lagon has helped her group increase the size of their cassava farm in Benue.

“This is possible because we now manage weeds in cassava better,” she said, adding that with Lagon, farmers were saving more on weeding costs.

Ngufan called on the government to support the dissemination of Lagon so that more farmers could have access to the product and make more returns from growing cassava.

IITA-Zero Hunger Project organizes GAP and data management training for Ogun State extension agents

The Ogun State Commissioner for Agriculture, Dr Adeola Odedina, represented by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Dr Dotun Sorunke, has charged extension officers in the State to play their role as the engine of agricultural transformation in the State. He gave this charge during the flag-off of the three-day workshop organized by [IITA](#) on [Zero Hunger Project](#) in collaboration with [International Fund for Agricultural Development](#) (IFAD) funded [Value Chain Development Programme](#) (VCDP) for Extension Agents at Ogun Tech Hub, Kobape Road, Abeokuta, Ogun State in August.

According to the Commissioner, knowledge of good agricultural practices (GAP) is foundational to good production. He advised the extension agents (EAs) to pay attention to all the training sessions to ensure that they transmit the knowledge to the cassava farmers in the State.

During the Training of Trainers’ event, Zero Hunger Project Lead [Debo Akande](#) thanked the State government through the Hon. Commissioner of Agriculture for the partnership and introduced the participants to the three components of the project—Policy assessment, Productivity enhancement, and Capacity

development—and encouraged them to see their role in the project as an opportunity to contribute to attaining the global Sustainable Development Goal 2, Zero Hunger.

The training covered Akilimo and Agronomy content of Fertilizer Recommendation tool, and Scheduled Planting and High Starch Content tool; Importance of the Cassava Seed System; Six Steps to Cassava Weed Management and Best Planting Practices; Safe Use of Herbicides; Digital tools in Cassava production – Herbicide Calculator, Seed Tracker, Cassava Business Connector, Akilimo; Identification and Management of

Cassava Pests and Diseases; Business Case for Cassava Seed Production: The IITA GoSeed perspective; Cassava Seed Field certification by the National Agricultural Seed Council (NASC); Record Keeping; and Data Management, Monitoring, and Evaluation.

The first day of the workshop, facilitated by the Zero Hunger Project Training Manager Bolanle Olorode, began with a presentation by the Project MEL Manager Oyewale Abioye showcasing the Training Needs Assessment Survey conducted by the project. The survey helped identify the knowledge gaps among the EAs and determined the

training topics for the workshop. It exposed the low level of adoption and lack of awareness on essential agricultural tools and technologies on the part of farmers.

The training sessions were facilitated by the BASICS II Project Manager Lateef Sanni, Digital Extension & Advisory Services Specialist [Godwin](#)

[Atser](#), IITA Germplasm Health Unit Head [Lava Kumar](#), ACAI project Research Assistant Ademola Adebisi, IITA GoSeed Operations and Marketing Manager Akinyemi Ibikunle, Agribusiness Consultant Joseph Alloh, and NASC Southwest Zone Seed Certification Officer Akinyemi Library.

Other key officers from the State apart from the Permanent Secretary were Samuel Adeogun (VCDP State Program Coordinator), Kehinde Jokotoye (Program Coordinator, Ogun State Cassava Revolution Program), Fashola O. Surajudeen (Director of Planning, Ministry of Agriculture), Olufemi Akinyi, Temitope Ajsafe, and Mrs Awe, among others.



Participants at the Zero Hunger Project workshop in Ogun State.

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More coffee, more cash—improved livelihoods for Bakyabumba farmers

Despite the heavy-laden coffee trees in Fred Salongo Kigongo's coffee garden, the income from the coffee has never been enough to cater for his large family. Prolonged droughts, weather variability, and the never-ending cases of pests and diseases have affected most of Uganda's 1.7 million smallholder farmers, resulting in the very high costs associated with proper management of the coffee farms, which most farmers cannot afford. This has led to a severe decline in coffee yields. Farmers now also experience one harvest season, yet the region previously experienced multiple harvests annually. To address this, IITA developed [the Stepwise approach](#) in collaboration with partners. Stepwise breaks down the recommended best practices that many farmers cannot afford into smaller, more affordable packages that can be implemented in phases.



Top: Participants view some of the coffee in the demonstration control where no practices were applied.
Left: HRNS district extension staff shows off the length of the fruiting branch of Kigongo's revived plant.
Right: As a demo host, Kigongo got regular technical backstopping from IITA.

Kigongo was among the few farmers selected from Bakyabumba Farmers' Cooperative to participate in the experiment. Because he managed the experiment well, his home has become a learning center/farmer field school where groups of 15 to 25 farmers receive regular training on good agricultural practices (GAPs). The training aligns with the cropping calendar. This approach motivates farmers to adopt the same techniques on their farms.

Kigongo admits that when [IITA](#) Research Associate David Mukasa visited his farm, he had a firewood forest, not coffee. He refers to his coffee garden as "ekibira," translated as forest. Not anymore though, he proudly informs the participants. As the group makes their way through the steps from the control to step 4 of the demonstration, one cannot help but hear the "oohs" and "aahs" of admiration.

July in Luweero is the season of the fly crop. However, Kigongo admits that he has harvested more coffee during the fly crop season than he previously did during the primary season. He attributes all this to the climate-smart technologies that were introduced in his farm.

While thanking IITA and [Hanns R. Neumann Stiftung - HRNS](#), Kigongo informs everyone that he is now referred to as "the" coffee farmer even though several other coffee farmers are in his village. Kigongo has transferred his knowledge from the demonstration and applied it to the rest of his coffee gardens. He now boasts of having two coffee harvest seasons, something almost unheard of in Luweero district due to climate change.

IITA utilized the already existing structures of depot committees and producer organizations of implementing partner HRNS within Luweero district to identify and reach farmers to test and validate the stepwise approach.