

## TAAT Cassava Compact establishes two cassava processing factories in Togo

The [TAAT](#) Cassava Compact, in partnership with the Togo Presidential Initiative on Cassava and the Togo Ministry of Agriculture, has established two commercial processing factories in two agripoles in Togo—the Notse processing factory and New Life service at Ahosoume. The collaboration targets the production of more foods, exposing the processors to modern processing machines, and creating employment opportunities for youth and women. [to page 3](#)



*The Cassava compact team with the staff and students of the Togo processing centers.*

## Zero Hunger Project trains extension workers to kickstart agricultural transformation in Benue State

[IITA](#), in partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)-funded Value Chain Development Program (VCDP), flagged off a workshop in Makurdi, Benue State tagged “Training of Extension Agents and Advisory Providers” under the Zero Hunger Project. This was done recognizing that agricultural extension agents serve as the critical drivers of information dissemination for farmers.

The Benue State Hon. Commissioner of Agriculture, Dr Timothy Ijir, appreciated IITA and IFAD-VCDP for organizing the workshop to train extension workers on the best way to go about cassava farming. He was represented by the Director for Agricultural Services, Thomas Unongo, who urged participants to impart the acquired knowledge to local farmers in their various communities to help improve cassava production in the state. Reiterating this, the Permanent Secretary at the Benue State Ministry of Agriculture, Mrs Margret Ikpe, urged participants to take the message from the workshop back to farmers and be good advisors in helping farmers achieve better yields.

Representing the Zero Hunger Project Lead [Debo Akande](#), the Project MEL Manager Oyewale Abioye presented the result of the Training Needs Assessment Survey conducted by the team. He said, "The survey revealed that 75% of the extension officers are women and 60% are youths between 18 and 35 years. This suggests that the state has an active extension

workforce that can be mentored by the older generation to retain institutional memory to improve the agricultural space because extension workers are the engine room of any kind of transformation that the State Government aims to have."

The survey result informed the training content—the 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, Identification and Management of Cassava Pests and Diseases, Business Case for Cassava Seed Production, Cassava Seed Field certification by NASC, Record Keeping, Data Management, and Monitoring and Evaluation.

Project Manager of a GIZ-funded Cassava-Maize value chain project in IITA, [Godwin Atser](#), who facilitated the training on six steps to cassava weed management, enlightened the extension workers on good cassava varieties for planting. He advised the extension workers to encourage

the use of good seeds and extend the knowledge acquired from the program to local farmers in their area of operations.

Zero Hunger Project Training Manager Bolanle Olorode, in her presentation on cassava pest and disease identification and management, highlighted the need for farmers to adopt proper sanitary measures and use improved cassava varieties that are disease resistant. She charged the extension workers to make good use of the knowledge to bring about yield increase to impact the lives of local farmers.

The VCDP State Programme Coordinator (SPC) Emmanuel Igbaukum encouraged the participants to use the training to improve their lives and train more seed entrepreneurs so that cassava production will no longer be a problem in Benue State.

At the end of the workshop, the extension officers thanked IITA and IFAD-VCDP for what they learned and promised to facilitate knowledge transfer to Benue cassava farmers.



Zero Hunger Project team with Extension Agents in Benue State, VCDP team, and staff of the Ministry of Agriculture.

## 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.

### Got a story to share?

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In 2020, the Cassava Compact donated two sets of processing machines to establish the processing factories as part of the agreement made during the project launch in 2018. The Cassava compact team comprising [IITA](#) Fabrication Consultant Thierno Diallo, IITA Postharvest Specialist Peter Kolawole, and Data Analyst Adegoke Gafar visited the sites to complete the installation and final training for the beneficiaries of the processing factories.

In a meeting with the Togo Presidency, represented by the Cassava project manager, Solym P’KLA and his team,

the TAAT Cassava Compact team highlighted its activities to strengthen the cassava sector and reduce food importation to Togo. These include distributing cassava planting materials, establishing a semi-autotrophic hydroponics (SAH) laboratory to produce disease-free cassava cuttings, training master bakers how to use high quality composite flour (HQCF) to make bread and confectionery, and the current donation of processing machines to make different cassava products.

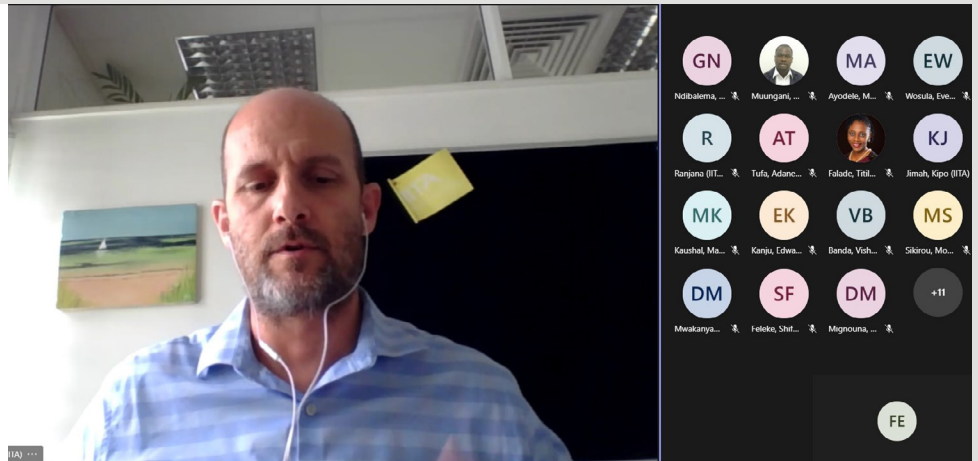
The theoretical and practical training conducted for the staff and students

of the two processing centers included how to make gari, tapioca, starch, and cassava flour, and exposure to modern processing technologies. During the training, the TAAT Cassava Compact team identified two local artisans to support the operation of the factories and sustain the running of the factories.

Solym P’KLA appreciated the work of the IITA-TAAT Cassava Compact. He said he will work on helping achieve the project’s goals and sustain a long-lasting relationship with the factories.

## **IITA Gender Network plans better strategies to promote gender research in One CGIAR**

The [IITA](#) Gender Science Network (GSN) is a team that comprises social and biophysical scientists, communication staff, and project managers. The Network’s goal is to be a vibrant community of practice for gender advocacy and enhancing gender research, communication, and impact.



*IITA Gender Specialist Dr Steven Cole sharing the purpose and agenda of the meeting with the team.*

It also envisions having an innovative and diverse network of scientists in IITA to strengthen the quality and visibility of gender research through dialogue, cooperation, and influencing the delivery agenda of the Institute.

The GSN holds quarterly meetings to monitor its activities, measure progress, identify challenges, and discuss the way forward. On 29 July, the Network held its second quarterly meeting for the year to highlight the Network’s gender research activities of the second quarter and discuss new activities and progress made. There was also discussion around the CGIAR GENDER Platform and One CGIAR ‘Gender’ Initiative.

[Steven Cole](#), IITA Senior Scientist and Gender Specialist and Coordinator of GSN, welcomed all, including

new members joining the team from units and projects in IITA. He also shared the purpose and agenda of the meeting, after which Olamide Olaosebikan, Research Associate at IITA, provided a recap of the quarter one meeting.

Long-standing and new members were allowed to share their gender-related activities in the second quarter. Among the numerous activities were those of [Ranjana Bhattacharjee](#), Molecular Geneticist at IITA Ibadan and Cheick Aboubacar Diarra, Technical Expert, ENABLE Youth-IITA Madagascar. Bhattacharjee spoke about the IBRD IDA World Bank project where they work with a “model farm” in schools to grow nutritious food crops focused on changing students’ food baskets. She spoke about the double burden of malnutrition that must be tackled in schools and the students’

households. “Gender is considered as we compare food baskets of girls and boys, and the reasons they are different,” she said. Diarra talked about the challenge nursing mothers face by not being invited to participate in the ENABLE Youth program, hence, they are working on daycare facilities to resolve this issue.

Discussing the way forward, the team agreed that webinars be organized to promote knowledge on gender research and its importance. Hence, the first set of webinars would be presented in IITA with occasional promotion to One [CGIAR](#). Other ideas included organizing a roundtable discussion for more interaction and contribution of members. There is also the need to carry out a small survey when planning projects to understand the preferences and needs of women and men for better research results.

Giving an update on the CGIAR GENDER Platform and One CGIAR “HER+” Initiative, Cole mentioned that there would be a [Cultivating Equality Conference](#) in October organized by

the GENDER Platform and Wageningen University and Research. Also, IITA was involved in developing three Innovative Methods Grant proposals of the GENDER Platform, and one that IITA led

was selected. “For the HER+ Initiative, which I am part of the Initiative Design Team,” a pre-concept proposal has been submitted and we are working on the full proposal,” Cole said.

## Determinants influencing youth engagement in agribusiness

With agribusiness gaining more attention in entrepreneurship development, youth-operated small enterprises in agriculture can contribute significantly to growing Africa’s economy and reducing poverty. These enterprises can help address the issue of youth unemployment across the continent.

Despite growing concern about the lack of interest in agriculture among African youths, engaging them in agriculture has become a prominent topic and has risen in the development agenda. According to Larissa Nawo, a young researcher with the [IITA-CARE](#) project, agriculture—the developing world’s single most significant source of employment—plays a pivotal role in Africa’s economic development, and Cameroon, in particular.

With the necessary support, policies, and infrastructure, small-scale agriculture practiced by youths in rural areas, can offer a sustainable and productive alternative to the expansion of large-scale, capital-intensive, labor-displacing corporate farming.

Following the IFAD-sponsored study carried out in Cameroon’s central region, Nawo identified factors that drive choice for youths among the three common types of agribusiness models—plantation, commercial, and contract farming. According to the survey, the semi-urban and rural areas of Cameroon’s central region show that, regardless of gender, youths are mainly engaged in commercial farming rather than plantation or contract farming.

Also, the level of education (from primary school to tertiary), size and ownership of land (for inherited and rented land), have considerable influence on the youths’ decision to engage in plantation and contract farming. At the same time, gender and access to white-collar employment have a negative and significant influence on youth’s decision to engage in agribusiness.

With the COVID-19 pandemic worsening youth unemployment across the globe, the shortage of decent work in low- and middle-income

countries is a pressing global issue facing young people now. Hence, the study proffers several recommendations that can help policymakers create sustainable policies that will engender systems to initiate an enabling environment for youths to thrive in agribusiness.

According to Larissa, increasing female youth participation in agribusiness models can initiate inclusive growth and better results. Policies can also be put in place to ensure market systems enable affordable or subsidized costs of agriculture tools and machines, among other things, to encourage youths in agribusiness and plantation farming.

While education level had a significant impact on the annual revenue generated among the youths, the study also suggests the importance of encouraging financial institutions to lend a greater percentage of their portfolio to youth agripreneurs through public-private partnership schemes.

According to the project Communication Officer, Timilehin Osunde, the IITA-CARE project is exploring ways to engage policymakers to adopt some of the recommendations being proffered by the research, as this will ensure youths become beneficiaries of a sustainable system that provides employment and reduces poverty.

IITA is working with young researchers in 10 African countries under the IFAD-sponsored Enhancing Capacity to Apply Research Evidence (CARE) in Policy for Youth Engagement in Agribusiness and Rural Economic Activities in Africa. The project seeks to enhance the understanding of the poverty reduction and employment impact, including the factors influencing youth engagement in agribusiness and rural farm and non-farm economy.



*Youth farmer spraying a maize field.*