

IITA to partner with the Nigerian Government on good agricultural policies

On 17 September, the House Committee on Agriculture, Colleges and Institutions of the Nigerian National Assembly visited IITA headquarters. The visit was to initiate partnership around fund coordination and cooperation for a new agenda for good agricultural policies in Nigeria. [to page 3](#)



The DG highlighting three key challenges Nigeria needs to address.



The House Committee Chair and his team visiting the Semi-Autotrophic Hydroponics screenhouse in IITA.

AICRRA-Ghana launch: Fostering partnerships for technology development

On 14–16 September, the Accelerating Impact of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa-Ghana Cluster (AICRRA) was launched at the Alisa Hotel, Accra, Ghana. The project aims to bridge the gap between research institutes that produce improved technologies and development organizations that promote improved technology adoption.

The project, funded by the World Bank and led by [IITA](#), seeks to scale the most strategic and impactful CGIAR Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CAAFS)-Africa programs that promote resilience to climate change and improved food security. The focus is on six World Bank International Development Association (IDA)-eligible countries in Africa, including Ghana.

[Michael Abberton](#), IITA West African Hub Director, gave an overview of IITA's mission. "Most of our work focuses on climate change, and our overall mission is to reduce food insecurity, alleviate poverty, and build sustainable livelihoods," he said. He further explained the importance of the project, "This project is taking some of the things already developed, making them impactful, and accelerating the impact." Abberton pointed out that climate change and resilience to climate change are not only about drought, heat, terrible rainfall, etc., but also about ways in which pests and diseases could change the pattern of distribution, frequency, and severity. "We already see good examples of that in Africa," he concluded.

Dr Moses Monchia, the Director of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)-Crop Research Institute, said, "The AICCRA project is a useful intervention and it aligns very well with our national priorities." He explained that in scaling up, there is a need to develop collaborative research and build partnerships with major stakeholders.

Dr Lorenzo Carrera, the sector lead for sustainable development at the World Bank, said that agriculture remains at the center of the livelihoods of millions of people in Africa. However, many remain food insecure and malnourished.

"The World Bank has been scaling up support for climate-smart agriculture to help African countries boost their resilience to climate change," he said. He further promised that "The World Bank, with the new climate-change action plan, will step up its support in countries on addressing climate change and boosting resilience."

The guest speaker, Prof. Victor Agyeman, Director General, CSIR Ghana, appreciated the different partners involved in the AICCRA-Ghana cluster project for taking steps to minimize the effect of climate change. "This program would make a lot of change as it is transformative, and we need to embrace it, and ensure that it is successful." He concluded that the program should be applauded and supported by all African countries.

"We have put mechanisms in place to enhance synergies and collaboration between the different partners involved in AICCRA-Ghana," said Tepa-Yoto Grishlain, the project lead. Since partnership is critical for the project, farmer organizations will be connected through the nearest mechanism. "We will ensure that whatever technologies we are promoting are meeting the true needs of farmers; therefore, the farmers will really occupy the central position in this project," he added.

In terms of sustainability, the project will foster public-private partnerships to ensure that whatever technology is developed within the project can serve future generations.

The One Health platform, which is an integrated, collaborative, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary system, was officially launched during the meeting. This platform will work at the local, national, regional, and global levels to achieve optimal health outcomes, recognizing the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment.

The AICCRA project is built on CGIAR's multi-stakeholder platform of the Biorisk Management Facility (BIMAF) hosted by IITA's station in Benin, West Africa. Partners are the CGIAR Climate Agriculture & Food Security (CAAFS) Research Program, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Alliance Bioversity-CIAT, World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF), ICRISAT, Center for Agriculture Biosciences International (CABI), Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO), Crop Research Institute (CSIR/CRI), Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA/PPRSD), Ghana Meteorological Agency, and the Climate Change and Agriculture Department of the University of Development Studies (CCAD/UDS).



Stakeholders at the Accelerating Impact of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa-Ghana Cluster (AICCRA) launch in Accra, Ghana.

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During the event moderated by [Kenton Dashiell](#), Deputy Director General for Partnerships for Delivery, [Dr. Nteranya Sanginga](#), IITA Director General, welcomed and introduced IITA's activities to the team, including its stations and youth programs. He highlighted three key areas that are challenges in Nigeria. The DG stated that youth employment, reduced importation of food, and the use of technology need to be championed for the population's survival. "The mindset of the youth has to be changed regarding agriculture, as the sector can create more employment opportunities, hence, IITA needs your support to continue what we are doing," he said.

[Busie Maziya-Dixon](#), IITA Food and Nutrition Scientist, gave an overview of the National Food Consumption and Micronutrient Survey (NFCMS), a collaborative project between IITA and several Ministries aimed at assessing the micronutrient status and dietary intake of women of reproductive age, children, and non-pregnant adolescent girls. "Government agencies and research organizations will use the information from the survey to develop initiatives to address key nutrition issues," she said.

Honorable Munir Dan'agundi, Chair, House Committee on Agriculture, Colleges and Institutions, commended IITA on its research efforts and youth programs. He highlighted some of the challenges Nigeria faces in the agriculture sector, such as low yield, the decline in soil fertility, scarcity of inputs, and inadequate

mechanization, which have led to food insecurity. However, these problems can be tackled by research, he stated.

IITA's research will create more impact through collaboration with national agricultural research systems to devise more solutions to agricultural problems in Nigeria, he added. "We need collaboration and cooperation for the new agenda for good agricultural policies that emphasize coordination and support, to increase productivity, research and extension, value addition, and reduce postharvest loss," he said.

The team was taken on a tour of the Institute, including the Germplasm Health, Virology and Diagnostics Laboratory, Genetic Resources Center, Aflasafe, Research Farm Unit, and the Cassava Processing Unit.

Adeyayo Adefioye, Project Coordinator, [Start Them Early Program \(STEP\)](#), highlighted activities of the project and how it is helping youth understand and be involved in agriculture. He also shared some of STEP's achievements.

Hammed Oni, one of the co-founders of Frotchery Farms, shared the success story of how their agribusiness was impacted by the IITA Youth Agripreneur (IYA) program.

Speaking on the way forward, Prof Garba Sharubutu, Executive Secretary of the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN), highlighted three major areas of collaboration with IITA; coordination

of funds to develop research institutes, capacity building to accomplish the mandate of the institutes, and the need to synergize.

Hon Dan'agundi requested the assistance of IITA in getting improved cocoa seedlings as part of plans to improve the cocoa research system.

Responding to the absence of cocoa in the IITA gene bank, Dr Dashiell said IITA is working with Ghana and other partners in looking at the genetic relationships, purity, and agronomic aspects of cocoa. Hence, "we hope to expand and look for further opportunities for cocoa in the new CGIAR," he said.

Hon Dan'agundi expressed appreciation for the privilege to track and understand what IITA is doing. In his closing remarks, Dashiell appreciated the Chairman and members of the Senate Committee for their visit.



Top: The House Committee Chair explaining the areas of collaboration and cooperation for the new agenda for good agricultural policies. Bottom: The DG giving his speech while in a meeting with the Chair and members of the Senate Committee.

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.



IFAD-funded Zero Hunger project trains 116 Nigerian extension agents on good agronomic practices and data management

As part of efforts to support Nigeria to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goal 2](#) (Zero Hunger), [IITA](#) and [AfricaRice](#), under the [International Fund for Agricultural Development](#) (IFAD) funded [Zero Hunger project](#), conducted training for extension agents in Benue, Ebonyi, and Ogun states in August and September 2021.

The training was in partnership with the IFAD-funded [Value Chain Development Programme](#) (VCDP) in the three states on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Data Management. The training content was informed after the Needs Assessment survey conducted on the extension agents in the states and agreements reached with the project stakeholders in various meetings with the Commissioners of Agriculture and the VCDP State coordinators.

A total of 45 and 46 extension agents drawn from different Local Governments in Ogun and Benue states, respectively, attended the IITA-led training program in August, and 25 extension agents participated in the training organized by AfricaRice in Ebonyi State in September 2021. The training sessions had theory and practice sessions.

The workshops aimed to empower extension agents with the knowledge, skills, and tools to educate farmers on good agricultural practices (GAP) and how to double cassava and rice yield cost-effectively in their communities. The trainers also taught the extension agents how to manage

the data collected from the farmers effectively.

The Training of Trainers (ToT) covered topics such as Importance of the Cassava Seed System, Six Steps to Cassava Weed Management, and Best Planting Practices, Safe Use of Herbicides, Identification and Management of Cassava Pests and Diseases, Business Case for Cassava Seed Production: The IITA GoSeed perspective, Cassava Seed Field certification by NASC, Record Keeping and Data Management, Monitoring and Evaluation, and introduction to IITA developed [Herbicide calculator](#), [Akilimo](#) and [Seed tracker](#) applications as well as the use of Open Data Kits (ODK) tool for data.

For rice, the extension officers were introduced to GAP, best management practices in rice harvest and postharvest handling, and [RiceAdvice](#)—a digital technology helping extension agents give advice and rice farmers to make informed decisions. The extension agents and lead farmers were also taught the need for digital data capturing and reporting using the ODK collect tool for data survey.

The workshops were flagged off in Ogun and Benue states on behalf of the Commissioners of Agriculture by the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Agriculture, Dr Dotun Sorunke in Ogun State, and Director for Agricultural Services Mr Thomas Unongo in Benue State. The Commissioner of Agriculture in Ebonyi, Chief Moses Nomeh, opened the training in the State.

Speaking at the opening ceremony at the different states, the Commissioners of Agriculture assured the Zero Hunger Project team of the states' commitment. They charged the extension agents and lead farmers to take the knowledge from the training to more farmers to ensure the States achieve Zero Hunger. They unanimously appreciated IITA and AfricaRice for the partnership and IFAD for funding the much-needed Zero Hunger project in the State.

The VCDP State Program Coordinators—Sunday Ituma in Ebonyi, Samuel Adeogun in Ogun, and Emmanuel Igbaukum in Benue—also registered their commitments to partner with the Zero Hunger project team to work towards contributing to Zero Hunger in the three states during the project life cycle.

The Zero Hunger Project Lead [Dr Debo Akande](#) of IITA and Co-Lead [Dr Francis Nwilene](#) of AfricaRice thanked the States for their commitment and urged the Extension Agents to transfer the knowledge acquired to the farmers.



Extension Agents in Ogun state listening to training facilitator.

IITA contributes to conserving Nigeria's rarest endemic bird:

Ibadan Malimbe

The Ibadan Malimbe, range-restricted and endemic to Ibadan, is an important bird for conservation. Its home, food, and climatic habitat are in the forest areas in Ibadan alone. Between 1994 and 1996, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) listed it as critically endangered due to its rarity and closeness to extinction. It was later listed as endangered, as more birds were spotted over time.

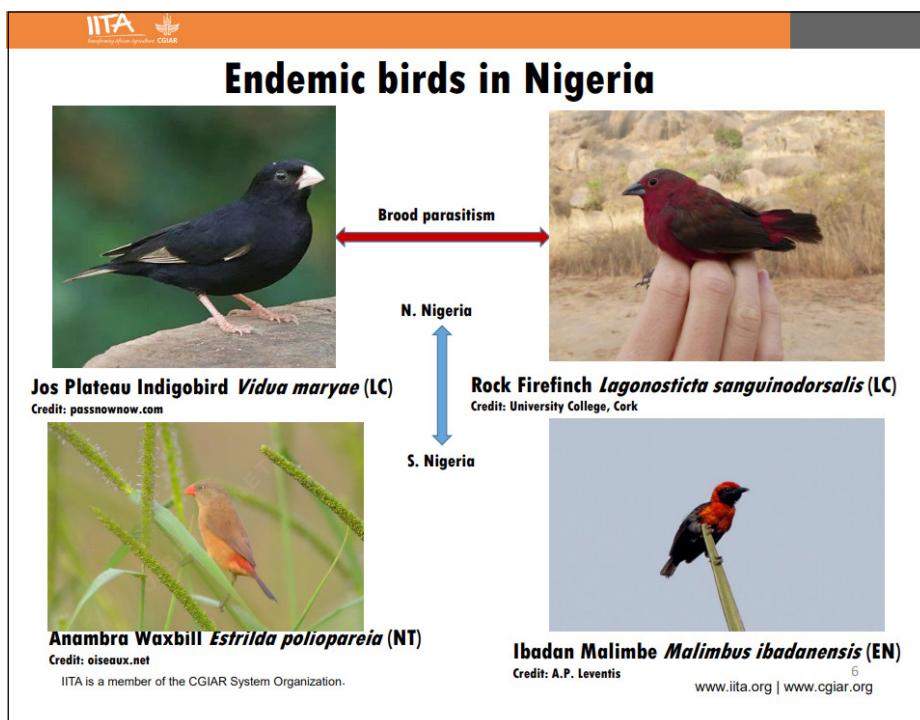
palm and insect fragments such as tailor ants. Awoyemi enumerated causes of decline in the population of the Ibadan Malimbe as sparse forests, smaller home ranges due to increased urbanization, competition for food with related species, and increased nest destruction by children during fuelwood collection.

The Ibadan Malimbe is also a forest edge species, meaning it is not necessarily found in thick forests only. It can also be found in gardens, on trees around residential areas, and in forest suburbs. The Ibadan Malimbe can be spotted by "Its red hair that extends from its chest to its breast, distinguishing it from the red-headed and red-vented Malimbe, whose red hair is not as extended as the Ibadan Malimbe's," Awoyemi said. He urged anyone who spots this bird to report sightings to the IITA Forest Center for tracking and further study.

The endemic birds in Nigeria enjoy institutional support from research institutes. Up north, the AP Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI), located in Jos, Nigeria, trains Biological Science students in conservation biology emphasizing birds. They provide studies and research for the protection of the endemic birds in that area. And down south, IITA is a haven for the Ibadan Malimbe, where lots of efforts and agricultural research go to protect the Ibadan Malimbe in its conservation work through IITA Forest Center.

Awoyemi acknowledged the publicity the conservation of Ibadan Malimbe got during the recent Inqaba Genome sequencing challenge. He sought funding to sequence the gene of the Ibadan Malimbe to promote the increase of the bird population in their endemic habitat. He acknowledged the enthusiasm of many IITA community members who participated in the online voting contest to support the conservation of Ibadan Malimbe.

He urged everyone to conserve the Ibadan Malimbe by protecting its habitat, taking up habitat restoration courses, reporting sightings, joining nature clubs and IITA's social media discussions and hubs, raising private forests, and protecting and funding existing ones.



The four endemic birds in Nigeria.

[IITA](#) Ibadan campus, sitting on a 1000 ha and hosting about 350 ha of forest dedicated to biodiversity conservation, is home to the Ibadan Malimbe. This beautifully unique bird is the most threatened of the four endemic birds in Nigeria. The Jos Plateau Indigobird and the Rock Firefinch are range-restricted to the north, and the Anambra Waxbill and the Ibadan Malimbe to the south.

The [IITA Forest Center](#), headed by Adewale Awoyemi, is an internationally acclaimed Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA). The Center carries out conservation activities and environmental education awareness programs, including quarterly bird monitoring and research, habitat restoration, and awareness creation programs. Through the Ibadan Bird Club (IBC), School Conservation Clubs (SCC), Radio IITA programs, international contests, and various

social media platforms, the IITA Forest Center raises awareness to conserve this rare bird.

In a seminar on 18 August, Awoyemi shared the rareness and ecological importance of this bird and the contributions of IITA Forest Center to its conservation. Between 2016 and 2021, the Center has recorded 368 Red-vented Malimbe, 255 Red-headed Malimbe, and 12 Ibadan Malimbe through its bird monitoring activities. The Ibadan Malimbe accounted for less than 5% of red-headed Malimbés recorded. It is essential to conserve these birds because they help pollinate crops, clean up the environment, and serve as an important bird for ecotourism.

The Ibadan Malimbe was first sighted at the University College, Ibadan, on 18 December 1951. It feeds on vegetable matter such as the fruit fibers of oil