



STEP stages first school quiz competition on agriculture

To further attract and retain the interest of young people in secondary schools, the Start Them Early Program (STEP) has commenced the STEP School Agri-Competition. This competition is aimed at inspiring young people towards channelling deliberate efforts in identifying a career and business options in agriculture.

The maiden edition of the competition was staged in Oyo State, under the STEP-Oyo Project, at IITA Headquarters in Ibadan, on November 29. Five schools engaged under the project participated in the competition; Fasola Grammar School (FGS), Bishop Philip's Academy (BPA), Iresa-Adu High School (IHS), Methodist High School (MHS), and UMCA Secondary Grammar School. Dr Paul Woomer, Technical Advisor to the Director General of IITA, provided an overview of STEP and congratulated the organisers and stakeholders on the program's rapid expansion.

The Director General of IITA, Dr Nteranya Sanginga also explained the importance of the STEP program and praised the secondary school students for using modern facilities. He stated that the competition would help identify potential in the younger generation, and 'the food business would be the continent's most prominent

business, providing leadership and job opportunities for people.

Dr Chrysantus Akem, Coordinator, Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT), stated that youth involvement is one of the core activities carried out by IITA. He explained that STEP activities encourage the younger generation to pursue a career in modern agriculture, which benefits the entire continent. He went on to say that these activities were carried out by introducing them to modern machinery, climate-smart



Dr Nteranya Sanginga giving his speech



Mosadoluwa Omolade, the quiz master

agricultural concepts, high yielding seeds, and ensuring proper input use. "By continuing to support the program, IITA is determined to play a role in the transformation required to use agriculture".

Omolade Mosadoluwa, STEP Laboratory Technician, moderated the Quiz session. It was hinged on showcasing the mastery of STEP club members in their engagement on a series of training and experience on the various agricultural value chain.

Also, Ms Saidat Dauda, CEO of Abisal Foods, while sharing her agricultural experience, mentioned that the internet, marketing, and networking are essential strategies for increasing product sales. She went on to say that collaborating with other companies would increase employment, production capacity, and product marketing. She urged the next generation to take advantage of the agribusiness training opportunity and add value to their products.

At the end of the competition, the winners were announced based on the following categories; announced the winners in the following agricultural enterprises: value addition (IHS); crop production and mechanization (MHS); poultry (IHS); ICT (UMCA); science (BPA); and aquaculture (MHS). The winners



A Student answering a question during a quiz section



Contestants in the STEP ICT Enterprise during the Quiz.

received 'Starter tool kits' for their home agribusiness ventures.

Our productivity is low because our cultivation methods are primitive, relying primarily on traditional tools rather than modern agricultural machinery that is readily available. The institute has created a dedicated youth in agribusiness unit to promote the use of modern technologies in food cultivation and production and change the mindset of young Africans to see agriculture as a rural leisure activity. One of the unit's innovations is the STEP-Oyo Project is designed to empower younger



A student from Iresaadu High School being awarded



A student from Methodist High School being awarded

youths in Oyo State with quality agribusiness, digital and soft skills to foster their inclusion in modern agriculture and mitigate the crucial youth employment challenge. Thus, the program was a means to engage the students after their certification in modern agricultural enterprises.

The STEP strategy showcases viable opportunities in agriculture by establishing school pilot enterprises, young farmer clubs, improvement of classroom instruction, and facility upgrades, thereby emphasising experiential learning and the development of specialised skills. Our success stories span across the rapid establishment of

thriving home agribusinesses by these students to the bountiful rewards of their involvement in pilot enterprises.

The youngest STEP home agribusiness owner is a 12-year-old who manages a small-scale poultry farm in Ibadan. Similar younger youths have become suppliers of fresh vegetables and cereals, catfishes and poultry products, liquid soaps and sanitisers, and a range of value-added products through the pilot enterprises. Also, they promote these products through digital marketing tools and have a customer base within their communities and other regions in Nigeria.



Dr Paul Woomer sharing an overview of the STEP Project.



A section of participating students.

PHOTOS



Contestants in the STEP Science Enterprise during the Quiz



One on the students, resolutely participating in the tie breaker quiz.

PHOTOS



A group photograph of Students, Teachers, School Principal Officers, and the STEP team.



The Crop Production and Mechanization Enterprise team during a tour at the Hydroponics session.

This bulletin is a production of the IITA Start Them Early Program in Ibadan, Nigeria

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