

Special Envoy highlights DRC's agriculture plan during visit to IITA Goodwill Ambassador

During his extended visit to the [IITA](#) headquarters in Ibadan, Special Envoy to the Democratic Republic of Congo President, Pacifique Kahasha Birindwa, visited IITA's Goodwill Ambassador and former Nigerian President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in Abeokuta, Ogun State, as part of his itinerary. [to page 3](#)

IITA Director General, [Dr. Nteranya Sanginga](#), accompanied the Special Envoy, who explained that his visit was partly to raise awareness and cultivate support for President Felix Tshisekedi's plans to ensure that agriculture in DRC becomes the primary vehicle of development in the country.



IITA Goodwill Ambassador, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (right) welcomes Special Envoy Birindwa, Ntwali, and DG Nteranya Sanginga.

Chief Obasanjo welcomed the delegation, commending President Tshisekedi's decision to embrace agriculture. "He has begun very well, but there is need for continuity, and I hope the people of DRC understand that you don't replace or withdraw a winning horse in a race," he said. He added that agriculture is the centerpiece of Africa's economic activities and the beginning of industrialization.

Obasanjo noted that Africa could mobilize its internal and external resources to develop its agribusiness sector. He further highlighted DRC's

IITA Y-SWEP biogas technology: A sustainable energy solution and gateway to more research



IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga commissioning one of the Anaerobic Digestion Biogas Installations serving the on-campus canteens at IITA headquarters in Ibadan.

[IITA](#) has taken another step in implementing a circular economy within the Institute by launching two biogas installations for power generation and waste management.

The IITA Youth in Sustainable Waste Eco-Recycling Program (IITA Y-SWEP), under the supervision of Deputy Head of Facility Management Services Martins Akeredolu, on 19 January inaugurated the Anaerobic Digestion Biogas Installations on the IITA campus in Ibadan, Nigeria.

IITA Director General [Dr. Nteranya Sanginga](#) presided over the official ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by senior management personnel and external project partners.

In her opening remarks, an enthusiastic Deputy Director General for Corporate Services, [Hilde Koper](#), hailed the initiative, providing the general IITA Staff Canteen and Cappa Canteen with energy supply for cooking. She noted that these biogas installations are small steps to help IITA become greener, adding to earlier efforts, including installing solar panels for

electricity, solar streetlights, and a waste separation system.

“We started the separation of waste in 2019, and we can use the biodegradable waste to keep filling both of these installations,” she said. Koper encouraged everyone to embrace the plan of collecting biodegradable waste such as fallen leaves on the campus and crop residues, including maize husks and cassava peels. “They can all help with keeping these biogas installations going,” she concluded.

Rehashing the origin and importance of the biogas project, Akeredolu cited the nuisance of unused waste in sub-Saharan Africa as an opportunity for which the biogas initiative is a pilot. He said he hoped that the project would provide a cost-effective alternative to environmental hazards, including deforestation for firewood and poor household and industrial waste

management, including endemic postharvest waste.

The IITA Y-SWEP Team Lead Oluwole Ijiti highlighted a promise that DG Sanginga made to the operators of the Cappa Canteen to provide a viable alternative to cooking with firewood. “Sir, I am proud to let you know that the promise you made to them on 21 January 2021 has been fulfilled today,” he announced.

Ijiti also noted that since the initiative produces biogas and biofertilizer, it is a gateway to further research opportunities for IITA mandate crops and fertilizers.

Appreciative staff from the canteen hailed the project team for helping them transition from the challenging and hazardous firewood stoves to the greener and more cost-effective biogas cooking method.

DG Sanginga lauded the project team and the result of their long-awaited biogas installations; two biodigesters for the Staff Canteen (20 m³ and 147 m³ biodigesters) and a 50 m³ biodigester for the Cappa Canteen. He encouraged the team to begin considering opportunities to scale the initiative to the external community, such as power generation and waste management for community markets and abattoirs. He promised to support their scaling efforts, starting in Oyo State, and hoped to see this sustainable energy and waste management solution exported to other parts of sub-Saharan Africa and other regions.



Top left: A testimonial from one of the IITA Staff Canteen cooks. *Right:* Operators of the Cappa Canteen thanking and blessing DG Sanginga for fulfilling his promise. *Bottom:* The Cappa Canteen operators with the IITA Y-SWEP team.

abundance of rain and arable land, which exceeds that of all other African countries. "DRC is the only country in Africa with more than one time zone," he noted.

Birindwa was on an exploratory visit to IITA Nigeria following the decision of President Tshisekedi's government to transform the country's agricultural sector using IITA's Nigerian model. He said DRC had been practicing subsistence agriculture, and it was time to change the status quo. "Based on what IITA did for

Nigeria, President Tshisekedi has requested the African Development Bank (AfDB) President Dr Akinwunmi Adesina and IITA DG Sanginga to help DRC create and implement a next-generation agricultural project that will not only increase the country's agricultural production and the entire value chain but also pull the economy into commercialization," he said.

During an exclusive interview with Radio IITA, Birindwa said his visit to IITA and Nigeria had been nothing

short of inspiring and transformative. "Now I can develop a strategic plan for the President's further action," he added.

Dr Sanginga expressed his optimism about the project in DRC and said CGIAR and IITA would provide the needed support to help DRC attain its goal.

After the meeting, the Special Envoy and his Assistant Felix Karume Ntwali toured the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library and Museum.



Chief Obasanjo (third from left) with the DRC and IITA delegation.

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?

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).



IITA and partner work to improve food systems

Food systems refer to the organization of the production, processing, distribution, consumption of food, and waste disposal considering their health, socioeconomic, and environmental outcomes. It has a crucial role in delivering high-quality diets that are not reflected in our everyday nutrition due to such factors as population growth, climate change, and urbanization. Therefore, food systems have helped develop an integrated strategy for addressing hunger, ill health, poverty, and assuring nutrition security.

[IITA](#), in collaboration with the Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation of Wageningen University and Research (WUR) under the CGIAR Agriculture for Nutrition and Health Food System for Healthier Diet Flagship (A4NHFP1), organized a two-day virtual masterclass training program themed: “Food Systems for Healthier Diets” in December. The training focused on understanding food systems from a dietary approach, how to approach food system innovation, what to consider, and how to evaluate the desired outcomes.

This ensures actions are leveraged for a healthier and sustainable diet for national development.

The training had in attendance members of staff from government and non-government organizations and postgraduate students of universities and research institutions in Nigeria using group discussion, among others, as one of the training methods.

The CGIAR A4NHFP1 Country Coordinator and IITA Head of Agribusiness Unit, [Adebowale Akande](#), stated that the training focused on food systems through the agrifood value chain impact pathway and associated policy required to accelerate food system innovation, scaling, and anchoring. He further explained that the training was to unite national policymakers and stakeholders in all sectors related to agriculture, nutrition, and financing for effective policy formulation and implementation towards food security and healthier diets.

[Drlnge Brouwer](#), an Associate Professor, Division of Human Nutrition

and Health, WUR, oversees the CGIAR A4NH flagship program, Food Systems for Healthier Diets. “There is a need to look systematically at the changes in food systems and how they are related to diet transitions. The Nigeria masterclass training is very special because we focus on food systems from a nutrition point of view. So, we want to improve the food system by increasing the production of crops. But more importantly, we look at diets in terms of nutrients, diversity and also what unhealthy components are consumed,” she stated.

One of the participants, Oyo State Home Grown School Feeding Program Coordinator, Mrs Adejoke Adewusi, promised to encourage the local production of nutritious food through off-taking of nutritious foods from local producers for the Home Grown School Feeding Program. Similarly, Mr Olugbenga Sadik from the Nigeria Governors’ Forum Secretariat pledged to advocate for implementing policies sensitive to the country’s food systems challenges.



Food systems play a crucial role in delivering nutritious food to the society.