

IITA wins prestigious Nigeria Farmers and Agribusiness Award for supporting agribusiness

The Nigeria Farmers and Agribusiness Awards (NFAA) has recognized [IITA](#) as the Best Agribusiness Support Research Institution in Nigeria for 2021.

A delegation from the NFAA and the [Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development \(FMARD\)](#) visited the Institute's headquarters in Ibadan to present the award, considered one of the highest honors in the nation's agricultural sector. The award celebrates IITA's research for supporting agricultural production and entrepreneurship in the country.



Africa Farming Project National Coordinator Dr Bright Isaac Okwu (left) presenting the award to DG Sanginga.

In his welcome address, IITA Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery (P4D), [Kenton Dashiell](#), welcomed the team and gave them an overview of IITA's agricultural research and development work. He highlighted the P4D directorate's work, which ensures that "the good work of our scientists gets out to the people and organizations that need it." [to page 3](#)

IITA celebrates women as it works towards a gender-balanced environment



International Women's Day (IWD), celebrated globally every 8 March, recognizes and appreciates women's achievements, efforts, and contributions to society. The theme for this year's celebration is "Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow."

Staff and IITA International School students celebrating IWD with a "Walk for a Purpose".

IITA joined the #BreakTheBias campaign with various activities, starting with a commemorative “Walk for Purpose”, followed by a physical and virtual hybrid event to discuss the theme for the year.

In her opening remarks, IITA Deputy Director General, Corporate Services, [Hilde Koper](#), said that IWD is celebrated to achieve gender equality and women empowerment. She stated that women have been at the forefront of change, adaptation, and climate change, hence they should be supported and given equal opportunities. “IITA is striving for gender equality, and for us to achieve this, we have to understand and appreciate the differences of men and women,” she said.

Giving his speech, the IITA Director General [Dr Nteranya Sanginga](#) mentioned that although IITA is still working to have an equal number of men and women, the quality of women in the Institute is extraordinary. He shared the great works of women around him, including his wife, Mrs

Charlotte Sanginga, who has been very supportive and has contributed significantly to his progress in life. He also talked about other women he has worked with, such as his past and present secretaries and communication personnel, who he fondly calls “Chief of Staff”. “Most of these young ladies that worked with me were trained and have now risen to higher positions where they are doing a lot better,” he said.

There were video presentations from the different IITA hubs across Africa— Eastern, Southern, Central, Sahel, Western Africa hub, and the IITA headquarters in Ibadan. Some of the presentations featured women sharing their thoughts about the IWD and what the theme means to them personally.

There were also drama presentations to showcase the work of CGIAR and IITA in giving women equal opportunities and how the organizations have benefitted from tapping into the potentials of women for increased productivity and towards their goal. Women in

various fields such as engineering, photography, security, and research, showcased their capabilities to emphasize that they can accomplish as much as men if given equal opportunity.

Some male staff also shared their thoughts about women and gender equality, encouraging IITA and CGIAR to create a friendlier environment for men and women to thrive and carry out their assignments with peace of mind. They acknowledged that women have so much to contribute; hence men should partner with and empower them.

Closing out the event, IITA Molecular Geneticist [Ranjana Bhattacharjee](#) said, “Every day should be a day for celebrating both men and women because none can exist independent of the other.” She appreciated everyone for coming out to celebrate women, especially DG Sanginga, who has been a source of inspiration to all staff in this journey. “Thank you all and let’s keep supporting men and women equally,” she concluded. *Contributed by Favour Ochuwa Eleta.*



Left: DG Sanginga, celebrating his female colleagues, including his Communication Officer Dolapo Ogunsola. Right: IITA women showcasing their capabilities in various fields.

Got a story to share?

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“We emphasize agribusiness and youth because we strongly believe these are two components that must be prioritized for agriculture to really change in Nigeria and all over Africa,” said Dashiell.

National Coordinator of the Africa Farming Project and leader of the delegation, Dr Bright Isaac Okwu, highlighted the importance of the awards in Nigeria. The NFAA is a collaboration between FMARD’s Agribusiness and Marketing Department and the Africa Farming Project. He said the Honorable Minister of Agriculture, Dr Mohammad Mahmood Abubakar, mandated them to come to IITA-HQ to present the award to the Institute officially.

Receiving the award, IITA Director General Dr [Nteranya Sanginga](#) thanked the award organizers for recognizing IITA’s hard work over the

years. He said, apart from working with established agribusiness entrepreneurs, IITA encourages youth participation in agriculture through various interventions as Africa’s farmers have been mostly of the older generation.

Singinga highlighted the success of the [Start Them Early Program \(STEP\)](#), IITA’s intervention for primary and secondary school-age children, which it implements in DR Congo, Kenya, and Nigeria. He noted that the Oyo State Governor, HE Seyi Makinde, has adopted it as a model for the State after seeing it yield positive results in the pilot phase.

He applauded Okwu and his Africa Farming Project team for their shared passion for youth progression in agribusiness and the entire agriculture value chain. He expressed his openness to future collaboration to

increase agribusiness opportunities in the nation.

The delegation included two winners of the agribusiness pageants—Miss Feeds and Nutrition, Esther Boluwatife Adeyemi and Miss Poultry and Livestock, Ifeoma Favour Obinna, who also won the overall Miss Agribusiness Nigeria prize. *Contributed by Uzoma Agha*



Top right: IITA DG Sanginga highlighting some of IITA’s work over the years. Bottom: DG Sanginga (holding the award) with senior IITA leaders and the NFAA delegation.

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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.

WIRES highlights women's career development and workplace relationship

[Women In Research And Science](#) (WIRES), an Employee-Led Resource Group, held a webinar session on “Mentorship” as part of the International Women’s Day (IWD) celebration on 8 March. The webinar aligned with the group’s goal of connecting and inspiring its members by providing tools and shared knowledge that support professional development, build workplace relationships, and strengthen networks and alliances across [CGIAR](#). WIRES, which has [IITA](#) women as part of its organizing committee, is dedicated to championing and supporting women.

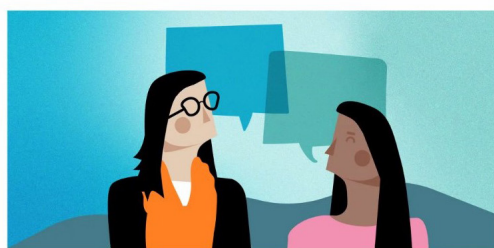
by men who tend to mentor more men than women.

Also, men are cautious about mentoring women for fear of seeming inappropriate. Due to these challenges, women often miss out on compelling mentorship experiences. Duce stated that if women are well mentored, it will help build their confidence and connection and serve as an inspiration for them to work better. “Mentoring can help us better navigate our environment and is essential for our own progress in career and life generally. Mentoring helps us give back to our community,” she said.

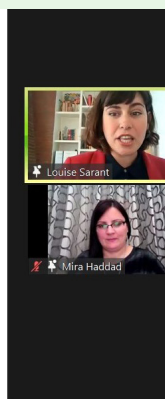
Duce emphasized three tips for finding a mentor: Have a clear goal of what you want to achieve from the relationship; find someone ahead of you with practical and relevant experience; be specific by making clear to your mentor why you wish to connect and how they can help. To have a good mentorship relationship, Duce said, “Build trust by being honest; be open to listening and following your mentor’s opinions and advice; ask clarifying questions and be specific with your goals.”

Following the presentation, three CGIAR women shared experiences of how they have benefitted from mentorship. [Mira Haddad](#), Research Associate at [ICARDA](#), talked about how her colleague inspired her in career development and her boss supported her masters’ program. [Deborah Nabuuma](#), Nutritionist at [CIAT](#), spoke on how mentorship helped her have a clear vision and solid experience. [Young Wha Lee](#), Module/Biometrics Lead at [CIMMYT](#), also shared how mentorship helped her learn how to manage relationships better.

Mentorship Stories



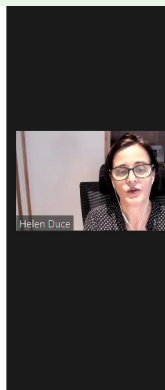
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Benefits of Mentoring



Source: Moving Ahead, Turning the gender diversity dial



Top: Louise Sarant, introducing Mira Haddad as she shares her mentorship story.
Bottom: Helen Duce, highlighting the benefits of mentorship.

The moderator, Fiona Bourdin-Farrell, CGIAR Global Director of People and Culture, mentioned that WIRES wanted to do something practical to improve gender equality in CGIAR workplaces. Hence, it chose the theme “Mentorship” because building constructive relationships is beneficial to everyone.

The speaker, Helen Duce, CGIAR System Organization Consultant, highlighted the benefits of mentoring, challenges women face in mentorship, tips for finding a mentor, and the foundation of a great mentorship relationship. Sharing some of the challenges, she said that most senior positions in organizations are occupied

IITA partners with NASENI to develop technologies for agricultural solutions

A team of scientists, engineers, and administrators from the National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI) visited [IITA](#) on 10 March. The visit was to establish a formal relationship between IITA and [NASENI](#) to design, develop, and transfer technologies for agricultural solutions for the Nigerian population. A Memorandum of Understanding MoU was signed to this effect.



IITA DDG-P4D Kenton Dashiell welcoming NASENI Coordinating Director, Planning and Business Development, Nonyem Onyechi.

The team: Nonyem Onyechi, Coordinating Director Planning and Business Development NASENI; Emmanuel Ajani, Deputy Director Engineering Infrastructure; Folashade Folahanmi, Assistant Chief Engineer; Emmanuel Abur, Chief Engineering Infrastructure Directorate; and Noratu Sanni, Chief Scientific Officer; met IITA's Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery, [Kenton Dashiell](#); Debo Akande, Head of Agribusiness and Mechanization; Femi Akeredolu, Deputy Head Facility Management Services (FMS); and Morenike Abu, Legal and Compliance Manager IITA.

Dashiell gave a brief history of IITA and the countries in which it operates across Africa. He stated that beyond the research and administrative arms of IITA, IITA also has a strong arm of partnerships for delivery, which will all

meet the needs of NASENI's visit. He said IITA works on soybean, maize, banana/plantain, cassava, yam, and cowpea but can also work on any crop based on demand. "We even work on fish and animals. And on fertilizers, which is part of the reason you are here. We work on anything that will make farmers successful." Stressing the advantage of long-term partnerships for sustainable project delivery, he said, "the signing of this MoU today will build a platform for continued work between IITA and NASENI way after the current participants are long gone."

Nonyem, in response, thanked IITA for the warm reception, lauding the Institute's efforts over the years in providing solutions to poverty and hunger and the degradation of natural resources in Africa. She continued,

"This collaboration will enhance cooperation, joint research for development, and technology transfer between NASENI and IITA. Coming together today, we firmly believe that IITA and NASENI will form a leading research partnership that will provide home-grown technologies to increase food security and reduce rural poverty in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa as a whole."

NASENI currently liaises with [Saputra Global Harvest](#), an Indonesian company engaged in agriculture, fisheries, and animal husbandry, based in Jakarta, in the transfer of coal-based fertilizer technology and the development of a coal-fertilizer production plant in Nigeria. NASENI felt the need to collaborate with IITA on implementing field trials for crops such as maize, yam, and cassava; to ascertain the efficacy and suitability of the coal-based fertilizer produced by Saputra to Nigerian soil. The initial request for collaboration was sent to IITA in January 2022, including the need for a bio-digester and the cassava peeling projects of the agency. IITA expressed its willingness to collaborate with NASENI in an agreement that entails using IITA's facilities, staff equipment, and vast land space for the pilot tests.

Nonyem signed the MoU on behalf of Prof. M.S. Arunah, the Chief Executive of NASENI, and Dashiell signed on behalf of IITA. They further visited IITA biogas plant and learned of the biogas technology developed by FMS and the [Y-SWEP](#) youth. They were more than happy to replicate the technology back in Abuja. *Contributed by Folake Oduntan*



Femi Akeredolu showing NASENI guests how the IITA Biogas plant works.