

Belgian Royal Couple visit IITA-DRC



King Philippe and Queen Mathilde signing the guestbook.

Their Majesties, King Philippe and Queen Mathilde of Belgium, with the representatives of the Belgian community in the Democratic Republic of Congo, visited the President Olusegun Obasanjo, [IITA](#) Research Campus, during their visit to South Kivu on the recommendation of the President of the Republic, His Excellency, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo.

Since 2005, the CGIAR's Consortium for the Improvement of Livelihoods based on Agriculture in Central Africa (CIALCA) project, with the support of Belgian Development Cooperation, has enabled approximately 1 million small-

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IITA donates Rapid Aflatoxin Testing Equipment to Ghana Commodity Exchange (GCX) and trains staff to use them



Lionel Kadja (3rd from right) presenting aflatoxin test equipment to Robert Dowuona Owoo, 4th from right). Others (from left to right): Dr Dorothy Effa; AGRA's Country Head, Juliette Lampoh-Agroh; IITA Country Representative, Richard Asare, and Daniel Agbetieme. Photo credit: Gabriel Ayeetey/GCX.

A brief official ceremony was held on 6 May at the Conference Room of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) to hand over rapid aflatoxin test equipment to the Ghana Commodity Exchange (GCX) to improve Aflatoxin Management and Control (AMC) in Ghana.

The equipment consisted of three Aflatoxin test scanners (Raptor), 15 boxes of Reveal Q+ for aflatoxin test kits, and 425 raptor vortex cartridges. In addition, five GCX staff were trained to use this equipment for aflatoxin testing. This was part of a project grant support from AGRA to [IITA](#) to provide the Technical Assistance Program on Aflatoxin Management and Control (AMC-TAP) to the Directorate of Agricultural Extension Services of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (DAES-MoFA) and the GCX.

The project aims to catalyze and sustain an inclusive agricultural transformation by improving food safety and security through institutionalized systems for aflatoxin management and control. Other project deliverables include training 500 Agricultural Extension Agents (AEAs) as trainers and 25 GCX warehouse staff on AMC.

The partnership between IITA and the GCX dates back to 2019, when the two organizations signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to collaborate on issues relating to AMC, including advocacy, awareness creation, training, and advisory support on aflatoxin test equipment.

Presenting the items, AGRA Regional Head Lionel Kadja stressed that AGRA is pleased to work with partner institutions like IITA to solve food security issues in Africa. He noted that food-borne diseases and aflatoxin contamination, in particular, adversely impact the food security, health, and trade sectors of many economies of which Ghana is no exception. He commended the GCX for helping to improve market linkages in Ghana and advised GCX to put the equipment to good use to help curb the adverse effects of aflatoxins in Ghana.

The Program Officer, Dr Dorothy Effa, lauded IITA's efforts in ensuring timely delivery of the test equipment and explained how it aligns with achieving the project's goal when used effectively. She further advised the GCX to ensure

proper use and maintenance of the equipment to benefit smallholder farmers and market actors in the various commodity value chains.

IITA Technical Consultant Daniel Agbetiameh explained the test equipment's function and the benefit it will offer to the GCX in their operations in contributing to AMC. This will further increase the availability of aflatoxin testing services to other grain aggregators supporting adherence to set standards, especially on aflatoxin. The equipment is also useful to test for the presence of other mycotoxins,

provided that the corresponding kits are purchased.

GCX Chief Operations Officer Robert Dowuona Owo, on behalf of the Board, Management, and Staff of the GCX, expressed gratitude to AGRA and IITA for the equipment and training support. He reiterated that the interaction between AGRA and IITA teams with the GCX team during the presentation highlighted their keen interest in the GCX role in addressing market inefficiencies, postharvest losses, storage issues, and agricultural financing in Ghana. *Contributed by Daniel Agbetiameh*



Top: Dr Dorothy Effa addressing the GCX. Photo credit: Emmanuel Asante/IITA. Bottom: IITA Technical Consultant Daniel Agbetiameh demonstrating the use of the equipment to officials. Photo credit: Emmanuel Asante/IITA.

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.

scale Congolese farmers to benefit from new agricultural technologies, including new practices for protecting banana against diseases and pests and the introduction of fodder to improve milk quality, as part of agricultural resilience to climate change. With the support of other development partners, IITA also showcased its state-of-the-art agricultural technologies and research facilities and emphasized the promotion of commercial and competitive agriculture that creates wealth and jobs. In October 2019, President Tshisekedi Tshilombo inaugurated the IITA Biotechnology Laboratory, the first in Central Africa. He also supported the naming of the station after President Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria, in recognition of his mobilization support and relentless efforts in the talks for the return of peace in the DRC. The station further strengthened the relationship between IITA and the DRC government.

As a technical partner, IITA supports the DRC in transforming the Congolese agricultural sector through the Agricultural Transformation Agenda program (ATA-RDC), initiated by President Tshisekedi Tshilombo. The first phase will cost \$171 million, with the Congolese government has disbursing counterpart funding of up to \$22 million.

During this historic visit, King Phillippe said, "I am happy about what I am seeing here; it's very impressive."

The King and Queen of Belgium were accompanied by members of the Belgian government, including the Minister of Cooperation, Meryame Kitir. DRC government officials were also in attendance, including the Prime Minister of DRC, His Excellency Sama Lukonde, the Director General of Migration, DG Kashwantale, the Minister of Communication, His

Excellency Muyaya Patrick, and the Governor of South Kivu, His Excellency Théo Kasingwabidje.

The innovative research approach proposed by IITA/CGIAR for the ATA-

RDC project will help to transform DRC's agriculture and benefit the people of DRC as well as Africa and the world. *Contributed by Michèle Kimpwene and Dolapo Ogunsola*



Top: IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga welcoming the royal couple. Bottom: Director R4D, Central Africa and Natural Resource Management, Bernard Vanlauwe showing off an IITA improved cassava variety.

Got a story to share?

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Buhler, AFEX, and FCT partner with IITA on agricultural productivity

Following the approval of the first phase of the Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones (SAPZ) Program, which is being implemented in seven states—Cross River, Imo, Kaduna, Kano, Kwara, Ogun, and Oyo—and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), a delegation from the FCT Authority, Buhler AG, AFEX Commodities Exchange Ltd, and other partners visited the [IITA-Abuja](#) campus to explore ways of maximizing the facility as a hub for capacity building on agricultural innovations for farmers, especially the youth and how best to increase agricultural productivity and competitiveness through technical backstopping from IITA

The meeting was coordinated by AgroNigeria as part of the DealRoom Framework of the Feed Nigeria Summit. AgroNigeria has a subsisting partnership with IITA.

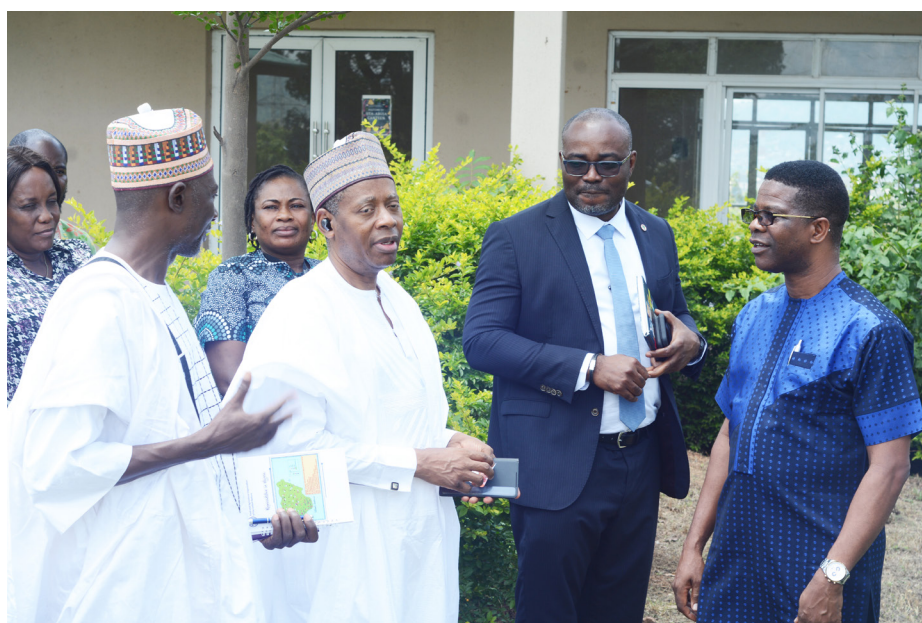
The Head of IITA-Abuja Station, represented by [Chiedozie Egesi](#), informed the team of the Institute's readiness to leverage experiences, resources, and existing facilities to support the implementation of FCTA's SAPZ and actualize the purposes of income generation, job creation, and sustainable livelihood of the populace.

The Chief of Staff to the Honourable Minister for State, FCTA, Prof M.T. Usman, remarked that SAPZ is a crucial program happening at the right time. "Considering the major challenges the country is facing at the moment, our SAPZ main target in FCT is livestock. We cannot do livestock without working on the crops for animal feed, including maize, soybean, and cassava. It is therefore important to leverage the value IITA, Buhler, and AFEX are providing," he said.

According to Buhler Country Manager Tolu Ita, Buhler will provide resource persons from her existing Crop Academies to assist with the training. At the same time, AFEX will support wealth creation by providing access to financial risk management and market connections.

In conclusion, all parties agreed to maximize the potential abounding in the IITA Abuja campus from the SAPZ standpoint because of the FCTA's involvement in the program. They will also provide information specific to roles and the potential cost of implementation in cluster farmers' development, training, and cost of coordination activities that will enhance the successful implementation of SAPZ in the FCTA.

Prof. Egesi appreciated the delegation and assured them that IITA would provide value for every investment they make toward this partnership. He guided them on a tour of the IITA Abuja facility to close out the session. *Contributed by Terngu Abur*



*Top: The Buhler, AFEX, and FCTA delegation with IITA's Prof. Egesi (3rd from left).
Bottom: Prof. Egesi guiding the delegation on a tour around the IITA Abuja campus.*

IITA to collaborate with Arise IIP to create sustainable value chains

On 14 June, Dr Adeola Odedina, Commissioner for the Ministry of Agriculture, Ogun State, Nigeria, accompanied by the [ARISE Integrated Industrial Platform \(Arise IIP\)](#) Vice President, Suren Abeywickrema, and the OgunInvest group visited [IITA](#) headquarters. The visit aimed to secure expert support for some crops, including cassava, maize, soybean, and their value chains for local, regional, and export markets.

Director of IITA Development and Delivery Office, [Alfred Dixon](#), welcomed the teams and outlined IITA's activities through a video. He said that IITA is available to foster partnerships for agricultural development with African stakeholders.

Odedina briefly introduced OgunInvest, which improves the ease of doing business in Ogun State by promoting investors and investment opportunities in the State. He further explained that Arise IIP, through Oguninvest, wants to collaborate with IITA to develop a roadmap and agenda on the agricultural value chains of some crops.

Abeywickrema explained that Arise IIP is a joint venture between Olam, AP Moller, and the Africa Finance Corporation. The platform focuses on identifying industrial gaps in Africa and creating new industries through transforming local raw materials.

Abeywickrema also explained the platform's emphasis on agroprocessing and crop production with sustainable value chains that will create jobs within the country and have competitive value

in the global market. Therefore, he requested data about other crops to know the type of crops they would adopt.

Responding to his request, BASICS II Project Manager Lateef Sanni highlighted why "modified cassava starch" would be the best market for Arise IIP, as the pharmaceutical, livestock, and plywood industries would have a high demand for it.

In addition, Sanni mentioned that IITA would support them in building cassava tissue culture to ensure a clean cassava stem. He added that the Institute would connect Arise IIP with IITA-GoSeed so the industry could grow the seed according to their specification, which would lead to increased yield. *Contributed by Anita Akinyomade*



Top right: Mr Suren Abeywickrema outlining his request to the IITA team. Center: Prof. Sanni discussing next steps with the Ogun State team. Bottom: IITA management team with the OgunInvest and Arise IIP team.