

Celebrating International Youth Day and ten years of the youth agripreneur movement

The [IITA Youth Agripreneurs \(IYA\)](#) is recognized as one of the pioneer models for youth engagement in the agriculture sector. Since its inception in 2012, IYA has led several initiatives involving women, the young and old in providing jobs and ensuring food sustainability. [to page 3](#)



IITA DG Nteranya Sanginga mentoring young people.

CGIAR Global Finance Director tours IITA business and production facilities



Zandstra observing the Aflasafe technology for clean seeds developed by IITA.

The CGIAR Global Director for Innovative Finance and Resource Mobilization, [Andre Zandstra](#), in his week-long visit to [IITA](#), 26–30 July, witnessed first-hand the business, research solutions, technology innovations, and impact deliverables of IITA.

At the [Business Incubation Platform \(BIP\)](#), the technology delivery arm of IITA_CGIAR, responsible for producing agricultural solutions and upscaling them for commercial benefit, Zandstra had a run-down of the efficacy, use, and production capacity of the [Aflasafe™](#) and [NoduMax](#) products. These products provide safe, virile, and high-quality seeds and planting conditions for soybean, cowpea, maize, and groundnut farmers. Zandstra and [Frederick Schreurs](#), BIP's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), proposed strategies to support seed companies in meeting the fallout posed by the fertilizer shortage due to the ongoing Russian-Ukraine war, among others.

Zandstra went further to interact with [IITA Youth in Agribusiness \(IYA\)](#). Representatives from the [Start Them Early Program \(STEP\)](#) and IYA took him through the projects, impacts, and influence they have had over the years among youth and primary and secondary school students in the African countries they operate in. Zandstra applauded the youth for harnessing available resources to meet varied demands in the agricultural sector, including fisheries, aquaculture, farming, training, value addition, and capacity development.

While visiting the [Cassava Processing Unit](#), International Trials Manager Peter

Iluebbey showed Zandstra around and listed the different cassava varieties developed by IITA so far, the high-yielding, bio-fortified, and improved varieties. He also saw various food products cassava root and leaves provide for African dishes. IITA Postharvest Engineer Diallo Thierno showed the Director an array of machines developed in IITA to meet the processing needs of cassava to consumable foods. He enjoined Zandstra to foster collaborations that would push the scaling-up of these technologies between partner companies and to other parts of the world.

At the [Biogas Plant](#), [Waheed Quader](#), Head of Facilities Management Services (FMS), and [Martins Akeredolu](#), Deputy Head, FMS, took Zandstra through the technology of waste conversion to biogas developed by IITA and the [Y-SWEP](#) youth. He also had a drive through the canteen, IITA clinic, and the water treatment plant.

In all, Zandstra was pleased to experience in-person the various technologies developed by IITA to increase yields, improve lives and livelihoods, and promote food security in Africa. He leaves with a resolve to intensify initiatives, outreaches, and efforts that would direct funding to scale existing and proposed food development initiatives of IITA. *Contributed by Folake Oduntan*



*Top: Peter Iluebbey, International Trials Manager, showing Zandstra various food products from cassava.
Bottom: Zandstra poses with IYA and STEP representatives after an engaging session with them.*

As the world celebrates International Youth Day (IYD) on 12 August, IYA acknowledges the importance of the critical roles of people across generations in achieving a sustainable future for the youth.

Tracing the history of IYA, the role and effort of inclusive generations in the growth of this movement are affirmed. The “Agripreneur” initiative of IITA started with fewer than 50 youth on IITA Campus in Ibadan, Nigeria. It has blossomed, with thousands of young people across Africa benefiting from the program in a decade. Many of the program’s beneficiaries now manage their own farms, while others have chosen other vocations within the agriculture space.

This success can be attributed to the support of the old and young generations who have served as financiers, mentors, and technical experts to IYA.

In commemorating IYD 2022, IYA recognizes the support of its mentors that has helped give birth and strengthened the African youth agripreneur movement. Among them is the internationally acclaimed “father of agripreneurs in Africa” and IITA Director General, Dr [Nteranya Sanginga](#), who organized the youth group and instituted the IITA Youth in Agribusiness office in 2012. Ten years later, he still inspires youth leadership across the continent and provides continuous mentorship, leadership, and support for youth agripreneurs across Africa.

Another notable mentor, African Development Bank (AfDB) President Dr Akinwumi Adesina, throws his weight behind agripreneurs through programs and investments that target youth groups. He always charges the older generation to embrace younger people in implementing the needed economic and financial change. The Agripreneur building in IITA is named

after him to recognize his passion for youth empowerment.

The support of the Emeritus President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Dr Kanayo Nwanze, has also provided strong mentorship and guidance to IYA since the beginning of the agripreneur movement.

The IYA model proves that with the appropriate institutional support, an enabling environment, and mentorship, young people can substantially impact the agri-food system. Obvious opportunities exist for directing African youth toward agribusiness for societal and economic benefit. On this International Youth Day, IYA affirms that for Africa to feed itself sustainably, action is needed across all generations to achieve a thriving agriculture and agribusiness sector. We must leverage the potentials of all generations, but for sustainability, we must stand solid behind the youth who will continue the course.

Dr Sanginga expects IYA’s growing influence to translate into a food-secure future for Africa. “We envisage IYA providing leadership and services to young agripreneurs across Africa, developing collaborative programs to advance youth agribusiness skills, and improving agribusiness opportunities and youth’s creditworthiness,” says DG Sanginga.

The next critical step for all developmental organizations and governments on the continent working with youth for development is to support a comprehensive program such as IYA that forges widespread commitment and partnership, effectively combining these approaches and delivering cost-effective opportunities to youth for profitable agribusiness development.

Contributed by Dolapo Ogunsola



Top: IITA Youth Agripreneurs on the field in Uganda. Bottom: ENABLE Youth’s visit to AfDB Headquarters.

PAULESI students visit IITA breeding program

Building the capacities of the younger generation would translate into immediate and long-term goal gains within and outside the organization and the agricultural enterprise as a whole. This was the drive of the conversation when [Prof John Derera](#), IITA Head of Breeding, received ten students from the [Pan African University for Life and Earth Sciences \(PAULESI\)](#) on 6 August. The students were drawn from eight countries: Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Niger, Nigeria, and Rwanda.

The one-day lecture at the Institute's headquarters was themed "Modern Plant Breeding- Integrating Biotechnology and New Breeding Tools in Classical Breeding Programs." The lecture exposed the students to modern breeding systems to ensure that genetic gains can be accelerated in the smallholder farming sector. These gains would enhance food security, reduce malnutrition, improve environmental health, strengthen farmer and community resilience to the vagaries of climate change, and foster gender, youth, and social inclusion. This training will help the young and future plant breeders to apply the knowledge gained in their careers and pass it to the next generation.

Prof Derera explained the evolution of the plant breeding profession from before the first World War through to the second World War, and the current conflict in eastern Europe causing food insecurity challenges. He emphasized the role played by modern plant breeding systems to ensure food security and better nutrition for vulnerable communities, especially in the global south. Modern plant breeding includes accelerated breeding processes, producing seed more cheaply, thereby reducing seed prices, and standardizing the product development process.

Furthermore, he highlighted the essential elements of a breeding program, such as people, plants, and processes, which all require improvement in organization, use of state-of-the-art technology, and global information systems. Following this explanation, "he mentioned that 'efficiency' in the breeding process would lead to a high output and high benefits per dollar invested in product development."

One of the students, Mahamane Abdoul-Razak, from Niger, commended Prof Derera on how zealous he is about modern plant breeding. He also



Prof. Derera explaining the essential elements of a breeding program.

appreciated his insightful knowledge about modern plant breeding, using practical examples to ensure a better understanding of breeding terms.

Ruth Oluwasegun, from Nigeria, a student of the Plant Breeding Department, stated, "I would incorporate the knowledge gained into practical use to make sure food insecurity, malnutrition, and poverty are eradicated to achieve a sustainable agriculture in Africa." *Contributed by Anita Akinyomade*



Prof. Derera with the young breeders.

Got a story to share?

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Partner organizations benefit from IITA-PDAU capacity-building activities

The [IITA-CGIAR](#) Project Development and Administration Unit (PDAU) organized a 3-day workshop on “Effective Proposal Budgeting, Grants Management, and Administration” at the Institute’s headquarters from 18 to 20 July 2022. The workshop aimed to develop capacity and close the knowledge gap of participating institutions to enhance effective service delivery in managing grants from IITA and other international development organizations.

In attendance were scientists and administrative staff from [Afe Babalola University](#), Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD); [Crops Research Institute](#) (CSIR), Ghana; [Sasakawa Africa Association](#); [Bayero University, Kano](#) (BUK), and IITA.

Kayode Awobajo, Head, IITA-PDAU, graciously welcomed and encouraged participants to take advantage of the training to exchange experiences freely, share lessons learned, and network with colleagues during the sessions. In his opening remarks, the IITA Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery, Kenton Dashiell, explained the importance of the capacity development activity in promoting partnership among IITA’s collaborators. He encouraged participants to maximize the opportunity to exchange knowledge to enhance productivity, especially in resource mobilization and better implementation of projects.

The facilitators were from the PDAU team. Moruff Kareem gave a presentation on “Fundamentals

of grants proposal budgeting,” and Ovegho Okome took a session on “Understanding contract financial management.” Seun Oladeji facilitated the session on “Stakeholders and time management in grants administration”, and Samuel Olowoyeye from IITA Finance Directorate spoke on “Partners’ financial reporting, invoicing, justification, and fund disbursement.”

Activities during the interactive workshop included case studies, practical sessions, and ice-breakers while participants took a tour of IITA facilities on the workshop’s final day.

In his closing remarks, Awobajo appreciated the participants for their brilliant contributions during the sessions and acknowledged the tremendous efforts put into the planning by his PDAU colleagues while expressing excitement for the positive feedback from the participants.

During the wrap-up session, Prof Emmanuel Otoo, on behalf of CSIR-CRI, Ghana, expressed delight at IITA’s excellent delivery during the training and committed to attend future training with his team.

Abdul Abdurashheed from Sasakawa appreciated the PDAU team’s professional delivery during the training while assuring that the quality experience gained will open further collaborative opportunities and engagements between the two institutions.

Dr Amina Mustapha from BUK appreciated IITA for sustaining a long-

standing partnership between both institutions. She said she looks forward to more collaboration and attending such training in the future.

Prof Abiodun Ojo from ABUAD, said the training experience was an eye-opener for him and his colleagues while extending goodwill wishes from Aare Afe Babalola, the founder of ABUAD. Prof Ojo added that the training would strengthen the positive collaboration between IITA and ABUAD.

The feedback from participants reinforced the necessity of further engaging the PDAU team to establish and build the capacity of similar Central Grants Office in their various institutions.

According to CDA, BUK group feedback, “We came aspiring to learn from IITA-PDAU’s wealth of experience and exposure, and our expectations were met. Our anticipations were also met and the hospitality was top-notch. The ice-breaker sessions also helped establish bonds among participants, which was worth all the time spent. We are indeed grateful to the workshop organizers, and their effort is appreciated.”

Wrapping up the workshop, [Hilde Koper-Limbourg](#), IITA’s Deputy Director General, Corporate Services, presented certificates to participants while acknowledging the strategic role of the PDAU team in IITA. She appreciated the active interaction by participants and encouraged further collaborations between participating institutions and the IITA-PDAU team.

Contributed by Anita Akinyomade



Workshop participants with the facilitators.

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.