

IITA Zero Hunger Project equips nutrition and agriprenurship trainers in Nigeria's Middle Belt

Twenty-nine farmers, extension agents, food processors, and food entrepreneurs participated in a training of trainers workshop on nutrition and agriprenurship in Benue State, Nigeria.

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Workshop participants displaying their just-produced HQCF.

IITA's strategic role highlighted during new agricultural season launch



Uvira Territory Administrator Bonheur Kayamba being shown how to use a tractor.

The official launch of the 2022–2023 agricultural season A in South Kivu took place on 30 August, in the city of Sange, Ruzizi Plain, in the Territory of Uvira, South Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of Congo. [IITA CGIAR](https://www.iita.org) participated in this initiative of the Uvira Territory Administrator as a strategic partner in DRC's and South Kivu's agricultural sector.

IITA Researcher Isaac Balume spoke to stakeholders attending the launch about the technical assistance IITA provides in the implementation of the Agenda for the Transformation of Agriculture in the Democratic Republic of Congo (ATA-DRC) Program. This initiative of the President, HE Félix Antoine Tshisekedi, aims to improve the efforts made in the agricultural sector in the DRC, whose population is at the heart of the program's concerns. ATA-DRC focuses on access to quality

seeds, appropriate farming techniques to increase their yields, processing quality agricultural products, and facilitating market access.

The Assistant Administrator of the Territory of Uvira, Bonheur Kayamba, praised IITA-CGIAR efforts in the territory. He underlined the Institute's support in the PICAGL project to improve and increase agricultural production with the new seed varieties introduced for rice and cassava in the region,

create employment for young people, and improve the living conditions of farmers who have adopted the technologies.

He expressed his desire to see agro producers in Uvira Territory and other areas take the opportunities offered by the ATA-DRC program to rid the region of hunger and nutrition insecurity. He said he hoped to see agribusiness thrive as a way of life in the region.

Contributed by Michèle Kimpwene



Administrator of Uvira Territory, Bonheur Kayamba, launching the 2022-2023 agriculture season in South Kivu.

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The [IITA](#) Zero Hunger Initiative (IITA-ZHI) project conducted the five-day intensive training from 15 to 19 August in partnership with the Center for Food Technology and Research of the Benue State University (CEFTER-BSU) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development Value Chain Development Programme (IFAD-VCDP).

Benue State Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Dr Kester Kyenge, lauded the collaborative efforts of IITA-ZHI, CEFTER-BSU, IFAD-VCDP, and other partners to make the training possible. He noted that today's global hunger threat highlighted the importance of the training and called for an inward solution to address it. He praised the workshop's gender mainstreaming, evident in the female majority participation (26 women and 3 men). "As long as we keep emphasizing the role of women in food value chain development, we are halfway towards ensuring nutrition and food security. The government's responsibility is to keep encouraging women to be drivers of this food sustenance vehicle," Kyenge said.

IITA-ZHI Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Manager, Oyewale Abioye, celebrated extension agents' ceaseless efforts to achieve zero hunger in the state. He disclosed that early interactions between ZHI and CEFTER led to mapping CEFTER as one of the Initiatives to support the state government in achieving zero hunger and culminated in signing a memo of agreement between IITA and BSU.

Abioye said that the IITA-ZHI in Benue State has three main components:

agricultural policy assessment for technology uptake, productivity enhancement for cassava and rice farmers, and capacity development for agriculture extension officers, service providers, and farmers. Based on these, the project has engaged the government and other stakeholders to assess agriculture policies and has made recommendations to ensure the attainment of zero hunger in the state.

The IITA-ZHI project's work with extension agents and other stakeholders aims to increase farmers' production capacity and improve collaboration between the government and farmers to achieve zero hunger. Capacity-building activities include introducing extension agents to digital agricultural tools like the IITA Herbicide Calculator and Area Calculator, which are available on mobile app stores. While the Herbicide Calculator helps farmers determine the right amounts of agrochemicals to use to avoid overdosing or underdosing on farmlands, the land measurement tool—Area Calculator—assists farmers in determining the exact size of their land to ensure they purchase the correct quantity of inputs. This, in turn, leads to profit maximization by farmers.

The training also addressed cassava substitution in pastry making, particularly now, with wheat costs and availability hugely impacted by the Russia-Ukraine war.

Another rationale for the training, according to Abioye, was to improve nutrition for pregnant women, nursing mothers, and households in general with simple and non-expensive

products like vitamin A cassava and high-quality cassava flour (HQCF). IITA-CGIAR has improved some of these cassava products, which are not entirely new.

CEFTER-BSU Center Leader Dr Barnaba Ikyo noted that the skills learned in this workshop hold huge income generation potential and charged participants to maximize it. He appreciated IITA for actualizing the agreement signed in 2022. The workshop focused on value addition, teaching participants to prepare products such as cassava-beans moi-moi, combo bits, yellow cassava garri, cassava custard, and peanut burger. They also learned to make HQCF cakes, puff-puff cakes, peanut burgers, and cassava custard (Castard).

The attendees received their participation certificates from the Permanent Secretary Hembadon Gum, representing the Honorable Commissioner of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Administration, of the Benue State University, Prof. Mike Odugbo Odey, who represented the Vice-Chancellor.

One of the participants and wife of the Paramount Ruler of Tiv Land, Prof. Felicia Ayatse, commended the workshop organizers and expressed optimism that the training would go a long way in ensuring nutrition and food security in the state. She said she hoped the training would provide Benue women with sources of income when the knowledge is eventually cascaded by the participants to members of their various cooperatives and communities.

Contributed by Zero Hunger Project Team

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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.

IFAD Country Director seeks stronger ties with IITA

A five-member delegation from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), led by the newly appointed Country Director, Ekou Dede, paid a courtesy visit to [IITA](#) Abuja. The visit created an opportunity for the IFAD and IITA teams to discuss issues of mutual benefit.



Left: Head of IITA Abuja Station Professor Lateef Sanni briefing the IFAD Country Director and her team. Right: IFAD Country Director Ekou Dede speaking at the meeting.

Head of IITA Abuja Station Professor Lateef Sanni briefed the delegation on IITA's work, which spans over 55 years, highlighting the achievements of transformation technologies and

modern best practices. Sanni and the IITA project leaders who were present organized an interactive session to showcase their work and provide an opportunity for discussion.

In her remarks, Dede congratulated everyone for the technically impressive presentations despite the short notice. "Your presentations have expanded our understanding of the ground-breaking results that the various projects are undertaking. This meeting has helped shed light on multiple pathways we could take to deepen our partnership through program or policy work. Our key priorities are youth inclusion, gender transformation, market access, and innovative agronomic practices to boost farmers' productivity, resilience, income, and nutrition-sensitive agriculture," she said.

She also emphasized prioritizing one or two areas for deeper collaboration. She said the IFAD delegation would be pleased to continue learning about the progress made by the IFAD-financed agribusiness hub project and looks forward to leveraging the results in other youth-oriented initiatives.

"IITA is excited about the prospects of working with you in the areas you have highlighted. I also want to reassure you that our team is always ready and willing to share more details about the agribusiness hub project that is being funded by your organization," Prof. Sanni said.

Contributed by Temgu Abur



The IFAD delegation with the IITA-Abuja team.

Agric Commissioner reiterates government's commitment to ensuring zero hunger in Benue State

Benue State Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Dr Kester Kyenge, has applauded the IITA Zero Hunger Initiative (IITA-ZHI) project for its efforts to ensure food security in the state. Speaking in his office on 15 August, Kyenge reiterated the state government's commitment to sustaining the partnership for the benefit of the Benue people. The commissioner said this as he hosted a team from IITA-ZHI who visited the state to assess the implementation of the policy recommendations by the project in line with the program's objectives.

Benue State is one of the three states in Nigeria where the Zero Hunger project is being implemented. As part of efforts toward its actualization, the IITA-ZHI team visited the commissioner at the project's inception in 2021 to propose policy directions in line with the project's set goals. The visit aimed to assess the level at which the state government has keyed into these proposals to achieve Zero Hunger.

Dr Kyenge commended the Zero Hunger team for relentlessly ensuring that farmers, processors, extension agents, agripreneurs, and other stakeholders along the cassava value chain are equipped with the requisite knowledge and capacity to ensure food security in the state. He observed that since the state government's partnership with the project, farmers and extension workers in the state were doing better.

The commissioner highlighted the project's capacity development efforts, which have resulted in rural farmers and extension agents adopting best practices in cassava cultivation. This has gone a long way in changing the

fortunes of the farmers. When the state government officially flagged off the 2022 cassava cropping season in partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development Value Chain Development Programme (IFAD-VCDP), some improved seedlings were sourced from IITA-ZHI trained seed entrepreneurs to the delight of stakeholders. According to the commissioner, all these efforts are highly commendable.

The commissioner also briefed the team on the state government's policy efforts to achieve Zero Hunger. He disclosed that, in 2017, the state government passed an Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranch Establishment Law to address the incessant farmer-herder crisis. He noted that the law is in line with global best practices in animal husbandry and has been adopted by other states of Nigeria.

Dr Kyenge noted that a strong nexus exists between agricultural sustenance and security of lives and property and that security has been on the front burner in Benue. He, however, observed that "it is quite unfortunate that the entire FADAMA belt of Benue has been sacked by marauding herdsman for grazing purposes. Local governments along the River Benue have become flash points of herder-farmer clashes, which is worrisome as it affects the overall food sustenance policy of the government and, by extension, the Zero Hunger drive which the state is partnering to achieve." He, however, disclosed that the state government has partnered with the federal government in the area of Agro Rangers to intervene and has launched the State Volunteer Guards to serve as a security intelligence and information sharing network to reassure farmers.



Benue State Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Dr Kester Kyenge, speaking with the IITA-ZHI team.

The commissioner commended IITA-ZHI and other partners for their role in building farmers' and extension workers' capacity. He noted that, as a system, people are expected to work and retire with new people engaged, which also goes for extension workers in his ministry. He regretted that the state lacked the resources to recruit a full workforce due to dwindling resources. He disclosed that the government had sometimes made extraordinary arrangements to see how some people who are due for retirement can pass down knowledge. He appreciated IITA-CGIAR and other partners for stepping up to the challenge of developing capacity in that regard and appealed that the Zero Hunger project be extended to all the local government Areas of the state.

The project team also paid a courtesy visit to the Benue State University Vice Chancellor and the university management team. *Contributed by Zero Hunger Project Team*



Group photo after a meeting with the Benue State University Vice-Chancellor, management team, and CEFTER leader.