

First release of natural enemies against FAW in farmers' fields in Cameroon



[IITA CGIAR](#) has partnered with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to release the fall armyworm (FAW) egg parasitoid *Telenomus remus* in West Cameroon. The collaborators have been developing innovations to manage FAW in Cameroon.

FAO partner observing FAW egg parasitoids in vials ready for release in the field.

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Government of Ghana launches landmark Aflatoxin Policy calling for Aflasafe adoption

Ghana is on the path to overcoming issues related to aflatoxin contamination in food and feed—maize, groundnut, sorghum, and derived products—by launching a landmark National Policy for Aflatoxin Control in Food and Feed.



The Minister for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Dr Kwaku Afriyie (front row, sixth from right), with other public and private sector stakeholders showcasing the National Aflatoxin Policy document at the launch event in Accra.

The Aflatoxin Policy, launched in Accra on 12 October, provides a coordinated approach among institutions and stakeholders to control aflatoxin in foods and feeds to reduce foodborne diseases. A successful implementation would also increase the income of farmers and agricultural stakeholders and promote food security and food safety in keeping with Goal 2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—Achieve Zero Hunger by 2030.

Ghana's Minister for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), Dr Kwaku Afriyie, lauded the effort of the Science and Technology Policy Research Institute of Ghana's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR-STEPRI) for their leading role in developing the policy. Afriyie emphasized that aflatoxin contamination in crops has serious implications for food security, health, trade, and livelihoods. He noted how aflatoxin might be linked to increased liver cancer cases in Ghana (21% of all recorded cancer cases in Ghana).

Afriyie elaborated on how aflatoxins pose a barrier to trade and market development due to the rejection of contaminated products by local and international buyers. In the early 2000s, the European Union (EU) was the main destination for Ghana's groundnut and maize products; however, only 10% of the exported peanut butter met the stringent EU standards in 2019. The Minister, therefore, acknowledged that the policy aligns with the Government's Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies (2017-2024), which recognizes challenges in agriculture, nutrition, and health and makes provisions for addressing them. When implemented, he said, it would boost the success of the government's flagship programs, including Planting for

Food and Jobs, Planting for Exports and Rural Development, Rearing for Food and Jobs, and One District One Factory.

In his speech, the Minister of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), Dr Owusu Afriyie Akoto, also recognized the immense adverse effects of aflatoxin contamination. He indicated that MoFA, through the Plant Protection and Regulatory Services Directorate (PPRSD), has developed codes of practice for preventing, reducing, and eliminating aflatoxin contamination in maize and groundnut in the country.

Long-time IITA collaborator and Chairman of the National Steering Committee for Aflatoxin Control, Professor Richard T. Awuah, appealed to the Government of Ghana through MoFA to adopt Aflasafe GH01 and Aflasafe GH02. These aflatoxin biocontrol products were developed specifically for Ghana through painstaking research by IITA, in collaboration with the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and the US Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS). He said studies have shown that, apart from its high effectiveness in maize and groundnut, farmers who used Aflasafe to cultivate sorghum in the Northern Region produced aflatoxin-safe sorghum.

"This is probably the most important way we can minimize aflatoxin contamination of our feed and food in Ghana. We have tried drying, early planting, early harvesting, and proper storage. These are good, but they don't amount to much. It is the Aflasafe, which is going to do the trick," Prof. Awuah said. He added: "If the Government helps make Aflasafe available to farmers, it will help a lot in mitigating aflatoxin contamination of our foods." Aflasafe distribution

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A significant aspect of the policy is that CSIR-STEPRI used the Prioritizing Investments for Market Access (P-IMA) framework in collaboration with AGRA and the support of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) to harness the power of strong public-private dialogue, economic data, and evidence for prioritizing investments related to aflatoxin control. Further, various activities identified were ranked into five main investment options in the Aflatoxin Policy's implementation plan to bring the policy's vision to life:

1. Consolidating institutional capacity to ensure successful implementation of the policy
2. Increasing public awareness, advocacy, communication, and demand for aflatoxin-safe food and feed
3. Strengthening research and technology transfer on aflatoxin
4. Enhancing surveillance systems for the detection of aflatoxin-related diseases in humans, livestock, and fish
5. Strengthening the capacity of value chain actors in pre- and postharvest aflatoxin management for market access.

The goal for implementing activities under these investment options is to strengthen consumer protection while increasing market access for domestic and international trade in aflatoxin-safe food products for increased income of value chain actors. MoFA, MESTI, the Ministry of Health (MoH), and the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MoTI) have been tasked to lead the implementation of activities within their respective mandates. *Contributed by Daniel Agbetiameh*

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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.

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Through One CGIAR's Plant Health Initiative (PHI), the IITA-Cameroon IPM team, led by [Komi Fiaboe](#), has identified several FAW natural enemies under the humid tropical forest and Sudano-Sahelian agroecologies of Cameroon. They established that the egg parasitoid *Telonomus remus* was the most aggressive, frequent, and widely distributed in farmers' fields. Through joint funding of PHI and the FAO-funded Integrated Management Strategy for the Fall armyworm in Central Africa project, the parasitoid was collected from fields and mass-produced in the IITA Cameroon Entomology Laboratory under the leadership of IITA researcher Samuel Nanga Nanga.

The current release aims to promote conservative and augmentative biological control in a small-scale maize production system. The first batch of 45,000 *T. remus* individuals was released from 3 to 5 October in Bangangte, Dschang, and Foubot in the West Region of Cameroon by IITA researcher Albert Abang, in collaboration with Nguelo Collins from MINADER and Jeannette Florence Magni from FAO.

The release was witnessed by nine FAO and MINADER field trainers (seven men and two women) and 42 farmers (12 women). Forty-two farmers (30 men and 12 women) were trained on conserving natural enemies in the maize production system and on the ecosystem services rendered by those invisible friends. Specifically, farmers learned to identify FAW egg batches, differentiate the characteristics of parasitized eggs from non-parasitized ones, and recognize the presence of natural enemies and the detrimental effect of broad-spectrum pesticides on natural enemies.

The second release round will be conducted in the cropping season, and a similar release exercise is planned for the Centre Region of Cameroon. Post-release surveys will also be carried out to assess the improvement of egg parasitism rates. According to Abang, this release, the first of its kind in the Central Africa region, is expected to create awareness of conservative biological control of major pests in the maize production systems among farmers and extension officers.

Contributed by Komi Fiaboe



Top: Farmers in Bangangte listen to an explanation on biological control strategy and the negative effects of chemical control. **Center:** Farmers participate in pre-release evaluation and search for fall armyworm eggs in maize in Sangwa village in Bantoum, a locality in the Nde division, West region of Cameroon. **Bottom:** IITA researcher and farmer releasing parasitoids in Tsinbing village, Dschang subdivision of West region, Cameroon.

IITA trains local journalists on cassava seed system in Tanzania

[IITA-CGIAR](#), in collaboration with Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA), Tanzania Official Seed Certification Institute (TOSCI), Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TOSCI), and the Ministry of Agriculture under the Building Economically Sustainable Seed Systems for Cassava, Phase II (BASICS-II) project conducted a two-day training for local media reporters to effectively communicate and advocate for cassava seed system and cassava value chains in Tanzania. The workshop trained the journalists on communicating effectively about the cassava value chain, which would help them disseminate accurate information to communities. The training was held recently at the IITA Eastern Africa hub office in Dar es Salaam.

During the training, the IITA Head of Advocacy and Resource Mobilization, [Regina Kapinga](#), noted that cassava offers multiple marketing opportunities for farmers and processors. “The goal is to put journalists at the forefront in promoting the crop and opportunities still untapped along the value chain to the farmers and agricultural stakeholders across the country,” she said.

Head of Communication at the Ministry of Agriculture, Hudson Kamoga, noted

that private sector actors play a significant role in agriculture. Thus, it is difficult for the government to work alone, whereas the government has a massive strategy to advance the agriculture sector by ten percent by 2030.

“The Ministry of Agriculture values IITA’s efforts in developing the sector, and I promise we will keep working together. I also appreciate the work done by journalists, as you have been inspiring us through your agricultural publications,” Kamoga said.

The participants learned about foundational topics, including the cassava profile, cassava seed system, breeding systems, certification process, diseases, and the potential of using improved varieties, digital tools used in cassava agronomy (NURU, AKILIMO, and Seed Tracker), and the role of media in promoting the seed systems.

IITA Assistant Projects Manager and Resource Mobilization for East African Hub, Bahati Maregeri, stressed the need to spread the commercialized cassava seed systems to the farming communities for more adoption to increase productivity, improve food safety, and boost income.

“Even though we conduct research, not many people are aware of the commercialized cassava seed system. This has not yet been on farmers’ minds since they believe they can get local seeds from their neighbors, which is bad because such seeds are easily susceptible to diseases. We need your support to inform the communities in simple language,” Maregeri emphasized.

During the training, the participants prepared the strategic communication calendar for disseminating cassava production information to the communities according to the planting season. The participants also toured the modern state-of-the-art facilities, such as the Science Building with five laboratories, where IITA’s local and international research is carried out.

On behalf of the participants, the agricultural reporters’ association chairperson, Gerald Kitabu, urged his fellow journalists to write and report cassava-related news accurately without misleading the public. “Journalists must have credible sources of information. IITA is a good platform to connect with researchers who will provide us with factual findings; let’s use them effectively,” Kitabu noted.

In her closing remarks, IITA Director for Eastern Africa Hub, [Leena Tripathi](#), noted that partnerships between IITA and media houses are critical for both parties to achieve their mission and contribute to developing the country’s agricultural sector.

“This is a continuous partnership, not just for the BASICS-II project but also for the entire Institute. Today, you are being trained on cassava under the BASICS-II project; next time, you might be here to work on other crops like banana, maize, beans, or other IITA technologies,” Tripathi anticipated.

The BASICS-II project aims to provide farmers with access to affordable, quality-assured seed of cassava varieties in demand by local food and processor markets by strengthening a commercially viable seed value chain operating across breeder, basic, and commercial or certified seed levels. This value chain will enable more efficient dissemination and adoption of superior varieties to improve productivity, increase the incomes of cassava growers and seed entrepreneurs, improve gender equity, and contribute to inclusive agricultural transformation in Tanzania and Nigeria. Contributed by Hadi Rashid



*Top: Participants excitedly following a presentation during the training. Photo: IITA/Hadi Rashid.
Bottom: IITA researcher, Rudolph Shirima (left), explaining how the Molecular Biology Laboratory works for cassava and other crops. Photo: IITA/Gloriana Ndibalema.*

UK FCDO seeks strengthened research partnerships

A delegation from the United Kingdom Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) recently paid a four-day visit to [IITA](#) headquarters in Ibadan to review the existing partnership between the two organizations.



The FCDO Food and Agriculture Advisor Nicholas Baynham and Deputy Program Manager Naanchin Muhammad were received by IITA Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery (DDG-P4D), [Kenton Dashiell](#) and other members of the Institute's Management team.

In his opening remarks, Baynham said the visit was to learn and experience the research side of the MoUs that have been signed, such as the recently signed one with HarvestPlus.

He stated that the visit is part of the team's plans to have better oversight of what the UK does in Nigeria, "to know about what we are funding and contributing to while exploring what we can do more," he said.

In his welcome remarks, Dashiell encouraged them to ask questions to get all the information they need during their tour of IITA's facilities. He also gave an overview of IITA research activities in West Africa.

IITA Biomarker and Anthropometry Lead for the National Food Consumption and Micronutrient Survey (NFCMS), [Mercy Lungaho](#), gave insights from the National Nutrition Survey report. "IITA is working with partners to ensure that agriculture works for agriculture," she said.

She also highlighted the need to increase efforts to help people make informed, healthy choices and improve nutrition metrics.

Baynham commended the IITA Nutrition team's contribution to the national survey and stated that it is an excellent approach to addressing food insecurity.

Deputy Director General, Corporate Services (DDG-CS), [Hilde Koper](#), also gave the visitors an overview of IITA's Corporate Service activities in Nigeria and Africa. There was also an overview of IITA's financial management and project administration.

The FCDO team visited various facilities at IITA headquarters, including the Genetic Resources Center, Nutrition Laboratory, Cassava Unit, HarvestPlus, the IITA-Youth in Agribusiness Office,



Top: IITA Deputy Director General, Partnerships for Delivery, Dr Kenton Dashiell and IITA Management team members in a meeting with the FCDO team. Bottom: FCDO Food and Agriculture Advisor Nicholas Baynham and Deputy Program Manager Naanchin Muhammad visiting the ILRI Livestock farm.

and the Business Incubation Platform (BIP) showcasing Aflasafe, Nodumax, and GoSeed.

“The extent of IITA’s work is much bigger than I had previously thought, and it is impressive. It is also good to look at the different ways of integrating research; for example, the integration of the genebank, biosciences, and the field activities are all very interesting,” said an excited Baynham.

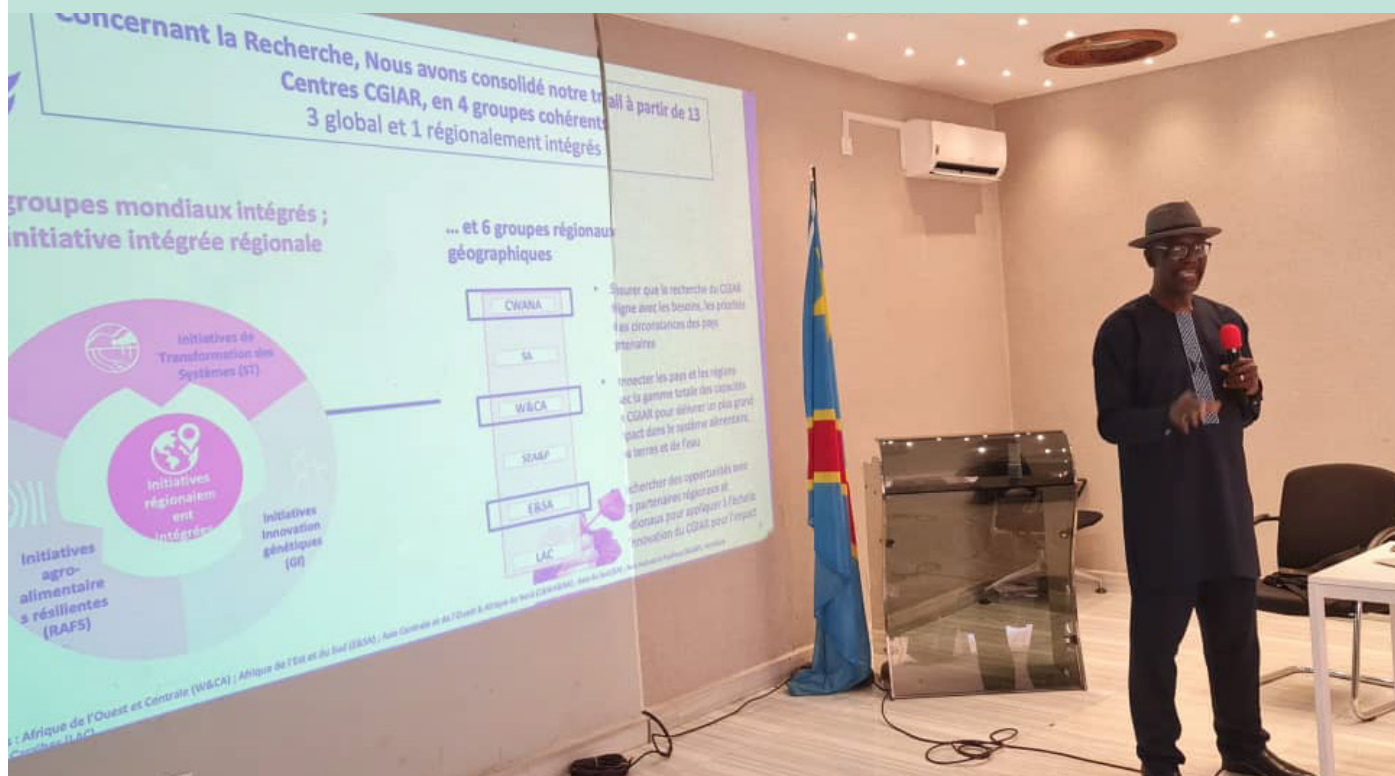
The FCDO team said they would explore suitable ways to strengthen the mechanism for communication between both organizations, especially within Nigeria. This will provide more opportunities to collaborate and engage in the future. *Contributed by Timilehin Osunde*



FCDO team visiting a rice trial site with AfricaRice Country Representative Dr Francis Nwile.

DR Congo hosts consultative forum to elaborate on new One CGIAR structure

One CGIAR—the newly restructured consortium—held an Informational and Consultative Meeting on 9 September in Bukavu, the capital of the South-Kivu province of DR Congo.



Dr Kwesi Atta-Krah presenting an overview of the restructured One CGIAR, on behalf of the Regional Director for West and Central Africa.

Hosted and led by CGIAR centers operating in DR Congo—IITA and the Alliance of Bioversity International and International Center for Tropical Agriculture or CIAT (ABC)—the one-day session brought together the diverse partners and stakeholders in the agropastoral sector at its various value chain levels. Besides representatives of civil society bodies, academic institutions, and developmental, entrepreneurial, and association structures attending the meeting, guests also included officials from the provincial government of the South-Kivu led by the Chief of Staff of the Provincial Minister of Agriculture, Fishing and Livestock.

The session briefed and enlightened attendees on the rationale, implications, and prospects of the transition to One CGIAR, touching on the process of change, the structuring of the revamped consortium initiatives, and the planned modus operandi at the global, regional, and country levels. It was also about building and strengthening interactions and relationships with officials, government-led bodies, and local partners committed to ensuring that agriculture leads to food and nutrition security in DR Congo.

The moderator of the day, Dr David Bugeme, mentioned that the One CGIAR transition consists of a dynamic reframing of CGIAR's partnerships, knowledge, assets, and global presence, aimed at greater integration and impact in the face of

the interrelated challenges facing the world today.

Representing CGIAR's Regional Director for West and Central Africa, Dr [Nteranya Sanginga](#), Dr Kwesi Atta-Krah highlighted a vital aspect of the "reshaped" consortium. "CGIAR's centers are coming together under a single organizational structure to enable better resource management and allocation, more cohesive research undertakings, and closer interactions among partnering structures," he stated. He added that this would maximize the adoption of ensuing outcomes and development-oriented resolutions for optimum economic growth, among other goals.

Furthering Atta-Krah's clarification, CGIAR's Country Convener for DR Congo, Liliane Togogo, noted that part of the innovative geo-administrative pattern of One CGIAR includes "scrutinizing specific issues, thinking through possible solutions, planning and implementing appropriate action/interventions in the frame of 'Initiatives'."

"For DR Congo, the said Initiatives will be spearheaded in various locations by two of the 13 CGIAR centers established in the country to date, that is, IITA and the newly formed Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT," she said. In DR Congo, the three selected Initiatives would relate to (1) Excellence in Agronomy for sustainable intensification and adaptation to climate change, (2) Plant health and rapid response

to ensure food security and improved livelihoods, and (3) Transforming agro-food systems in West and Central Africa.

Responding to questions from participants, a panel comprising Atta-Krah, Dr Antoine Lubobo (representing the Alliance), Bugeme, and Togogo, reiterated that the revisited perspective of One CGIAR is to ensure the focus and actions of staff and partners match the specific challenges to revolutionize engagement-related practice and decision-making processes for more sustainable development.

Atta-Krah commended the DRC Government's commitment through its Ministry of Agriculture, observing that the move has great potential to help the country attract and host more centers and programs soon.

Enlightened on the proposed functioning features, partnership approach, and research directions of One CGIAR, participants said they want to have more opportunities to allow the harmonization of actions to be carried out by the various stakeholders. These would also bring all key stakeholders to gather and analyze challenges, set priorities, and design all-inclusive strategies for optimal results.

The official launch of One CGIAR in DR Congo will take place soon in Kinshasa after holding the much-desired sessions to bridge differences and agree on the way forward. *Contributed by Isabelle Buhoro and Gabriel Dunia*



Partners and stakeholders in the agricultural sector participated in the Informational and Consultative Meeting.