

IITA wins second place at the national farmers' exhibitions awards in Tanzania



IITA researcher diagnosing cassava diseases during a Nuru App demonstration.
Photo: IITA/G Ndibalema

[IITA](#) came second in the Institute of Agricultural Research exhibitions awards during the 2022 National Farmers Exhibition held from 1 to 8 August in Mbeya. The Institute won in a category with 240 public institutions and 300 non-governmental organizations operating in the agriculture, livestock, and fisheries value chains.

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Africa House and IITA training highlights potential in agro-commodities export

Following the recently signed MoU between [IITA](#) and Africa House, both parties conducted a one-day training on agro-commodities export in IITA Abuja.



Participants at the agro-commodities export training in Abuja.

The participants were from the Agro Division of the Federal Capital Territory Authority (FCTA), Nigeria Export Promotion Council (NEPC), Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), Nigeria Association of Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture, Federal Ministry of Trade and Investment, Nigeria in Diaspora Commission, and some private sector agribusiness owners.

The objective of the training was to sensitize relevant government agencies on the opportunities available in exporting agro-commodities to improve the agricultural sector of Nigeria's economy and generate more income for Nigerians in agribusiness.

IITA Abuja Station Administrator Ijeoma Animam, representing the Head of Station, Prof. Lateef Sanni, welcomed

the participants and thanked them for honoring the invite from IITA and Africa House to participate in the one-day training. She highlighted IITA's achievements over the years and the benefits of the MoU with Africa House. She encouraged the participants to pay attention so they could capitalize on the opportunities the training would offer.

The training, facilitated by Africa House Director Engr. Abayomi Onasanya, included highlights of Africa House activities and Nigeria's current export capacities compared to other African countries. Onasanya also identified export opportunities available to Nigeria using commodities such as citrus, seafood, and ginger as case studies. Other topics included finance in export, export documentation processing, and the role of Nigerians in diaspora in export.

He said the partnership with IITA was intended to exchange information and develop specific cooperative programs in areas not limited to empowerment, wealth creation, and capacity building. He also said that Africa House is willing to assist interested government agencies with export development, corporate export mentorship, standard machinery stockpiling, and facilitating international market linkages.

Giving the vote of thanks on behalf of the participants, a delegate from the Nigerian Export Promotion Council, Ibrahim Olaniyi, thanked IITA and Africa House for the training opportunity. He recommended that the training be opened to other government agencies, e.g., Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) and National Agency for Food and Drug Administration Control (NAFDAC), which monitor agro-commodities for export. *Contributed by Terngu Abur*



Training participants with facilitators at the IITA Abuja Station.

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IITA participated in the week-long exhibition, nicknamed “Nane nane” (eight-eight), referencing the final day, 8 August. During *Nane nane*, agricultural stakeholders get the opportunity to showcase new technologies, discoveries, and solutions in the agricultural sector. The technologies showcased by IITA included the cassava seed system, digital tools ([Plantvillage Nuru](#), [SeedTracker](#), and [AKILIMO](#)), and mechanical tools. The Institute’s stand also highlighted

procedures for breeding better bananas and exhibited the recently released improved cooking-banana varieties called TARIBAN. The aflatoxin biological control product Aflasafe and the Afya soil rapid test kit were also displayed.

The exhibition’s secretariat awarded second place to IITA in recognition of the excellent display of products (innovations and technologies) in the pavilion, creativity, and competence of exhibitors in disseminating information

on the technologies and the potential benefits to the agricultural sector from adopting these products, among other criteria observed.

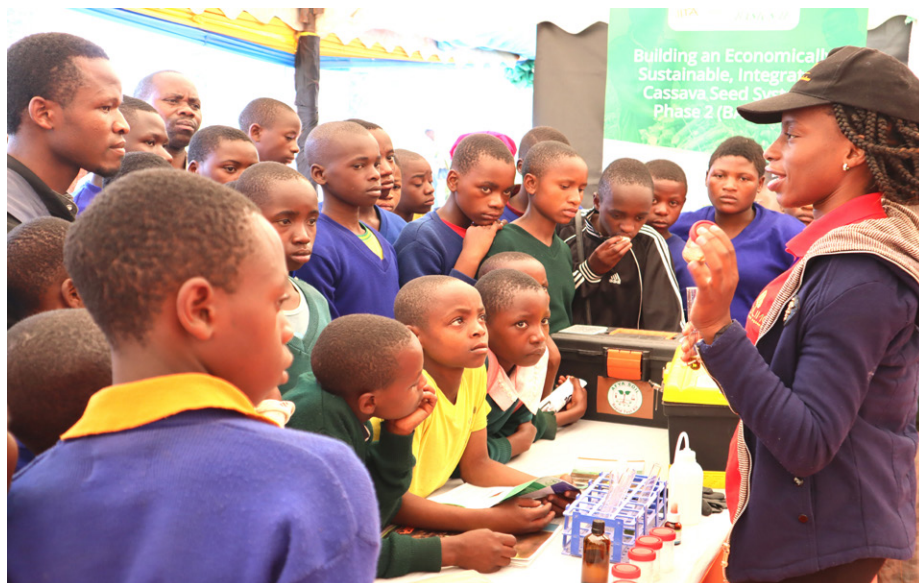
“Congratulations to IITA and the team that lifted the IITA flag high at the exhibitions. We look forward to an even better performance in the coming year. Well done!” IITA Eastern Africa Hub Regional Administrator Eveline Odiambo applauded.

Odiambo noted that the award is good publicity and recognition of IITA’s work in Tanzania that contributes to reducing poverty and hunger through the different technologies showcased at the “Nane Nane” Agricultural Exhibitions. She said it shows that the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania recognizes and appreciates IITA’s contribution.

Agricultural stakeholders applauded IITA for the impactful technologies that target improved productivity and increased smallholders’ livelihoods. “I am so impressed with the new, improved cooking banana varieties you have released and how you demonstrate on-field management to increase productivity. I will implement these practices; I am sure I will have high yields and increased income, which is good for business,” said an excited farmer from Rungwe, Ronald Balasi.

“Rungwe district is blessed with favorable weather! I am attracted to growing cassava in the coming planting season, and I believe these digital tools, technologies, and knowledge I have acquired here will help my farming,” noted Philip Mwakapala.

About 300 visitors from different backgrounds visited the IITA pavilion. Moreover, IITA had the opportunity to train stakeholders in the extension services classroom prepared for teaching agricultural practices during the exhibitions. *Contributed by Gloriana Ndibalema*



Top: IITA lab technician showcasing the Afya Soil Rapid test kit functions to students. Bottom: Ronald exchanging ideas with the IITA staff on banana farming. All photos: IITA/G Ndibalema.

Got a story to share?

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Drabo Forest Reserve: A haven for birds and biodiversity conservation

The Drabo Forest Reserve (DFR), one of the remaining patches of secondary rainforests in Benin Republic, was the site of a recent bird survey conducted by [IITA Forest Center](#) Manager Adewale Awoyemi. The survey was funded by the A.G. Leventis Foundation.

The DFR is a regenerating secondary rainforest rehabilitated and managed by [IITA](#) Emeritus Scientist Peter Neuenschwander on behalf of the Institute. Located in Drabo Gbo and Dodja villages near Calavi, the DFR is strictly reserved for biodiversity conservation in the immensely

degraded area. Despite its small size and persistent threats from urbanization and unsustainable farming, the DFR supports populations of three monkey species, including the critically endangered Red-bellied Monkey *Cercopithecus erythrogaster*, the Mona Monkey *Cercopithecus mona*, and the

Green Monkey *Chlorocebus sabaeus*, and many more mammals, reptiles, and, of course, insects.

The purpose of the survey was to collect valuable data contributing to the ornithological significance of Benin Republic broadly and the Drabo Forest Reserve in particular. Awoyemi, assisted by DFR forest guides, Godonou Kandji and Louis Houngouè, carried out the bird survey concurrently using non-hazardous line transect and mist-netting. The transect method of surveying birds involves simply walking and counting birds seen or heard within a fixed radius and duration. In contrast, mist-netting involves capturing birds using mist nets made of nylon or polyester mesh suspended between two poles, resembling a volleyball net. After capture, the birds are removed from the nets and ringed with numbered metal or color rings. Data on their morphology (e.g., tarsus and wing length, mass) and breeding (estimated from the swelling around the belly or brood patch) are typically recorded before releasing them safely into the wild.

The team recorded 253 birds of 46 different species during the 6-day survey. Nocturnal birds, including the Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, African Wood Owl *Strix woodfordii*, Northern White-faced Owl *Ptilopsis leucotis*, and Black-shouldered Nightjar *Caprimulgus nigriscapularis* were prominent among the birds recorded during line transect, while the African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ispidina picta*, was conspicuous during mist-netting.

Birds were observed taking cover in the luxuriant tree canopy, suggesting that despite the threats affecting the area, birds find the DFR a haven of refuge and food. This survey is the fourth conducted since 2018, with around 100 species of birds observed in the forest reserve and its surroundings. This encourages IITA to continue long-term bird monitoring to establish data useful for ecological decisions and biodiversity conservation and recommends the continued protection and regeneration of the DFR. Contributed by Folake Oduntan



Top: The Drabo Forest Reserve has multiple bird species, including the Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone rufiventer*. **Bottom:** A mist-netted Western Nicator *Nicator chloris* in the Drabo Forest Reserve. All photos: IITA/A. Awoyemi.

STEP hosts CGIAR Global Director at Fasola agribusiness facility

Andre Zandstra, Global Director, Innovative Finance and Resource Mobilization at the [CGIAR](#) System Office, went to the [IITA-STEP](#) Agribusiness Facility in Fasola, Oyo State, during his visit to the IITA headquarters in Ibadan recently. He was received by the students, STEP teachers, school administration, and members of the STEP team at Fasola Grammar School, Oyo.

While touring some of the facilities, which included the processing center, ICT room, training room, broilers' and layers' pens, the screen house, school hall, classrooms, and Central Science Laboratory, Zandstra expressed delight and commended the impact

the facilities are having in the learning of the students.

A STEP representative gave a brief background on the program's success stories and how it has impacted the students, schools, and community, and added that this gave birth to the STEP-Oyo partnership, which operates in 10 schools in the state. The school principal, Mr Lamidi Abolaji, described how the project has increased enrollment in the school, adding that "Fasola community is developing into a semi-urban environment due to the intervention of STEP and IITA."

Zandstra revealed that he was surprised by the impact of modern

agricultural equipment, small-scale efarm machines, and digital tools on the students and other beneficiaries. He also expressed gladness at the increase in student enrollment because of the program.

"The STEP activities, model, and technologies are an incredible opportunity for students, and it's wonderful to see the project's impact in secondary schools. It's amazing", he said.

After his visit to IITA, Zandstra remarked, "One of the many highlights was the visit to the Start Them Early Program and Oyo Youth Agribusiness Park – a model for other CGIAR centers." *Contributed by Jesutofunmi Robinson*



Top and bottom: Andre Zandstra at the processing center and with STEP trainers at the Facility's poultry farm.