



CGIAR moves to work better together and align with Nigeria's national agenda

CGIAR centers working in Nigeria and key representatives of the country's agriculture stakeholders—from farmers' organizations, development agencies, donor organizations, the private sector, private and public extension actors, regional organizations, research partners in the national program, the media, and policymakers—are coming together in a move to work more closely with each other and at the same time better align their activities to national priorities.

Discussions on better integration and the mechanics of how all important stakeholders could work together at the national level were held at a two-day meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, 16–17 November. This meeting brought together all CGIAR centers working in Nigeria and a wide range of stakeholders in the agriculture sector to explore how CGIAR can be better integrated in the country's agriculture R4D fabric.

The participants looked at the agricultural strategy of Nigeria, the challenges facing the sector, the national priorities, donors and funders' priorities, and CGIAR activities in the country. They discussed principles and mechanisms that would help guide



Stakeholders at the first CGIAR Site Integration Workshop in Abuja, Nigeria.

the development of an integration plan outlining collaboration; selection of sites, issues, and partners; and important areas including monitoring and evaluation, communication, and coordination and governance structures. The plan will be used to inform the development of phase 2 of the [CGIAR Research Programs](#). The meeting was organized by IITA's Partnership Coordination Office led by [Alfred Dixon](#).

Engineer Akeju Olagbaju, a Director with the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development (FMARD), noted that this was a timely move by CGIAR that would lead to better impact of research and development efforts for smallholder farmers in Nigeria. Engr Olagbaju officiated the opening of the meeting on behalf of the Permanent Secretary of FMARD. He noted that while the agricultural sector is very important in Nigeria it is also still grappling with many challenges including low yields of key staple crops and livestock, poor market access, and lack of inputs such as improved seeds and fertilizers, among others. On the other hand, the country also has a large number of unemployed youth for whom agriculture can be a source of jobs and income, and a huge international portfolio of project grants from various donors that address agricultural development.

The President of the Maize Association of Nigeria (MAAN), Tunji Adenola, commended CGIAR for the site integration initiative, emphasizing that it would multiply the benefits of research.

"Take for instance, IITA and CIMMYT, which have been working on maize and have developed improved maize varieties. A meeting like this has the potential of scaling up the benefits of these varieties such that more farmers would have access to these varieties," he explained.

Also speaking at the meeting, [Kenton Dashiell](#), IITA Deputy Director General for Partnerships and Capacity Development, noted that the days of each CGIAR center working alone is long gone. "CGIAR is moving into a mode of greater collaboration and integration with national, regional, and international partners within a single location," he said.

He said that the challenge to agricultural development was huge and demanded collaboration among all stakeholders.

Kwesi Atta-Krah, Director of the CGIAR Research Program on Integrated Systems for the Humid Tropics, spoke on behalf of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research ([GFAR](#)) and the CGIAR Consortium.



Kwesi Atta-Krah presents on behalf of CGIAR and GFAR.

He said that the challenge to agricultural development was huge and demanded collaboration among all stakeholders.

“Our goal is to ensure how best the smallholder farmer in Nigeria will benefit the most from research,” Atta-Krah added.

Other speakers at the workshop were Atsuko Toda, from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) represented the Agriculture Development Partners’ Working Group; and Alfred Dixon who gave an overview of CGIAR’s presence in Nigeria.

This meeting is the first in a series of meetings on site integration being organized by CGIAR. The next meeting will take place in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on 3-4 December also organized by IITA. Other countries slated soon include Ghana, Ethiopia, and Kenya, among others.

IITA signs MoU with Osun State to advance agricultural development

On 17 November, IITA and the State Government of Osun signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that will facilitate the use of 204 ha of land situated in the Ago-Owu area of the State for research and demonstration plots for best agronomic practices.

The land is situated close to two farm settlements which are part of the newly planned agricultural production zone in the state.

The MoU, which was signed by the State Governor, Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola and IITA’s Director General, Nteranya Sanginga, at the office of the governor in Osogbo, is expected to foster a relationship that will impact on research and development in agriculture to the farmers and youth in the state.

During his address, Sanginga thanked the people of Osun for giving IITA the opportunity to bring the Institute’s vast knowledge in the area of agriculture to their doorstep. He said that with the looming fall in price of oil in Nigeria, now is the time for the country to diversify from its dependence on oil and turn to agriculture. He stressed that agriculture still remains a source of wealth and the only sector that can accommodate the teeming population of unemployed youth in Africa.



Gov. Aregbesola and DG Sanginga sign the MoU while Otunba Grace Titilayo Laoye-Tomori, Deputy Governor, Osun State, looks on.

Speaking about the impact of IITA in Africa, Sanginga said the presence of IITA has rescued many African countries from poverty and hunger.

“Just think of Africa or Osun State without cassava or yam. Thirty years ago, cassava almost disappeared from Africa but the timely intervention of IITA research saved the situation. Rwanda after the war came to IITA to get seeds for planting. Our [Genetic Resource Center](#) maintains [seeds](#) of important African food staples. What we have to do is to use those resources for the benefit of Osun. Some of these seeds will be given to the farmers in Osun to plant and spread. We will start with banana and cassava,” he said.

He, however, implored the government to fulfill their part of the MoU by providing over 1,000 extension workers in the state to help in the multiplication of the seedlings.

Governor Aregbesola said the partnership will complement his administration’s agriculture program especially in the area of food production.

Aregbesola attributed the challenges facing farmers in the state to lack of

critical linkage between agricultural research and implementation, adding that with the IITA partnership, Osun State stands to have direct-to-farm linkages of scientific innovations in farming with the best agriculture scientists. He enjoined the farmers and villagers around Ago-Owu to support IITA in its bid to bring research and development to the area.

“The State of Osun has about 316,780 ha of arable land. Out of this, only about 149,148 have been cultivated so far. So let us support this partnership to transform Osun from a peasant, agrarian state to a mechanized agricultural state,” he added.

The Director General of the Office of Economic Development and Partnerships, Charles Akinola, said that he looks forward to a larger impact from this partnership. “We expect that the impact of IITA will be felt among the 85 villages and the state as a whole,” he said.

The [IITA Youth Agripreneurs](#) will have the opportunity of training youth in the state on modern, commercial, and profitable farming.



Gov. Aregbesola presents a plaque of recognition to DG Sanginga.

IITA wins outstanding research Institute award

IITA has received the Outstanding Research Institute award from the Nigeria-based Centre for Values in Leadership (CVL). IITA was honored for its sterling leadership in agricultural research in Nigeria in particular, and sub-Saharan Africa in general.

In a letter to IITA DG Nteranya Sanginga, the Chief Executive Officer of CVL, [Prof Pat Utomi](#) wrote: "I write to appreciate IITA for its laudable contributions towards economic growth in Nigeria and also inform you that the CVL team has specifically selected your organization as one of the honorees at the upcoming CVL Agriculture Sector celebration. This is a prestigious recognition given to research institutes for their valuable contribution through research, publications, training, and advocacy."

Receiving the award in Lagos 2 weeks ago, Sanginga dedicated the prize to African farmers "especially women who in spite of many odds have remained a pillar of food security on the continent."

"We are proud of this honor and it demands that we do more to lift more people out of poverty," said Sanginga who was represented by Gbassey

Tarawali, Head of the IITA Abuja Station.

Since assumption of office, the IITA DG has led efforts to embark on a radical transformation of the Institute with a vision of bringing 11 million people out of poverty, and reclaiming 7.5 million hectares of degraded land and putting them into sustainable use.

The Institute's strategy emphasizes generating research outputs and having impact at the farm level. Consequently, IITA became a major player under Nigeria's Agricultural Transformation Agenda, taking a critical role in crop improvement and value addition.

CVL estimates that Nigeria's agricultural sector, which comprises crop production, livestock, forestry, and fishing, contributed 26.63% in real terms to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as at the 3rd quarter of 2014.

Prof Utomi said "We are also aware that Nigeria was declared the biggest economy in Africa and was one of the 11 global growth generators last year (*The Economist* April 2014). This rapid growth has been accounted for based on the contributions of key sectors (particularly



CVL CEO Pat Utomi hands plaque to IITA's Gbassey Tarawali.

non-oil sectors) of the economy. To further sustain this status, the CVL Economic Growth Sector Celebration Series was initiated to continually identify, honor, and celebrate outstanding sectors that have immensely added value in a particular year."

The high-profile event attracted top executives and entrepreneurs showcasing the immense contributions of the agricultural sector to Nigeria's economic growth and making them serve as examples to other sectors.

Replanting the tree that identifies us...

During a solemn but symbolic ceremony on 18 November, IITA DG [Nteranya Sanginga](#), assisted by David Ladipo, Director of the Centre for Environment, Renewable Natural Resources Management, Research and Development (CENRAD), replanted a baobab tree ([Adansonia](#)

[digitata](#)) to replace the historic baobab that stood as a landmark for locating the IITA Campus in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Generally known as *Igi Ose* by the Yoruba tribe, the baobab tree gave its name to *Idi-Ose* (near-the-baobab), Akinyele Local Government area, Ibadan, Oyo State. The original tree, about 460 years old, was an icon of this community and a familiar sight beside the main road next to the IITA Sports Center. It died in 2014.

Ladipo recounted that, just before the tree died, about five young shoots were propagated from the mother plant by CENRAD, one of which Sanginga planted at the IITA entrance.

"The value of the tree is so important culturally to the people of *Idi-ose*...we want to preserve the name and legend that this community is known by and also show that we respect the tradition of our host community," said Deni Bown, Head of the IITA Forest Unit, during the ceremony.

"We hope the tree will have as long a life as the parent tree," Deni also added.



Other seedlings have also been planted at the [National Centre for Genetic Resources & Biotechnology \(NACGRAB\)](#) and the [Botanical Garden at the University of Ibadan](#). One more will be planted later in the year by Alhaji Oloye Suara Amusa, *Baale* (High Chief) of *Idi-Ose*, within sight of the royal palace.

The baobab is a revered tree throughout sub-Saharan Africa, associated with human habitation since earliest times due to its innumerable and dependable uses for food and drink, flavorings, salt, medicine, water, shelter, fodder, fibers, and so on. These traditional uses now find new applications in consumer products for health and export markets.



DG Sanginga waters the new tree after planting. Looking on are (L-R) David Ladipo of CENRAD, Timothy Ajiboye of NACGRAB and Deni Bown, IITA Forest Unit.

YIIFSWA organizes orientation for M&E field assistants in Nigeria and Ghana

The Yam Improvement for Income and Food Security in West Africa (YIIFSWA) project recently recruited 29 Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) field assistants in Nigeria and 15 in Ghana, to objectively document the project's progress and successes starting with the mapping of project beneficiaries in the project communities since its implementation in 2011.

From its inception, [YIIFSWA](#) aimed to promote interventions to increase yield and tackle the production constraints affecting yam farmers in West Africa, who contribute about 95% of the world's production of yam. These constraints include high cost of production, lack of quality and quantity of seed yam, high farm losses, susceptibility to pests and diseases, and soil fertility issues.

[Djana Mignouna](#), YIIFSWA Project Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, explained that at this stage of the project, it is necessary to have more hands for increased effectiveness of the project impact monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

"This will help the project gain more insightful data in generating information and knowledge to inform and influence policy making, project action, and research," he said.

[Tahirou Abdoulaye](#), IITA Outcome/Impact Socioeconomist and Harunah Braimah, YIIFSWA Country Project Manager, Ghana, welcomed the participants.



Djana Mignouna anchoring the training in Nigeria.

Abdoulaye emphasized that every project needs to document its outputs and outcomes to ensure accountability because funds for agricultural research must be justified through producing desired results at the grassroots level. He also said that the project's promise to its donor to improve the livelihoods of farmers in West Africa and also increase the productivity of yam by 40% must be achieved for yam-dependent farmers.

"This has to be done by measuring the outcomes set on farmers' livelihoods and can only be proven by presenting data to show that the project has been successful... If the project cannot measure and show evidence of this then our donors will cease their contribution to YIIFSWA's activities."

The enumerators were trained at Collinmay Hotel, Ejura, Ghana, on 19–21 October, and IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, on 28–29 October. The training looked at the project's M&E framework, community entry approaches, techniques/strategies for quality data collection, and mobile data collection with the open data kit. The participants also received computer tablets to be used for collecting data in the field.

YIIFSWA Community, Household, and Field endline survey activities commenced in Ghana this week.

YIIFSWA is implemented with funds from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and aims to improve the livelihoods of 200,000 smallholder yam farmers in Ghana and Nigeria.

Announcements

- **R4D Week**, IITA Ibadan, Nigeria, 22-28 November.
- IITA Board of Trustees Meeting, IITA Ibadan, Nigeria, 26-27 November.
- World Conference on Root and Tuber Crops; Nanning, China, 18-23 January 2016.
- **7th International Conference of the Africa Soil Science Society**; Theme: Critical soil solutions for sustainable development in Africa. February 2016, Salle de Banquets in Ouaga 2000, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.
- **Joint World Cowpea and Pan-African Grain Legume Research Conference 2016**, co-organized by IITA and the Feed-the-Future Legume Innovation Lab, Livingstone, Zambia, 28 February to 4 March 2016. For more information, visit the conference [website](#) or download the conference [announcement](#).

Got a story to share? Please email it with photos and captions every Wednesday to Katherine Lopez (k.lopez@cgiar.org), Jeffrey T. Oliver (j.oliver@cgiar.org), Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org), or Adaobi Umeokoro (a.umeokoro@cgiar.org).