



IITA

Youth Agripreneurs

Agriculture is the future

IFAD President makes case for young people



IFAD President Dr Nwanze (second from right front row) speaking to youths in IITA Ibadan

By Adaobi Umeokoro and Adewale Joshua

The rejuvenation conference organized by IITA as part of its resource mobilization strategy in 2012 has come and gone but the call for investments in young people by the President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Dr Kanayo Nwanze that culminated in the formation of the IITA Youth program will not fade away.

Delivering a speech titled, "Rejuvenation: Investing in agriculture for the future of Nigeria and its young

people," the IFAD president said that investing in young rural people is a simple but elegant solution to some of the world's most pressing problems.

"It helps eliminate poverty and hunger, curtails migration to cities and abroad, and lays a solid foundation for national, regional, and global security," he added.

According to him, young people with prospects will build the foundations for their future, but on the contrary young people without prospects have nothing to lose and

are more easily swayed by extreme rhetoric.

Dr Nwanze emphasized the need for young people to be the farmers and food processors of tomorrow, not just to feed themselves and their villages, but to grow the food to feed cities.

"When rural communities offer young people a range of income-generating opportunities, more will decide to stay in the villages and resist the call of often dead-end futures in the cities, abroad, or in extreme religious or political movements," he explained.

His speech which was clouded with great passion for the youth created the spark that stirred the formation of the IITA youth in agriculture project.

As a follow up, IITA Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga held several meetings with the National Youth Service Corps members and challenged them to take action by getting involved in agriculture. Today, this has paid off as IITA now prides herself with agripreneurs—young people who are actively involved in agriculture and are saying, "We will never go back come what may."

For full text of the speech, please click: <http://www.ifad.org/events/op/2012/iita.htm>

IITA Youth initiative is timely, say Nordic ambassadors

By Barituka Bekee

Nordic Ambassadors who visited IITA on 25 September say the Youth in Agriculture project is a timely initiative, and a sure way of addressing issues such as unemployment and food insecurity in Africa.

The Nordic team comprised ambassadors of Austria, H.E. Dr Joachim Oepfänger; Finland, H.E. Mrs Riitta Korpivaara; and Sweden, H.E. Mr Svante Kilander. They were accompanied by embassy officials: Dr Heikki Valisuo of Finland, and Marisa Mercado and Nella Hengstler of the Austrian embassy.

The guests who were on a 3-day visit to IITA had an audience with members of the IITA Youth project and listened to a presentation by the youngsters titled: "IITA Youth in Agribusiness."

The guests were thrilled with the vision, mission, and ongoing activities of the agripreneurs, particularly the gender



Nordic ambassadors and the agripreneurs

equality and the diversity of disciplines inherent in the group.

The IITA Youth Agripreneurs, have in

recent times, played host to some high-profile guests, including delegates from FARA, USAID, and UNIDO.

AfDB officials laud IITA Youth program



IITA DG Sanginga and AfDB officials with agripreneurs at the seed processing center

By Lamidi Funmilola and Barituka Bekee

A team from the African Development Bank (AfDB) was on IITA campus for a visit to projects under the Support for Agricultural Research for Development of Strategic Crops (SARD-SC) and, the opportunity presenting itself, dropped by to witness for themselves the activities embarked upon by the IITA Youth Agripreneurs.

During the stopover on 24 October, the youngsters made presentations, describing the nature of their project. The presentations laid out cost estimates and implications for a scaling up of their activities. Moussa Keita, an agro-businessman from Mali, also displayed some mid- and long-term financial projections which the

agripreneurs could adopt.

Dr Jonas Chianu, Agricultural Economist and Mission Leader in his remarks noted that there were multiple linkages between the objectives of the

IITA Youth Agripreneurs and those of AfDB, concluding that the agripreneurs have a project worthy of investment. He advised that the agripreneurs move steadily and keep their focus despite any potential constraints.

After the presentations, the team was led to the seed processing center by the youths where they saw the seed processing machine in operation and had a view of the cold room. Subsequent tours were made to the agripreneurs' fields; soybean and cassava.

Other members of the AfDB mission team were Mr Eshetu Yimer Legesse, Chief Financial Management Specialist; Mr Banda Ngenge, Principal Regional Procurement Officer; and Mr Hassan Danladi Ebbah, Agricultural Engineer. They were accompanied by a team from IITA: the Director-General, Dr Ntenranya Sanginga; SARD-SC Project Coordinator Dr Chrysantus Akem; SARD-SC Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, Dr Issaka Amadou; and the Cassava Transformation Agenda Project Coordinator, Dr Richardson Okechukwu.



Agripreneurs making a presentation to AfDB team

Evaluation team assesses Agripreneurs' project sites



Agripreneurs and the evaluation team on a cassava field

By Evelyn Ohanwusi

A review and evaluation team made a field evaluation of IITA agripreneurs' out-station farm in Olokoto area of Ogbomosho in Oyo State on 10

October 2013.

The team comprised IITA Director-General, Dr Sanginga; IITA Maize Breeder, Dr Meseka; IITA Cassava Specialist, Ms Folakemi Alade; an

agribusiness intern from Mali Moussa Keita, and Sanghamitra Mazumdar working on Youth and gender issues for Humidtropics.

The reviewers commended the agripreneurs for the good agronomy practices on the farm and encouraged them to keep up the good work. Areas that needed improvement were also highlighted.

This year, the group cultivated 23 hectares of farmland— 12 hectares of maize and 11 hectares of cassava. For both crops, improved varieties of newly released materials by IITA were planted. The activities of the agripreneurs in the community is having a positive influence on the lives of people in the area. Most farmers are beginning to appreciate the use of improved planting materials and best-bet agronomic practices.

IITA and local council sign MoU, brokered by agripreneurs



Agripreneurs, IITA, and local council officials in a group photo after the signing of MoU

By Adaobi Umeokoro and Gbadamosi Muritala

IITA and Akinyele Local Government—the host local council to IITA—have signed a Memorandum of Understanding, paving the way for a closer partnership towards developing the capacities of youths in the council. The MoU was facilitated by the team of agripreneurs in IITA.

The Chair of the Local Government, Mr Abiola Mukaila explained that he was in IITA in August, and was impressed by the IITA youth model, which is drawing the youths back to agriculture, the reason why his government called for collaboration with the Institute.

Under the MoU, IITA and the Council will partner to:

- Organize training for 250 youths in the field of agribusiness in batches of 50 persons in sustainable agricultural practices, including livestock production.
- Train the participants/youths to become self-dependent and employed thus boosting their self esteem.

- Train young women and men in agribusiness development and management to enable them to establish individual or group-based enterprises for wealth creation.
- Help develop the entrepreneurial mind-set of the youths in agriculture.
- Provide technical business workforce training with an entrepreneurship focus.

The Deputy Director General, Partnerships & Capacity Development, Dr Kenton Dashiell said the close partnership with the Council, marked by the signing of the MoU, was a significant milestone, and a step in the right direction.

Dr Dashiell who was represented by Dr Chrys Akem reiterated IITA's commitment to keep to the terms highlighted in the MoU with a view to developing the youths, enhancing food security, and reducing poverty.

He said that the focus on the youths was an institutional policy initiated by Dr Nteranya Sanginga—IITA DG—to use agriculture as a weapon to address the

menace of unemployment.

Dr Akem explained that over the years, the Institute had been providing direct jobs to youths and also engaging several others in internship and participating in the National Youth Service Corps—a scheme that allows fresh graduates to serve a mandatory one-year internship with organizations in Nigeria.

“The IITA Youth program is further amplifying what we have been doing before... and in this case developing the capacities of the youths so that they become employers of labor,” he said.

Like most local governments/communities in Africa, Akinyele Local Government is predominantly rural with more than 70 percent of its inhabitants depending on agriculture as a source of livelihood. Most youths in the community find agriculture unattractive, a constraint which the signing of the MoU aims to address.



L-R: Mukaila and Dr Akem sign MoU on behalf of local council and IITA

Agripreneurs get training on baking bread with 40 percent cassava

By Kolo Juliana and Obafemi Victoria

Members of the IITA Youth agripreneurs have been trained on how to bake bread with 40 percent cassava flour. The training was conducted from 9 to 11 September, as part of capacity building efforts of the Institute, and had both theoretical and practical sessions.

Mr Gregory Nwaoliwe who



Nwaoliwe (left) and agripreneurs with bread baked with 40 percent cassava

led the training session gave an introduction to baking and underscored the need for a clean environment as a necessary prerequisite to avoid microbial infections.

He also talked about the role of gluten which is a source of protein that is present in wheat flour but absent in cassava flour.

The training is coming at a time when bread consumption all over the world has become a common meal with a growing population eating bread on a daily basis in Nigeria.

With a spending of about N645 billion annually on the importation of wheat, it is envisaged that the use of cassava flour in baking will save Nigeria a great fortune and also provide jobs.

Participants found the training a worthwhile experience.

Empowering young farmers: IITA walk the talk



Dr Gbassey Tarawali, Mr Udo and agripreneurs at the seed processing unit

By Bunmi Ajilore

Peter Casier, an online media communications facilitator with almost 17 years experience in development works (and a Grandpa to many ICT4D youth), wrote on a googlegroup I belong to that he has "started to realize the importance of youth in the future of a food-secure world... (and) no matter how many new seeds or crops we bring on the market, no matter how many new systems of irrigation, land and water use, cattle breeding systems, food storage improvements..., unless we have young people interested in... agriculture... it will all fail".

Nowadays, it has become a fad for policymakers at country levels (especially in Africa) and international organizations to talk much about youth involvement in development issues and youth empowerment without involving the

youth themselves in the conversation or without giving them a real voice. In fact, many times action plans are developed for the youth without their input or in cases where they are involved either in the planning or implementation of such ideas, they are given fringe roles; and in the end get little or no benefit from such plans.

So, it was a pleasant and welcome deviation from the "norm" for me to learn about the IITA Young Agripreneurs Program and to meet and talk with the young agripreneurs themselves, when the YPARD Nigeria team — a group of young professionals in agriculture to which I belong — visited them at their unit in the IITA headquarters on Thursday, 19 September 2013.

The IITA Young Agripreneurs Program was designed by IITA to train and engage willing young people in modern farming practices and agribusiness. The program,

which is still at the pilot stage, started with a group of young graduates — Corps members — who have chosen to use their one year mandatory youth service to develop modern farming skills and hope to put to practice their newly acquired skill and become farmers and agripreneurs soon.

Talking to them, these young folks were really enthusiastic about farming and were eager to share their experiences and the knowledge/skill they have acquired in the last one year on the program — from the production of new varieties of maize seed to the replication and mass production of cassava stem cuttings; this is despite the fact that many of them studied courses not related to agriculture and were probably having their first contact with farming.

By and large, in my quick assessment, the IITA Young Agripreneur Program has succeeded in stimulating the interest of these young people, who would have probably joined many other disillusioned youth waiting for white collar jobs in their various fields, to embrace agriculture as a productive means through which they can achieve their aspirations.

That way, IITA has moved beyond the "normal" and repetitive rhetoric of getting youth involved in, and empowered for, agriculture and development purposes but is already walking the talk through this laudable program.

Ajilore is a member of the Young Professionals in Agricultural Research for Development (YPARD). He and his colleagues visited IITA recently.

Gender: The resilience of a young nursing mother

By Ogidan Oluwaseun and Barituka Bekee

The reward for success is high, but so is the price. This, of a truth, has been exemplified by a member of the IITA Youth Agripreneurs, Mrs Olaniyi Ajibola. A mother of two, Mrs Olaniyi is faced daily with the challenge of meeting the tasking demands of work.

An animal scientist by training, her responsibilities as a nursing mother have not hindered her duties as an agripreneur. She engages in all activities just as every other member of the team. When it is required of her to embark on journeys, Ajibola, as she is often called, takes her infant along to locations outside Ibadan.

Though she admits that this feat has not been without its challenges, support from her husband and belief in the cause of the youth in agriculture initiative have been her driving force. The Director-

General of IITA, Dr Nteranya Sanginga, on a visit to the agripreneurs' outstation field at Olokoto in Oyo State, commended her zeal and commitment.

In an age characterized by increased laxity and dwindling resilience among young people, dedication has become a rare virtue.



Mrs Olaniyi with her baby and IITA DG on the farm