



# IITA

## Youth Agripreneurs

*Agriculture is the future*

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## IITA Youth program is nurturing the next agri-millionaires, says AfDB



*One of the mentors training the selected Agri-pitch contestants on the techniques of pitching a business idea*

Following the visit of the IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA) to the African Development Bank (AfDB) in December 2016, AfDB Dr Akinwumi Adesina expressed the need to organize a youth Agripreneurs forum where young people who are in agriculture can converge to share experiences and showcase their skills in agribusiness.

As a result, Agripreneurs from various African countries gathered together between 23 and 26 April, to share experiences, and showcase skills and innovations that will enhance agriculture during the first African Youth Agripreneurs Forum (AYAF) held at IITA-Ibadan.

The forum, which was powered by AfDB with the support of International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), the Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), and the Africa Agribusiness Incubation Network (AAIN) brought over 250 participants from 30 countries including some non-African countries together. It targeted the youths who are active in agribusiness, agriculture or related value chains- to promote their innovation for increased production and marketing. Also, youth, who are currently members in a youth

network or association, possess skills to share and disseminate agribusiness information and knowledge, and also have the potential of being a youth mentor and/or incubate through incubation platforms were given the opportunity to showcase their brands.

The forum was a two day conference/workshop with thematic discussions and presentations of success stories. It also gave selected youths the opportunity to pitch their business ideas during an Agri-Pitch Entrepreneurship Competition.

The Director General of IITA, Dr Nteranya Sanginga, said he was motivated to pioneer IYA, the first youth in agribusiness scheme in Africa because he firmly believed that the teeming energetic youth in Africa should have no business with unemployment and poverty. Thus he challenged the young Agripreneurs to take control of their future.

“Take charge of the future that is before you. Agriculture is the future for youth employment; it is the future of Africa. IITA will support initiatives to ensure that young people on this continent contribute to the transformation of African agriculture, through agribusiness

and its value chain,” he said.

In his keynote address, AfDB Director Dr Chiji Ojukwu expressed satisfaction over the outputs from IYA. He also assured the young farmers of AfDB’s continuous support to agriculture in Africa.

“IITA is already a renowned center of excellence for breeding new plant varieties for tropical Africa, but now, it is becoming a center for nurturing the next agri-millionaires! The African Development Bank is committed to play its part and has already pledged to increase its annual agriculture lending to at least USD2.4 billion per annum for the next 10 years,” he stated.

The Agri-Pitch Competition, which included pitching of business ideas and proposals that covered areas such as Information and Communication Technology, processing, production, harvesting, marketing, logistics, and financing had 10 Agripreneurs emerging from the competition.

Prior to the competition, 20 Agripreneurs were shortlisted from the online submission of 95 business proposals. However, they were streamlined to 10 by an international panel of judges who screened proposals, and presentations.

Furthermore, the top three Agripreneurs selected were Kwame Ababio of Green Afro-Palms Ghana, Mahmud Johnson of J-Palm Liberia, and Mary Joseph of FarmDrive Kenya. They were invited to participate at a side event at the Annual Bank’s Meeting at India in May where awards will be presented.

A number of partner organizations who participated in the forum also pledged to support the Agripreneurs. Dr. Daniel Karanja of the Initiative for Global Development (IGD) pledged to sponsor the top 5 Agri-Pitch competition winners to attend the Durban IGD Frontier 100 Leaders and Farming is Cool event at the World Economic Forum in Durban, South Africa. The Director of the Brazil-Africa Institute, Dr. Joao Bosco-Monte,

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A group photograph of participants at the Forum

offered to organize a two month training for 30 Agripreneurs on cassava with Embrapa in Brazil.

Highlights of the event included a debate session wherein Agripreneurs from Nigeria, Senegal, South-Africa and Uganda expressed their position on the topic "Governments Should Subsidize Financing for Youth in Agribusiness." The Agripreneurs also took turns in sharing their experiences and also exhibited their products and other knowledge materials that could promote their

businesses.

Hosting of AYAF will be rotated across each region for inclusive participation of Agripreneurs. The Ministry of Youth Promotion of Côte d'Ivoire offered to host the next AYA Forum (AYAF-2) by 2018 in Abidjan.

Mentors and other dignitaries who attended the forum included Mr. Jibunoh Adim, President of Transcorp Group representing Mr Tony Elumelu; and Mr. Gbenga Shobo, Deputy

Managing Director of First Bank Nigeria representing Dr. Oba Otudeko Chairman of Honeywell Group.

The former President of Nigeria and an Ambassador of IITA, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, also sent a goodwill message encouraging the youth to take the bull by the horn and make a difference by creating jobs in agriculture.

## ENABLE Youth Program kicks off in Cameroon



Mr Kwame Akuffo-Akoto (far-right) speaking on the techniques used by IITA in engaging youth in agriculture

Taking the lead among countries in Central Africa, the Cameroon government launched the ENABLE Youth Program on 24 April 2016 at Yaounde.

The Minister of Agriculture, Mr Henri Eyebe Ayissi together with other top government officials and representatives of the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture IITA attended the launch. The ENABLE Youth Program in Cameroon is a component of the Agriculture Value Chain Development Program (PD\_CVA) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINARD).

During the launch, Mr Ayissi noted that

the ENABLE Youth Program was part of the country's effort to ensure that every youth was provided an opportunity to earn a decent living through agriculture. He expressed satisfaction that IITA is partnering with the government in the nationwide implementation of the program. He also appreciated AfDB for its support.

The Deputy Director General for Special Duties of IITA, Mr Kwame Akuffo-Akoto stressed that IITA, through the IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA) model had realized that with institutional support, training, financing and mentoring, youths could be productively engaged in agriculture. He added that the institution would

introduce the concept used in attaining the success recorded with the IYA model into the ENABLE Youth Cameroon Program.

Dr Racine Kane, AfDB The representative, highlighted that the idea behind the introduction of the ENABLE Youth Program by the bank was to increase food production and job creation among youth. He said that the agricultural sector was vast enough to accommodate the teeming population of unemployed African Youth.

IITA is expected to lead and administer 16 Youth Agribusiness Incubation Centers (YABICs) over a period of five years and

...continue on page 3

...continue from page 2

train 1536 Agripreneurs who will launch 560 new agribusinesses and employ about 6200 additional persons, including out-growers. It will also organize and carry out the capacity development of technical personnel recruited in the framework of the agripreneurial strategy as well as to establish and operationalize an effective monitoring and evaluation system in all participating YABICs. Furthermore, it will assist the Agripreneurs in preparing their business plans and submission to PD-CVA.



A representative of IYA, Nigeria explaining the model to the Minister of Agriculture, Mr Henri Eyebe Ayissi

## In Onne, Nigeria's Minister of Agriculture pledged to work with IYA on plantain multiplication



The IYA team in Onne showcasing some of their produce to the Minister, Chief Audu Ogbeh during his visit to the station

Nigeria's Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Chief Audu Ogbeh visited the IITA station in Onne on 26 April 2016 to inspect the youth training center and other research facilities.

He was accompanied by the Minister of State for Agriculture, Mr Heineken Lokpobiri, Rivers State Commissioner

for Agriculture Mr Onimim Jacks, Commissioner for Agriculture Bayelsa State, Mr Week Agbapou Doodei, and other Directors from the Federal and State Ministry of Agriculture.

Chief Ogbeh said the agricultural sector was vital in eradicating unemployment in Africa. He also commended the IITA Youth Agripreneurs for their efforts in

producing disease-free plantain suckers which according to him would help reduce the challenges faced by farmers in getting quality planting material in the area.

He added that the ministry was counting on the youth to provide improved suckers of plantain and banana. The government plans to distribute improved plantain suckers to other young farmers all over Nigeria to boost the production of dessert banana in the country.

Chief Ogbeh promised that the government would support the youth in the production the planting materials.

"I am happy that IITA is setting up a youth training facility and tissue culture laboratory here. The government will support IITA with the needed equipment useful in producing plantain and banana so the Ministry can buy whatever quantity produced. We would ensure that this youth training center and other youth centers are developed," he said.

He enjoined the youth to pass the skills acquired to other youths in the locality so that the agricultural sector in the country could have a comparative advantage market in the world market.

# IYA commences Incubation Program in Imo; Deploys newly-recruited Agripreneurs



*DR Paul Woomer training the new interns on commercial vegetable production*

IITA has initiated a Youth Agripreneurs (IYA) incubation program for a new generation of Agripreneurs who recently concluded their National Youth Service Corp scheme at IITA-Ibadan. The commencement of the program follows a recent on-site assessment and visit by the Director-General of IITA, Dr Nteranya Sanginga; and the Director of Agriculture and Agro-Industry, African Development Bank, Dr Chiji Ojukwu to Imo state in January.

The new Agripreneurs are joining six other members who were deployed in January to Imo State from the mother group in Ibadan.

The incubation program which is a step towards creating sustainable livelihoods for young graduates through agriculture in the South Eastern region of Nigeria is expected to run for six months using the facilities at the Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo and the Anambra-Imo River Basin.

Taking the new Agripreneurs on the basics of the incubation program, the Technical Adviser of IYA, Dr Paul Woomer urged them to make good use of the knowledge gathered during the incubation period and be set to establish profitable agribusiness enterprises that would provide jobs for more youths.

He added that the incubation was one of the major features of the ENABLE Youth Program, which is set to create employment and business opportunities

for young men and women along different agricultural value chains.

After the orientation exercise, the youth were taken through steps involved in vegetables, production using improved technologies and good quality varieties of seedlings, proper management of green house for commercial production of vegetables and the use of machineries in the green house.

As the incubation continues, it will focus on equipping the interns with all the necessary knowledge and skills needed

to succeed in establishing sustainable businesses with focus on three priority enterprises; horticulture, catfish production and catfish farming. These commodities have been identified as peculiar value chains in the state.

It will further pull together their entrepreneurial motivations and expose them to strategies involved in business development and management, financial management, and how to develop a bankable business plans.

At the end of the training, the youths showed great delight and readiness to develop their skills while they learn from the IITA Agripreneurs model.

After the incubation program, each of the interns will select the value chain of interest to set up business enterprises which will create more employment for the state.

The IYA-Imo group was formed from the mother group in Ibadan and started operations in the state in January 2017.

The Imo Youth Agripreneurs which started in January 2017 and has also ventured into commercial production of vegetables, catfish and poultry.



*Chinwendu Nwabuogu conducting a step-down training for the the new interns*

# Meet the new Imo Agripreneurs

## Training Activities



**Faith Ohaegbulem**  
Course: Computer Science  
Achievers' University



**Jennifer Oputa**  
Course: Microbiology  
Caritas University



**Innocent Ezugwu**  
Course: Agric. & Bioresources Engineering  
University of Nigeria



**Judith Ezugwu**  
Course: Biochemistry  
University of Nigeria



**Mary Ohayi**  
Course: Animal Science  
University of Agric. Abeokuta



**Ngozi Onwusoye**  
Course: Plant Science  
University of Nigeria



**Precious Eneh**  
Course: Mech. Engineering  
Enugu State University of Science and Technology



**Silver Ohanonu**  
Course: Electrical Engineering  
University of Nigeria



**Ikeme Gift**  
Course: Microbiology  
Federal University of Technology, Owerri



Training on the appropriate method of planting vegetable seedlings on trays



One of the interns working on the renovated screen house



Transplanting vegetables to the green house



Training activities on poultry farming



Training on the use of rototiller



A group picture of the new interns with Dr Paul Woomer

# Abuja radio station hosts IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA) Abuja



Representatives of IYA Abuja during the interview on Raypower 100.5 FM

In April 2016, the IITA Youth Agripreneurs in Abuja were invited by the first independent private radio station in Nigeria to discuss issues relating to youth engagement in agriculture.

Featured in a 30-minutes radio

programme (Farmers' Friend on Raypower 100.5 FM in Abuja) representatives of IYA-Abuja, led by Sini Luwa discussed the need for government to engage youths in the production of high quality seeds to ease the challenges faced by farmers. They also highlighted that through the

youths in agribusiness model, IITA has trained young unemployed graduates on the use of modern technologies to produce quality planting materials. So far, many youth under the program have been gainfully employed.

Sharing their success stories, the youth arouse the interest of listeners of the program as they received calls and request on the modalities of partnering with them to establish profitable business enterprises in agriculture. Some of them also showed interest in the training opportunities offered by the youth.

The 30-minutes time-frame allotted for the programme was inadequate as the youths had so many more topics to discuss.

They also took the liberty to advise other youths to contribute their quota towards changing the narrative about agriculture by embracing agriculture as a business.

At the end of the programme, Mrs Okelola Folarin, the lead consultant of the radio programme, Farmer's Friend-suggested the need to continue the topic on youth engagement at a later date.

## IYA and the making of transformational change in Onne

The IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA)-Onne is a team of five young people who were deployed from the mother group in Ibadan to Onne, Rivers State to establish the IYA Program in the region.

Since their deployment over a year ago, the group established enterprises on the production of cassava, plantain and banana sucker multiplication, fish, vegetable, and poultry.

To make additional income from some of the produce, the team has started adding value to the cassava roots by processing it into garri. The garri which is packaged in 1 and 2kg comes in yellow and white colour, and are distributed in stores in and around Onne. After five months of raising over 300-day-old layer birds for its poultry production, the IYA Onne team has become one of the major suppliers of eggs to wholesalers and retailers within the station and its neighboring communities. They have also been able to create some visibility for their activities by building strong



Asaju Oyindamola displaying the branded IYA yellow garri

partnership with major institutions, government parastatals and other private organizations. Through their enterprises, they have created jobs for people in the area and are also training

other young unemployed youths on how to be gainfully employed through agribusiness.

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