



# IITA

## Youth Agripreneurs

*Agriculture is the future*

Special Issue June 2014

## Engaging youths in agriculture brings hope to Africa and makes the IFAD president proud



*Agripreneurs with Dr Nwanze, IITA Management team, staff and partners*

The activities of young men and women in the Youth Agripreneurs (IYA) program under the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) have made the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) President, Dr Kanayo Nwanze proud; and rekindled the hope of a new generation of African agricultural entrepreneurs that will feed the continent, create wealth and employment.

The IITA Youth Agripreneurs program was developed about 2 years ago after Dr Nwanze visited IITA in Ibadan, planted a tree to mark the rejuvenation of the institute, and in his speech called for investment in the youth. Inspired by Dr Nwanze's speech the Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga took up the challenge to mobilize the youth, give them mentorship, teaching and training, thereby creating a passion in the youths to adopt agriculture as a business.

In less than 2 years, the group has recorded plausible achievements. These include producing and marketing over 30 tons of certified maize and soybean seeds, and over 280 tons of cassava roots, as well as multiplying over 3200 bundles of cassava stems and over 1000 suckers of plantain.

The group has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State to train 250 young people in agribusiness, obtained approval in principle from Oyo State Government for the construction of a Youth Education Center at IITA, and trained 33 young people from Cross River State. They have also received approval for funding from IFAD, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), as well as IITA.

Addressing the young agripreneurs in IITA in Ibadan on Tuesday, Dr Nwanze said that the successes recorded by the youngsters were signposts to a brighter future for Africa.

"I am overwhelmed by your achievements... by what you have done and... I am proud of you," the IFAD President said.

Despite an old proverb that says, "He who plants a walnut tree expects not to eat of the fruits," Dr Nwanze noted that sometimes we live long enough to see the walnut tree bear fruits.

"And I think I am one of those few who have been blessed with such an occasion," he added.

Dr Nwanze drew from the literal meaning of the word "IYA" in Yoruba meaning "motherhood," and described the Youth Agripreneurs program in IITA as the most successful "incubator" that would raise the necessary human resources to address the food security concerns not just of Nigeria but also of Africa.

He advised the youngsters to take advantage of the program and plan for a better future.

"My future is behind me; your future is in front of you. When you are my age, you will know why I say that it's behind me already. I have lived my life; your life is just beginning. What you do today will determine your future, so please make your future as robust as you wish it to be. Learn all you can while you are here under the protection of IITA because the outside world is very challenging. Your greatest support will be your passion, your conviction, and your drive to move forward," he counseled.

Earlier, Evelyn Ohanwusi, one of the agripreneurs, in her presentation said the group envisaged that 40% of its members would become self-employed; 20% would further their studies with income generated from their activities, 20% would run the IYA program, 10% would be employed by the Business Incubation Platform of IITA, and 10% would be employed by other private and public institutions.



*Evelyn making a presentation*

# IFAD president's visit to the Agripreneurs' facilities



Let us take a tour and see what the agripreneurs are doing-- IITA DG Sanginga (left) seems to be telling Dr Nwanze (right)

After listening to presentations by the Youth Agripreneurs, Dr Nwanze made a tour of some of their fields and facilities within the institute. He was accompanied by Dr Sanginga, IITA's

DG, Dr Robert Asiedu IITA's Director for Western Africa, and Dr Francis Nwilene, Nigeria's Country Representative for AfricaRice, Toyin Oke, Godwin Atser, and other members of the management

Nwanze gave the Agripreneurs advice at the various stops, also pointing out more entry points that the group could exploit.

and senior staff. The tour covered the plantain macropropagation chamber, screen-house, fish hatchery, fish pond, and the Seed Processing and Soybean Processing centers. The tour was made to keep the IFAD president informed about some of the activities of the group in particular and the transformation of IITA in general.

Members of IYA were stationed at the various locations visited to explain some of the processes involved in the production and value chain, making special emphasis about the profitability of each. Dr

## Visit to plantain macropropagation unit

At the plantain unit, Dr Nwanze saw how the youngsters were multiplying clean plantain/banana suckers using a macropropagation chamber—a locally constructed but innovative technology.

By adopting the macropropagation chamber, the Agripreneurs are producing within 3 months between 30 – 40 suckers from every single mother plantain/banana plant.

Agripreneur Joshua Adewale explained that the beauty of the technique was that it could be done in the backyard as a source of income for farmers, especially women and young people.

The Unit is made from wood, bricks, transparent polythene bags, and steam-sterilized fine sawdust.

Using this innovative approach, the youngsters are helping resource-poor farmers with improved plantain planting materials and also training others.

Adewale explained that the lack of quality planting material is one of the main constraints to the intensification of this crop in Africa. Farmers often use suckers invested with pests and diseases as their only source of planting material. "I think more young people should be empowered to go into this business," he said.



Agripreneurs share wine made from plantain with Dr Nwanze, DG Sanginga and Dr Stephen Lawani



Adewale explains the macropropagation of plantain to Dr Nwanze

## The Seed Processing Center

Dr Nwanze was received by the IYA team and Mr Samson Udo, the Center's Supervisor, who talked about the rejuvenation of the Center which took place after the IFAD president's visit about 2 years before which had been marked by the president planting a tree. It was the start of new beginning for IITA as the seed processing machine that had packed up having served for 25 years was brought back to life.

A member of the IYA marketing team, Johnbosco Ezemenaka, explained the rationale behind the group's decision to go into seed production. It was because of the wide gap in availability that currently forces farmers to use grain as planting materials, and the potential of the seed sector to provide incomes to young people and women. He said at the moment, the group was yet to meet the demand from farmers, stressing that expanding the Agripreneurs program would attract more people and facilitate the rapid dissemination of most of the improved varieties that were still in research stations.



*L-R: Dr Nwanze and Dr Stephen Lawani inspecting maize seeds produced by the agripreneurs*

## Soybean Processing Center



*Dr Nwanze refreshes with a tin of soymilk produced by the agripreneurs*

After a long tour, Dr Nwanze came to the Soybean Processing Center of the Agripreneurs to witness the milestones recorded and also to have a taste of the soymilk. IYA member, Victoria Obafemi explained the

processes involved in production, the health benefits of consuming soy milk and the economic benefits. She said that increasing the utilization of soymilk especially in the rural areas would improve the nutrition of women and children and create jobs. The group was training other colleagues on how to process the crop; she advised the President to consider including soybean in IFAD's intervention programs. She noted that with Nigeria's position as the largest producer in Africa, adding value to soybean would increase the crop's market demand, thus leading to greater production.

## At the Fish Hatchery and Pond

The IFAD President also visited the Agripreneurs' Hatchery during the field tour. Olaniyi Ajibola made a presentation on the activities within the Hatchery Unit which involve spawning, hatching, and raising fry to juveniles before transferring them to the pond.

The Agripreneurs had diversified into the fish farming business to bridge the gap between the fish protein dietary requirements of Nigerians and the current domestic production of fish and also to increase their revenue. Having realized the existence of the required resources

in the IITA community including a dam and the lake and the availability of a large market; the Fishery Unit has undergone intensive training with the Durante Fish Industry. The hatchery is presently raising about 20,000 fingerlings to the juvenile stage.

She said if the rural youth and women were trained and empowered in the fish farming business it would create jobs, reduce unemployment, and improve livelihoods. Fish farming business is profitable with a cost-benefit ratio of 1:2.3, putting all costs into consideration.



*At the hatchery, Dr Nwanze feeds the juveniles*

# Photo news: IFAD president's visit to IITA, 16-17 June 2014



## Our progress since 21 August 2012 when IFAD President Kanayo Nwanze inspired the youth to be engaged in agribusiness



IFAD President Kanayo Nwanze plants a tree, marking the rejuvenation of IITA on 22 August 2012



IITA DG Sanginga nurtures the Youth Agripreneurs



IITA DG Sanginga with Agripreneurs on the field

### Goals

- Provide employment for the youth through agribusiness moving incomes from \$200 to \$700 in three years
- Create an independent agribusiness enterprise
- Replicate this model in the IITA hubs and in SSA countries.

### Achievements

- Produced over 30 tons of certified maize and soybean seeds
- Produced over 280 tons of cassava roots and multiplied over 3200 bundles of stems
- Multiplied over 1,000 suckers of plantain
- Signed MoU with Akinyele Local Government of Oyo State to train 250 youths in agribusiness
- Obtained approval in principle from Oyo State Government for the construction of a Youth Education Center at IITA
- Trained 33 youths from Cross River and generated US\$13,000
- Received approval for funding from IFAD, FARA & IITA worth US\$ 700,000

### Expected Outcomes

- 40% become self-employed
- 20% will further their studies with income generated
- 20% will run the business
- 10% employed by the Business Incubation Platform of IITA
- 10% employed by other private and public institutions



Invest in the youth - IFAD President Nwanze



Agripreneurs tending plantain seedlings



An Agripreneur harvesting cassava



L-R: IITA Deputy Director General (Corporate Services), Kwame Akuffo-Akoto, Dr Nwanze and IITA DG Sanginga in IITA Ibadan



Dr Nwanze (3rd from right) taking a tour of the IITA Business Incubation Platform in Ibadan

This poster shows a summary of successes achieved by the agripreneurs



"He who plants a walnut tree expects not to eat of the fruits, but sometimes we live long enough to see the walnut tree bear fruits." Dr Nwanze with Sanginga and agripreneurs at the tree, which he planted 22 months ago that marked a new beginning for IITA



Dr Nwanze at the Nodumax section of the IITA BIP



Charlotte Sanginga welcomes Dr Nwanze while Dr Stephen Lawani looks on



IYA honors Dr Nwanze with a plaque for his passion for youth empowerment



Mr Udo explaining the rejuvenation of the Unit