



# IITA

## Youth Agripreneurs

*Agriculture is the future*

October 2016 Special Issue

## IFAD President hopeful that young people in agriculture will change Africa's narrative



Dr Kanayo Nwanze while delivering his speech during the official launch of the 50th anniversary of IITA

The President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Dr Kanayo Nwanze has expressed optimism over the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) young agripreneurs, describing them as a generation that will change Africa's narrative.

The IITA young agripreneurs are young men and women trained under the IITA Youth Agripreneurs program and are investing in agriculture.

Dr Nwanze who was speaking on Wednesday, 19 October, during the official 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary launch of the IITA in Ibadan, Nigeria blamed the older generation for the woes faced by Africans, but admitted that the younger generation if given the necessary support would turn the tide.

"My generation has a lot to be accountable for. We have failed woefully as Africans. We have succeeded in one thing, consistent failure. We have succeeded very well in failing. Why? Our independence fighters handed over to us a land that is rich; rich in natural resources, diamond, copper, gold, oil and gas, and also a land that is plentiful, rich farmland, rainfall in abundance and plenty of sunshine. No

other continent in the world is so gifted. What did we do with it? We squandered it," he said.

He called on the older generation to support the younger generation to enable them revive and restore the lost potential of the African continent. He added that when given the necessary support and skill, the younger generation would make Africa a booming economic trade zone.

His words, "And so those of us like myself who have been abundantly blessed, we must stand firm in our convictions for the younger generation so that they can climb on the ladder of our backs and stand on the pinnacle of our shoulders to see beyond our own vision and into the future filled with hope."

Setting a pace for others to follow, Dr Nwanze said after his retirement, he would devote the rest of his energy to motivate, mentor, and support the youth in Africa.

He stressed that agriculture however provides the right platform for the youths to revive the continent and create jobs and wealth for themselves. He said the vast natural resources were readily available

for them to produce food and save Africa from the alarming rate of importation and looming hunger.

According to him, "25% of the world's arable land is in Africa. But it only generates 10% of the world agricultural output. On top of that, we are importing 35 billion dollars worth of food every day; Nigeria imports 6 billion dollars worth of food every year. By 2025 we are looking at 100 billion dollars import bills. We are paying

somebody else in Europe, in America, to produce food. This is so sad. Where did we go wrong?"

Dr Nwanze said although most African youths still have misperception about the agricultural sector, investing in them through loans, grants, and mentoring would enable them embrace agriculture as a business.

"So let me share from some of my perspectives on how we can plant the seed for Africa's future by investing in the youth. We should not blame ourselves for our mistakes, greed and stupidity. And so this dividend of our youth has the potential of yielding great things for Africa but first we must invest now and today. We have to create the space for young people to be able to demonstrate their capacity and ability, so that they can channel their energy into creative and innovative things. Let them generate, let them experience, and make mistakes. How will they learn to make mistakes and learn from their mistakes if they are not free and given the opportunity? And that is what IITA Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga is doing with grants. But if you want to prosper, you need loans," he added. He also enjoined scientists to embark on new

... continue on page 2

and cutting-edge research that would make the agricultural sector attractive to the youths, create impact, and evolve the agricultural sector. Congratulating IITA for the work done so far in the area of research and youth engagement in agriculture, Dr Nwanze advised other corporate bodies and institutions to

emulate IITA and create meaningful impact in Africa. Also speaking at the event, the Director General of IITA, Dr Sanginga said the institution's decision to create the IITA Youth Agripreneurs -- a youth in agribusiness model was to change the perception of the African youth about the agricultural sector and

create viable employment opportunities for them along the value chain.

He said, so far, the IYA model had shown that with the right institutional support, training, and finance, youths can be productively engaged; create jobs, and wealth in agriculture.

## From the Chairman's desk



Chairman, IITA 50th Anniversary- Dr Kwesi Atta-Krah giving a keynote at the official 50th anniversary launch of IITA

IITA will be 50 years old by July 2017. An institution is nothing without its people. We are not celebrating the buildings of the institution but we are celebrating the people of IITA. People of all shades of green and I choose to use the colour green because we are all agriculture.

Green symbolizes life, food security, nutrition, wealth creation and fighting against poverty. These are all the values that we stand for. So the celebration is about you and I. It is about the people

that have contributed in diverse ways into what IITA has become today. The past, present and future; that is why we are fully engaged with our alumni. And it gives me so great pleasure to see the Lawanis (Mr and Mrs Stephen Lawani). It is amazing, and it shows the connection that we all have with the organization.

For launching this momentous event, we have chosen an individual who takes all the boxes in the realm of significance and this individual is also an alumnus, Dr Kanayo Nwanze. At this point, let me

share a message I received early this morning from a highly distinguished elder alumnus of IITA, Dr Gamble, a former Director General of IITA, and he writes;

*“ Dear Kwasi, thank you for the information on IITA's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. Time has certainly passed. We celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary when I was the DG. If you can, please give my congratulations and best wishes to Dr Kanayo Nwanze. He was a post-doctoral fellow during my tenure at IITA and I have followed his outstanding career on the internet. At 96, I am unable to attend the celebration but please extend my very best and warm wishes to those attending.”*

This message from Dr Gamble is powerful in 2 key respects. It celebrates our institution and its alumni connection. But it also celebrates youths and dynamism. What excites me most is that youth connection. He mentioned that Dr Kanayo was a post-doc fellow at that time; a young bubbling man at that time. What that tells me is that our youths of today including our IITA Youth Agripreneurs, are the people with the potential to be Directors General, CEOs of major companies, to be millionaires and billionaires.

## Yet another debate

At about 2:00pm on the afternoon of October 19, the Conference Center at the IITA headquarters in Ibadan hosted staff of the Institute, invited guests and stakeholders in the public and private sectors. The debate was part of the activities outlined for the visit of the IFAD President, Dr Kanayo Nwanze, and the commencement of the 50th anniversary of the Pan-African agricultural research institute-IITA.

IITA Youth Agripreneurs from Ibadan and Abuja debated to proffer solutions and logical answers to the questions:

“Is there more value in processing than in production? Is it better to invest in loans than in grants? And are men better at production and women better in business?”

Moderated by Dr Eric Koper, the debate which was the second in the history of IITA, was in three sessions as Festus Okunlola, Mustapha Ismail, Molayo Owoeye, and Evelyn Ohanwusi spoke for and against the first topic.

Speaking in support of more value in processing, Owoeye Molayo and Evelyn

Ohanwusi argued that there is more profit in processing and value addition than production. Taking tomatoes as a case study, they emphasized that 40% of tomatoes produced in Nigeria goes into waste, but when processed it increases the level of revenue made by a farmer.

While arguing against the opinion of value in processing, Festus Okunlola and Mustapha Ismail were of the view that there is value in production than in processing. They stated that the producer (farmer) is the power house of the processor. Without the farmer



Debaters: (L-R)- Molayo Owoeye, Evelyn Ohanwusi, Ismail Mustapha, and Festus Okunola

who produces, the processor according to them will have virtually nothing to process and sell. They were also of the opinion that processed foods contribute to lots of health hazards in human beings.

At the end of the first session, the team proposing more value in production

won with over 60% votes. Also stepping out to defend their stand on the issue of investing in grants than loans, Seun Adedeji and Yetunde Oginni were of the view that grants were better investments, which could be used in supporting agribusinesses due to the risk associated with agriculture. Grants according to them serve as a mechanism for attracting youths to agriculture. They stated that it (grant) also provides a platform

for youths to learn and make mistakes in the course of their businesses. The high interest rate on loans according to Seun and Yetunde would cripple young business agripreneurs to expand and out-scale their businesses

Izuwa Zaccheus and David Samora on their part said they strongly believed



A cross-section of voting during the debating: Dr Nwanze (standing) and his wife, Mrs Nwanze (sitting in-front from right) cast their votes

that investments should go to loans than grants. They opined that loans enable young agripreneurs to establish and expand their businesses with ease. Loans according to them make aspiring agripreneurs to be more responsible and responsive to their businesses. On their part, Zaccheus and Samora said loans give young entrepreneurs the opportunity of being credit worthy.

At the end of the session, 55% of the people voted in support of investment of loans in business than grants.

The final session of the debate had Tosin Olaniyi, Gift Bawa, Dare Odusanya and Tolu Bajulaiye presenting their stand on men being better at production and women being better in business.

While Dare and Tolu were of the opinion that investment should go to men for production and women for business, they argued that women have better entrepreneurial skills to gather resources and make the economy of the Continent boom. Tosin and Gift would however not

support this motion as they strongly believed that investments should go to women for production and men for business. They both analyzed that even with the little resources made available to women; they still produce over 60% of the food thereby saving the world from hunger.

With their arguments, the team of Tosin and Gift won the debate as lots of people in the conference hall supported the fact that investments should go to women for production and men for business.

## Excerpts from the debate



Molayo Owoeye



Festus Okunlola

*Where is the value in value chain? Is it in production or marketing and processing?*

*"If you limit your thought to thinking agriculture is all about production, then you limit the magnitude of the benefit you can derive from agriculture."*

**- Owoeye Molayo**

*"President Olusegun Obasanjo is not into processing and yet he is wealthy. This should be at the back of our minds."*

**- Festus Okunlola**



Seun Adedeji



Izuwa Zaccheus

Is it better to invest in loans? Or is it better to invest in grant?

“There is no better definition of enslavement and imprisonment if you have to pay a loan for 100 years. Even your dead body will pay back the loan and your family will be held to ransom. Give me support for one year and I can sustain myself for so many years ahead.”  
- **Seun Adedeji**



Tolu Bajulaiye



Tosin Olaniyi

“A loan empowers the private sector and allows men and women to go into productive businesses. For Africa to experience rejuvenation, we should be talking about massive acquisition of loans from financial institutions spread across Africa.”  
- **Izuwa Zaccheus**

Is it better for investment to go to women for production and men for business?

“Women are more passionate, they are better financial managers and entrepreneurs. Have you wondered why we have had women as Ministers of Finance in Nigeria? If investments go to women for business, Africa’s economy will boom.”  
- **Tolu Bajulaiye**

“Women put in their best to ensure that everything they do becomes successful. If Africa is ever going to feed Africa, we need the people who are passionate about productivity and that is where you will find women. Men are better risk managers than women.”  
- **Tosin Olaniyi**

## Photo gallery



IYA member, Yetunde Oginni (R) with DG-IITA, Dr Nteranya Sanginga (M) presents a gift to Dr Kanayo Nwanze



Dr Kanayo Nwanze (2nd from left) with one of the products of IITA Youth Agripreneurs at the exhibition booth



A group photograph during the anniversary launch

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