

## Policymakers commend IITA for efforts on digital agriculture

Policymakers comprising commissioners of agriculture, permanent secretaries and program managers of Agricultural Development Programs (ADPs) in Nigeria have lauded efforts by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) on digital agriculture.

At a meeting tagged: 'Presentation of Digital Tools: Disruptive Innovations in Cassava and Maize Farming systems' on 02 December, the Commissioners for Agriculture in Ondo and Ekiti states, Messrs Adegboyega Adefarati and Folorunso Olabode appreciated the IITA-led African Cassava Agronomy Initiative (ACAI) project for developing digital solutions to address agricultural challenges in Nigeria.

They noted that the digital tools were apt for the agricultural transformation plans of their governments.

Olabode, the Ekiti State Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development stated that the Ekiti State government was already working towards digitization of agriculture and would be among the first to adopt digital extension to promote and strengthen the extension system and improve agriculture in the state.

His Ondo State counterpart, Adefarati said the digital innovations in extension services were coming at the appropriate time and expressed hope that they would be properly integrated into the existing traditional extension system for the benefit of farmers.

In his welcome remarks, IITA Director for Development & Delivery, Dr. Alfred Dixon, called for Concerted efforts on the use of digital tools that have been developed by IITA to revive the agricultural extension system.

He said the aim of the meeting was to share knowledge and digital tools developed in the last five years by IITA Cassava Weed Management Project and ACAI and other projects in IITA.

According to Dr Dixon, "deploying the digital tools which include the Six Steps to Cassava Weed Management & Best Planting Practices videos, IITA Herbicides Calculator, Cassava e-market, Akilimo, Cassava Seed Tracker, IITA News App and the 3-2-1 toll free code on airtel mobile line would help in solving farmers' challenges in cassava production and increase income generation."



*Dr Christine Kreye presenting Digital Agricultural tools developed by IITA to Commissioners of Agriculture*

He explained that in the last five years, the IITA Cassava Weed Management Project had developed integrated weed control methods that are helping farmers to double the productivity of cassava and maize. He said the recommendations of the project were being scaled out to farmers through a variety of digital platforms in the framework of the African Cassava Agronomy Initiative (ACAI).

He noted that considering the challenges with traditional extension systems in Nigeria and Africa, the digital tools would enhance efficiency and effectiveness in disseminating knowledge to farmers.

In his presentation, Mr Godwin Atser, IITA Digital Extension & Advisory Services Specialist, stated that IITA's approach to digitalization in agriculture was to complement the existing extension system and to offer practitioners with tools that would help them do their jobs better.

According to him, ACAI has developed agronomic recommendations in various Nigerian languages into videos, radio programs and the 3-2-1 IVR service on Airtel. He added that while the IITA Herbicide calculator would help farmers avoid herbicide under-dose and overdose, the Cassava e-Market provided a platform for farmers to sell their produce.

Lava Kumar, IITA Head of Germplasm Health Unit who spoke about the Cassava Seed Tracker said the web-based application aims to bridge the information gap in the agricultural seed sector and connect seed producers to their customers.

Dr Kumar stated: "The National Seed Council of Nigeria has bought into the digital Cassava Seed Trackers based on its numerous benefits and the app now serves as a means of registration for seed producers as well as certification. This will help the seed business that remains untapped as majority of farmers reuse seeds or buy locally."

Speaking on Akilimo, IITA Systems Agronomist, Stefan Hauser, said the application was developed to deliver tailored agronomy recommendations to cassava growers at their various locations in the country.

"Akilimo will help the farmers make informed decisions on their investments," he added.

The meeting had in attendance Commissioners of Agriculture, Permanent Secretaries, Directors of Agriculture, Program Managers of Agricultural Development Programs (ADPs), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), IITA Scientists, the academia, agrochemical companies and the media.

# Congratulations! ACAI shines at the 2019 R4D Week



Poster gallery at the 2019 Research for Development week (R4D Week 2019) in IITA Ibadan

Joy and celebration amid funfair filled the air as members of the African Cassava Agronomy Initiative (ACAI) emerged among winners of the Best Poster and Best PechaKucha Presentations at the 2019 Research for Development week (R4D Week 2019) in IITA Ibadan.

Dr Meklit Chernet, won the second place in the PechaKucha presentation where she discussed about Akilimo—an agronomy decision support tool under the Natural Resource Management category. The first place went to Danny Coyne/Laura Cortada, while the third, fourth and fifth places went

to Geoffrey Nsofon, Patchimaporn Udomkun, and Delphine Amah respectively.

Under the research poster category, ACAI's Dr Christine Kreye won the third position with her poster titled: Validating a decision support tool for cassava-maize intercropping in Southern Nigeria. The poster was based on the work done by Dr Kreye and colleagues including national partners. Co-authors on her poster included: C. Chigemezu, P. Pypers, A. Olojede, M. Busari, M. Tokula, F. Olowokere, A. Adebiji, S. Ejalonibu, Meklit Chernet Tariku, S. Hauser, and J. Six.

## ACAI scientists and partners to meet in Zanzibar to review progress

Scientists, experts and scaling partners of the African Cassava Agronomy Initiative (ACAI) of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) are set for their 4th annual review and planning meeting.

The meeting, holding on the exquisite Unguja Island in Zanzibar, Tanzania, from 9 December to 12 December 2019, presents an opportunity for the entire ACAI team to get-together, celebrate successes of the project, discuss challenges, and plan for the fifth and final year, says the Project Coordinator, Dr Pieter Pypers.

This year's meeting will have less of plenary presentations but more of poster sessions, a world café, breakout sessions and information booths where scientists, knowledge exchange experts and partners will showcase and share ideas.

According to Dr Pypers, "the meeting will also be about scaling and dissemination first, and how we have started gaining momentum with going on ground with Akilimo. The first day will be entirely devoted to how we have been putting our tools to use within the extension activities of our partners. Only on the last day, we will talk science."



From the archives: Dr Pypers making a presentation on ACAI to stakeholders

Akilimo is the mobile agronomy advisory tool developed to serve as the face of ACAI's decision support system. It combines data, predictions models, software infrastructure and interfaces, using pragmatic and user-centered approaches to provide the information in ways that are attractive and useful to partners, extension workers and cassava farmers.

Apart from the ACAI team members, partners leading the dissemination of the ACAI Decision Support Tools through extension work in Nigeria and Tanzania expected at the meeting include Mennonite Economic

Development Associates (MEDA), Farm Concern International (FCI), UWAMWIMA, Minjingu, Psaltry International, 2Scale and NOTORE. The technical partners working to strengthen Akilimo (VIAMO 321 service, eSOKO digital solutions and Arifu chatbot) will also be present at booth sessions.

Zanzibar presents a unique venue for this year's ACAI review meeting. The island is a real gem, a beautiful place with an interesting history, beaches, sun, palm trees and great food.

"We will take the opportunity to enjoy some of the pleasures that Zanzibar has to offer. But Zanzibar is also a place where cassava is grown. And cassava is a very important crop for Zanzibari farmers, both for food and for cash. Together with the Zanzibar Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI) and our partners Farm Concern International (FCI) and UWAMWIMA, we want to demonstrate some of the very interesting work that has been conducted here. We will be taking you out to the field, and let you experience first-hand how recommendations on cassava intercropping are now being validated and demonstrated to farmer groups on the island," Dr Pypers added.

## CBN to collaborate with IITA, NRCRI, on cassava, as ACAI steps up dissemination activities

In a bid to revitalize the cassava industry in Nigeria, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Nigeria Cassava Growers Association and Large Scale Cassava Processors. The signing ceremony took place at a meeting held on Thursday with the governors of cassava-producing states in Abuja.

At the meeting, CBN governor, Godwin Emefiele, regretted that Nigeria imports cassava derivatives valued at about \$600 million annually despite being a leader in cassava production and possessing several varieties of the root crop.

He announced that the apex bank would collaborate with the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan and the National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI), Umudike, in order to help farmers

adopt improved varieties and best practices that would guarantee better yield, better processing efficiency, increased profit and improved standard of living.

According to him, the signing of the MoU was to guarantee steady off-take and processing of cassava in Nigeria, adding that the move would maximize local benefits of all the derivatives in cassava and save scarce foreign exchange.

He however stressed that repositioning the country's cassava sector requires the involvement of research institutions especially the IITA and NRCRI, both of whom are already partners on cassava research projects.

"In achieving this goal, we are holding consultations with the International Institute



CBN's collaboration with IITA, NRCRI, on cassava

for Tropical Agriculture, Ibadan and the National Root Crops Research Institute, Umudike," Emefiele said. "Apart from foreign exchange conservation, increasing cassava production is a necessity as starch, glucose, sorbitol and other products currently being imported."

Nigeria grows over 50% of the world's cassava with over 4.5 million farmers growing the crop on 3.8 million hectares of land. Nevertheless, these farmers face challenges like soil and nutrient management, availability of improved germplasm and weed management.

To tackle some of these challenges the IITA and NRCRI, in conjunction with several other institutions, have collaborated on projects like the Cassava Weed Management Project (CWMP) and the African Cassava Agronomy Initiative (ACAI), which, after five years of research, have come up with recommendations that have been helping farmers double their cassava yield.

Both projects, now working as a single unit under ACAI, are currently disseminating agronomy recommendations to farmers across the country. The recommendations, which include the Six Steps to Cassava

Weed Management and Best Planting Practices, are teaching farmers: best weed control methods, safe use of herbicides, best practices in fertilizer application, inter-cropping operations and Scheduled Planting activities.

Three Nigerian radio stations are already broadcasting the recommendations while extension agents from project partners are currently teaching the technology to farmers in rural communities. Digital extension tools and mobile apps are also in full use. These tools include Akilimo, Herbicide calculator, Airtel 321 service by Viamo, Cassava Seed Tracker and the Cassava Matters website where farmers, extension agents, researchers, policy makers, and other stakeholders in the cassava sector can assess a wide range of resources.

IITA recently announced its plan to train 30,000 farmers in Abia, Benue, Oyo, Ogun and Osun States on the Six Steps to Cassava

Weed Management & Best Planting Practices.

The aim of the training, according to Godwin Atser, ACAI Digital Extension & Advisory Services Specialist, is to empower farmers with the knowledge to boost cassava and maize productivity and yield per hectare. This will subsequently increase farmers' incomes, better their livelihoods, and create jobs for more people.

In a chat with Newspeakonline, Atser explained, "the trainings are being done in close collaboration with state Agricultural Development Programs (ADPs) and other extension service providers."

"Already the ACAI has developed videos and translated same into local languages – Igbo, Yoruba, and Tiv, targeting the respective zones," he added. "We have also procured mini-projectors and mobile phones to empower extension service providers in the participating states."

## NEW! Now you can sell and buy cassava produce online as Cassava Matters launches e-Market

An online market place for cassava and cassava-related commodities has been launched on the Cassava Matters website, [www.cassavamatters.org](http://www.cassavamatters.org)

The platform called Cassava e-Market is a multi-seller/multi-vendor platform where farmers (especially cassava farmers) can advertise and sell their produce. Related farming and processing equipment,

herbicides, fertilizers, farmlands and lots more can also be advertised, sold and bought on the website.

According to Godwin Atser, Digital Extension & Advisory Services Specialist with IITA, the online store was set up to satisfy farmers clamoring for a platform to advertise and sell their produce.

The platform operates like other popular online stalls by simply connecting the seller to a buyer. Cassava Matters is only bringing sellers and buyers together on the e-Market platform. The website would not be held liable for any sour deal between the seller and the buyer.

### BUYERS

How to get the best from Cassava e-Market

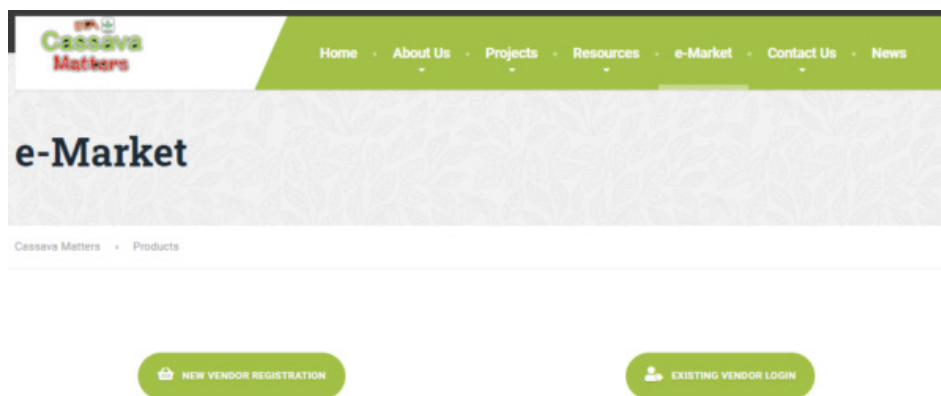
To get the best from Cassava Matters e-market, buyers are advised to adhere strictly to the following:

- Do not pay in advance before the delivery of any product
- Try to meet with the seller to properly negotiate and pick up your products
- Inspect and be satisfied with the product before paying for it;
- Pay only after collecting the item.

### SELLERS

Setting up your e-Market store on the platform is as easy as ABC

- Simply go to [www.cassavamatters.org](http://www.cassavamatters.org)
- On the menu bar, click **e-Market**
- Scroll down and click on **NEW VENDOR REGISTRATION** and go through the instructions



### New Products



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- Thereafter, click on **REGISTER AND START SELLING**, a Vendor Registration form will open

**Vendor Registration**

Cassava Matters · Vendor Registration

**Registration**

*Username\**

*Email\**

Verification Code  **RE-SEND CODE**

*First Name*

*Last Name*

*Store Name\**

[https://cassavamatters.org/store/\[your\\_store\]](https://cassavamatters.org/store/[your_store])


*Address 1\**

*Address 2*

*Country\**

*City/Town*

- Fill in your details on the Vendor Registration form. Immediately you input your email address on the form, a verification code will be sent to your email. Fill the **Verification Code** in the appropriate column, fill other required details and click Register
- A Store Setup page will open with the message, **Welcome to Cassava Matters!**
- To set up your store, click **Let's go!** Then fill the form that opens and click **Continue**
- A Payment setup page will open. Click on **Skip this step**
- A Support setup page will open. Click on **Skip this step**
- A Store SEO setup page will open. Click on **Skip this step**
- A Store Social setup page will open. Fill in your social media handles if you wish and click **Continue**. Otherwise click on **Skip this step**
- We are done! Click on **Let's go to Dashboard**

 **Store Setup**

Store    Payment    Customer Support    SEO    Social    Ready!

**Welcome to Cassava Matters!**

Thank you for choosing Cassava Matters! This quick setup wizard will help you to configure the basic settings and you will have your store ready in no time.

If you don't want to go through the wizard right now, you can skip and return to the dashboard. You may setup your store from dashboard › setting anytime!

**Let's go!**    Not right now

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- When your Dashboard opens, click on **Products**. Then click on **Add New** to add new products

The screenshot shows the 'My Store' dashboard. The top navigation bar includes the store logo, 'My Store', and a 'Products' breadcrumb. On the right, there are notification icons for alerts, help, and messages, along with a user profile icon. The left sidebar contains navigation links: Home, Media, Products (highlighted), Orders, Customers, Add to My Store, Settings, Reports, and Logout. The main content area is titled 'Products' and shows a summary of product counts: 'All (0) | Published (0) | Draft (0) | Pending (0) | Archived (0)'. A 'Products Limit: Unlimited' badge is visible. An 'Add New' button is in the top right. Below this, there are controls for 'Show 25 entries', a search bar, and filters for 'Filter by category ...' and 'All product types'. A 'BULK EDIT' button and a trash icon are also present. The table below has columns: Name, Status, Price, Taxonomies, Date, and Actions. The table is currently empty, displaying 'No data in the table'. At the bottom, it says 'Showing 0 to 0 of 0 entries' and has 'Previous' and 'Next' navigation links.

- Fill in the product details; title, price and description. Add a picture of the, select an applicable category and click SUBMIT. Click on VIEW to see how your product is displayed on the e-Market

This newsletter is produced by African Cassava Agronomy Initiative (ACAI) in collaboration with the BASICS projects.

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