

New research station to empower Nigerian farmers in modern agriculture

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) has unveiled a new research station in Ago-Owu in Osun state, Nigeria, as part of efforts to expand its research agenda and create impact at farm level - this as the organisation marks its fiftieth anniversary. The station, located in Ayedade Local Government Area, will serve as a research and training facility that will support the state's agricultural programmes and offer training support to the youth in the area, in particular, and Nigeria in general.



L-R Deputy Governor, Osun State, Titilayo Laoye-Tomori; Governor of Osun State, Rauf Aregbesola; and Director General of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, Dr Nteranya Sanginga at the commissioning of IITA Research and Training Farm in Ago Owu

In 2015, Governor Rauf Aregbesola donated a piece of land measuring about 205.5 hectares to IITA as he sought to bring research closer to the people of the state with a view to creating transformational change in the agricultural sector of the state. IITA accepted the offer with the signing of a memorandum of understanding and began investment on the land with the development of roads and other infrastructure.

Aregbesola said he was glad the MoU with IITA moved beyond paper to implementation. He commended IITA for its research efforts in the last 50 years, adding that the research facility will advance research in Osun state with a spinoff effect on other parts of the country. "We believe that this research facility will train and empower our youth in modern agriculture," he said.

The inauguration of the research facility also allowed researchers to make presentations on new findings from cassava weed management, breeding, banana breeding and multiplication, cassava processing, and aflasafe - a technology for controlling aflatoxins among others. There was a presentation of improved seeds of maize, cowpea, soybean, yam, plantain seedlings, and cassava stems for onward distribution to farmers in Osun state. IITA also gave the governor some quantities of Purdue Improved Crop Storage (PICS) bags which provide a simple, low-cost method of reducing post-harvest cowpea losses due to insects' infestations.

Research to facilitate agricultural transformation

The Director General, IITA, Dr Nteranya Sanginga said, IITA was happy to work with and in Osun state. "This research facility is part of our strategy to take research closer to the people. Our plan is to make this station a one-stop shop where farmers' needs will be addressed," he said.

Under the refreshed IITA strategy, IITA plans to lift 11 million people out of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa by 2020 and to reclaim 7.5 million hectares of degraded land and put the land into sustainable use. Achieving this goal entails IITA expanding its partnership scope and strengthening old partnerships.

Sanginga said the Ago-Owu research facility would primarily conduct research on cassava, maize, yam, soybean, banana/plantain and cowpea. "We will also be using the facility to train Nigerian youths in agribusiness," he added.

The inauguration of Ago-Owo research station brings to six the number of such facilities in Nigeria. Others are located in Onne (Rivers State), Abuja, Mokwa (Niger state), Minjibir (Kano), and Ikene (Ogun State).

Dr Alfred Dixon, director for development and delivery, IITA, said the inauguration of the research facility was a step in the right direction with the potential of bringing many benefits to the people of the state in particular, and the country in general. He said the research facility would assist the state in accelerating its agricultural reform agenda whose particular focus is on increasing agricultural productivity and job creation.

Established in 1967, IITA is an international agricultural research institution that generates agricultural innovations to meet Africa's most pressing challenges of hunger, malnutrition, poverty, and natural resource degradation. Working with various partners across sub-Saharan Africa, IITA improves livelihoods, enhance food and nutrition security, increase employment, and preserve natural resource integrity. The Institute operates in Nigeria and 13 research stations/hubs across sub-Saharan Africa.

C: L-R: Deputy Governor, Osun State, Mrs Titilayo Laoye-Tomori; Governor of Osun State, Rauf Aregbesola; and Director General of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, Dr Nteranya Sanginga at the commissioning of IITA Research and Training Farm in Ago Owu, Osun State, and donation of seeds to Osun State Government... on Thursday

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