PRESS RELEASE
IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria
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Stakeholders converge in Ibadan, Nigeria to brainstorm on the future of Africa’s cocoa research

For the first time in West Africa, a regional symposium focusing on the next generation of cocoa research for West and Central Africa will take place 8-10 November, at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Ibadan, Nigeria.

The symposium will tackle the bottlenecks faced by cocoa producers in West and Central Africa, and update stakeholders and policy makers on the recent innovations in cocoa improvement.

Academics, industry representatives, and various stakeholders from Africa’s cocoa sector will come together to discuss research priorities across both the public and private sector platforms, share research experiences, identify research need, and ultimately develop national, regional and global alliances to unleash the potential of the crop.

“This Regional Cocoa Symposium is the first of its kind in Africa. It is happening in West Africa—the hub of global cocoa production. It will highlight the diverse roles of cocoa in improving farmers’ livelihood. It is also a forum for stakeholders to synthesize ideas on sustainable cocoa production. The Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria (CRIN) is proud to be part of this event,” said O. Olubamiwa, Executive Director of CRIN.

Cocoa is essential to the livelihoods of 40-50 million people worldwide, including over 5 million smallholder cocoa farmers who grow this valuable crop. In West Africa about 6 million hectares are planted with cocoa, contributing about 70% to the total world production. The biggest producers are Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana, followed by Nigeria and Cameroon.

Cocoa production is highly labor intensive, and smallholder cocoa farmers face many challenges including severe crop loss due to disease, aging trees, outdated farming techniques, and limited organizational and research support.

Nteranya Sanginga, Director General of IITA, said that the symposium aims to bring together different stakeholders including public institutions, private partners and donors along with scientists, researchers, industry partners, farmers and other stakeholders across the value chain to draw a roadmap for a sustainable cocoa sector in the region.

“The symposium will address the issues around the research and development continuum and will provide the platform for scientific interaction, display of products, and strengthening of partnerships among different actors across the entire sector,” he further explained. “The convergence will better position Africa’s cocoa research and production in the face of the current climatic challenges affecting the crop in the region.”
Richard Scobey, President, World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) stated that the symposium underscores the significant role being played by research in crop and livelihood advancement.

“The World Cocoa Foundation, through its partnership with USAID’s Feed the Future, is pleased to be working closely with IITA to co-host the Regional Symposium for the Next Generation of Cocoa Research. We are also proud to point out investments made by WCF member companies, including through the African Cocoa Breeders Working Group, which is bringing together industry scientists and public-sector researchers to work on critical issues in this field. The symposium, supported by WCF's African Cocoa Initiative, underscores the critical role that research plays in transforming the cocoa sector and ensuring a more prosperous future for cocoa farmers and their families around the world,” Scobey said.

The symposium is being organized by the WCF African Cocoa Initiative (ACI), in conjunction with the African Cocoa Breeders Working Group (ACBWG). It receives support from Feed the Future (USAID), IITA, CRIN, and WCF.

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Hashtag: #gococoa16
Streaming link: https://youtu.be/J56cl1p26Bk

About IITA www.iita.org
The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) is a non-profit 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, we improve livelihoods, enhance food and nutrition security, increase employment, and preserve natural resource integrity. IITA is a member of CGIAR, a global agriculture research partnership for a food secure future.

About WCF www.worldcocoafoundation.org
The World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) is an international membership organization that promotes sustainability in the cocoa sector. WCF provides cocoa farmers with the support they need to grow more quality cocoa and socially and economically strengthen their communities. WCF’s members include cocoa and chocolate manufacturers, processors, supply chain managers, and other companies worldwide, representing more than 80 percent of the global cocoa market. WCF’s programs benefit farmers and their communities in cocoa-growing regions of Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Americas.

About CRIN www.crin-ng.org
The Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria (CRIN) is a national institute with research mandate on cocoa, kola, coffee, cashew, and tea. The Institute has six substations located in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria where these crops are cultivated in abundance. Over the years, the Institute has recorded major breakthroughs in research that enhanced the production and utilization of products and by-products of the mandate crops.

About Feed the Future https://feedthefuture.gov
Feed the Future is the United States’ contribution to a collaborative global effort to sustainably reduce global hunger, poverty and undernutrition. To achieve this, Feed the Future agencies work hand-in-hand with partner countries to develop their agriculture sectors and break the vicious cycle of poverty and hunger. Feed the Future’s efforts increase agricultural productivity and generate opportunities for economic growth and trade in developing countries, boost the harvests and incomes of rural smallholder farmers, improve agricultural research and development and increase resilience to help prevent and withstand recurrent crises.

Media contact:
Katherine Lopez, Head of Communication, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
k.lopez@cgiar.org