

2Blades Signs Memorandum of Understanding with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)

2Blades and IITA Collaborate to Develop Resistance to Asian Soybean Rust (ASR) in Tropical Soybean

EVANSTON, IL, USA, July 11, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- 2Blades announces the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture



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Diana Horvath

(IITA) to foster greater cooperation between the two organizations and their activities in soybean in Africa. The scope of the MOU includes exchanging information, materials, and training opportunities in pursuit of developing resistance to Asian Soybean Rust (ASR) in tropical soybean.

Following successful work identifying novel sources of genetic resistance to ASR for North and South America,

2Blades [launched its program on Asian Soybean Rust in Africa last year](#). 2Blades has been building and expanding a [consortium of public and private partners](#), such as IITA, to strengthen an African agricultural innovation chain and advance and deliver ASR-resistant soybean.

IITA is a member of CGIAR and a leading Africa-based research organization focused on improving crop quality and productivity to reduce hunger, malnutrition, and poverty. IITA has extensive expertise in soybean breeding in sub-Saharan Africa with the aim of increasing the crop's value for food, feed, and farmer income. IITA has improved soybean yields and tackled disease threats, including ASR.

"2Blades has worked with IITA scientists on several crops over many years. I am delighted to now step up our joint efforts on soybean," stated Diana Horvath, President and Co-Founder of 2Blades. The MoU follows discussions during visits by 2Blades' team members to IITA's administrative and research locations in Nigeria and Zambia earlier this year.

In addition to collaborating on research strategies for combating ASR, 2Blades and IITA are jointly supporting the Ph.D. research of Ms. Habtamnesh Girma Habtemariam. Ms. Habtemariam will pursue degree requirements for the Ph.D. at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. Her research will focus on the genetic analysis of soybean for resistance to Asian soybean rust,

conducting research in Malawi where soybean crops have been devastated by ASR in recent years. IITA and 2Blades' support for Ms. Habtemariam's studies and related fieldwork reflects a commitment to training scientists and building capacity in the region.

"IITA is happy to work with 2Blades in strengthening the agricultural innovation chain in Africa," says Simeon Ehui, CGIAR Regional Director for Africa and IITA Director General. "This is a strategic collaboration, and we look forward to working with partners in helping deliver research capacity and promoting soybean as an important economic crop in the continent."

This MOU comes at a critical time for smallholder farmers as a growing number of African countries have prioritized soybean and expanded its cultivation. Soybean is a highly versatile crop that carries strong economic value for smallholder farmers, yet increases in soybean production have been met with increased occurrences of Asian soybean rust, a fast-moving, aggressive disease that can destroy up to 90% of soybeans within just 3 weeks of initial infection. Caused by the airborne fungus, *Phakopsora pachyrhizi*, ASR is already the leading disease affecting soybean yield loss in Africa.

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About IITA (iita.org)

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) is a nonprofit 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 Africa, we improve livelihoods, enhance food and nutrition security, create employment, and preserve natural resource integrity. IITA is a member of CGIAR (cgiar.org), a global agriculture research partnership for a food-secure future.

ABOUT 2BLADES (2blades.org)

2Blades is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that advances solutions to crop losses by merging cutting-edge scientific discovery with delivery in the field, contributing to a more resilient, sustainable, and productive global food supply. 2Blades establishes and manages development programs addressing significant unsolved crop disease problems and delivers outcomes to downstream implementation partners. It conducts these programs in its own laboratories and in collaboration with leading research institutions around the world. 2Blades also manages a portfolio of specific traits and enabling technologies used in its own programs and out-licensed for broad use. 2Blades is headquartered in Evanston, IL, with research labs in Norwich, UK and St. Paul, MN.

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