



Strengthening Soil Health Systems in West Africa: 2025 Progress of the Regional Hub for Fertilizer and Soil Health (RHFSH) Establishment

Report on IPI 1.2



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About AICCRA Reports

Titles in this series aim to disseminate interim research on the scaling of climate services and climate-smart agriculture in Africa, to stimulate feedback from the scientific community.

Photos

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CONTENTS

Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	NEW UPDATES IN 2025.....	2
3.	HUB GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES.....	5
4.	COORDINATION MECHANISM.....	5
5.	COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY.....	8
6.	DEPLOYMENT OF THE HUB FUNCTIONS.....	9
7.	COUNTRY SUPPORT MISSIONS	12
8.	TECHNICAL FUNCTIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS	15
9.	CONCLUSION.....	16

Abbreviation

AICCRA	Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research in Africa
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AUDA	African Union Development Agency
BAU	business as usual
CA	conservation agriculture
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CBA	cost-benefit analysis
CCAFS	Climate Change Agriculture and Food Security
CGIAR	Consultative Group of International Agricultural Research Centres
CIS	climate information services
CSA	climate-smart agriculture
CSAIP	climate-smart agriculture investment plan
CSEP	Climate-Smart Agriculture Education and Policy Project
CSV	climate-smart village
FANRPAN	Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FNS	food and nutrition security
GCCASP	Gender Climate Change and Agriculture Support Programme
ICT	information and communications technology
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
IRR	internal rate of return
MoAMID	Ministries of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development
MSP	multi-stakeholder platform
NDE	National Designated Entity
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NPV	net present value
PICZ	Professional Insurance Company of Zambia
REC	Regional Economic Community

1. Introduction

This 2025 update provides an overview of IITA's coordinated efforts toward establishing and operationalizing the Regional Hub for Fertilizer and Soil Health (RHFSH), in alignment with AICCRA Performance Indicator (IPI) 1.2. The report presents key milestones achieved in the reporting period, focusing on developing governance structures, stakeholder engagement processes, country-level collaborations, and progress in deploying the Hub's core functions. Collectively, these achievements demonstrate significant advancement in promoting sustainable soil health and fertilizer management systems across West Africa.

Performance Indicator: IPI 1.2:

Regional Hub for Fertilizers and Soil Health established

The IPI 1.2 serves as the foundational or “backend” infrastructure enabling the effective delivery of programmatic activities under the AICCRA–Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health (AFSH) framework. Specifically, this component encompasses three critical dimensions:

- **Deployment of Hub Functions:** Establishing the logistical, administrative, and technical systems required to roll out Hub activities across the Wave 1 countries: Nigeria, Togo, Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.
- **Technical Backstopping and Country Support Missions:** Coordinated missions by Hub experts to support national teams in strengthening soil and fertilizer systems, harmonizing data standards, and facilitating joint planning and implementation.

Specialized Expertise: Engagement of thematic experts in data analysis and modelling to generate evidence-based fertilizer recommendations, soil information systems, and regional soil maps.

Through these strategic interventions, the Regional Hub continues to serve as a key enabler in building resilient, data-driven, and collaborative soil fertility management systems that support agricultural transformation and climate-smart development across the region.



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1.1. Demand-Driven Country Engagement

The Regional Hub for Fertilizer and Soil Health for West Africa and the Sahel was created in June 2024 under the auspices of ECOWAS. Its mandate originates from two regional and continental commitments: the Lomé Declaration on Fertilizer and Soil Health (May 2023) and the Nairobi Summit on Fertilizer and Soil Health (May 2024).

The Hub operates as a demand-driven mechanism, responding to national and regional needs articulated through ministries, research institutes, and private sector actors. It functions as a technical assistance platform that supports the implementation of countries' soil health and fertilizer action plans.

The Regional Hub also collaborates with and supports major national and regional initiatives, such as the Soil Values project, with which a Memorandum of Understanding is being developed, to foster mutual sharing of data and methodologies, avoid useless duplication of costs, and develop synergies.

In the last quarter of 2024, the Hub undertook scoping missions in 11 West African and Sahelian countries to understand and assess their needs and priorities. Based on these engagements in countries, we selected the first wave countries meeting the following set of criteria:

- 1. Countries' readiness for scaling, visible in the political willingness
- 2. Presence of scaling financial partners

Hence, the first wave of countries comprises Nigeria, Togo, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mali, and Senegal, which form our first area of focus during the AICCRA- AF implementation period.

2. New updates in 2025

As part of the core mandate of the Regional Hub for Fertilizer and Soil Health (RHFSH) for West Africa and the Sahel, IITA prioritized the operationalization of both the administrative and technical functions of the Hub to enable the full implementation of planned activities. This effort ensures the Hub operates as a regional coordination platform for knowledge generation, policy engagement, and capacity strengthening in sustainable soil and fertilizer management.

Recruitments (positions and Job descriptions)

Technical Positions

The Director of the Hub position and three new positions have all been filled.



- **Director for RHFSH: Lionel Kadja** has an MBA and over 24 years of experience in financial auditing, rural development projects, and agribusiness, including work in cocoa and shea nut value chains. He is responsible for providing strategic oversight, ensuring effective management, and guiding the long-term sustainability of the Hub.
- **Lab Capacity Strengthening Expert: Job Fugice** is a Consultant Scientist at the Hub. He holds a Master of Agriculture from Auburn University, with a concentration in Soil Chemistry, and has over 18 years of experience at the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC). His expertise spans soil, plant, and fertilizer analysis, laboratory management, analytical method development, and quality assurance. He has led teams in developing innovative fertilizers to enhance sustainability and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, supported laboratory capacity building across West Africa, and contributed to global committees on fertilizer methodologies, including AFFPCO, ISO, and IFA.
- **Senior Agronomist: Bello Muhammad Shehu** holds a PhD in Bioscience Engineering, an MSc in Soil Science, and a BSc in Agriculture, with 13 years of experience in soil fertility, site-specific nutrient management (SSNM), land evaluation, and agronomy. He leads the development, coordination, and scaling of agronomic solutions and soil health management systems across the region by engaging with partners, building technical capacity, integrating digital soil resources, and ensuring quality assurance of nutrient management interventions in target countries.
- **Senior Data Scientist: Surajit Sinha** holds an MBA specializing in Business Analytics and Business Intelligence and brings over 20 years of experience in data science, digital agriculture, climate change monitoring, and strategic growth. His work focuses on strategic leadership, stakeholder engagement, developing decision support tools, capacity building, and delivering impactful agricultural technologies. He also provides technical oversight, manages projects, and contributes to grant proposal development and fundraising efforts.
- **Junior Data Scientist: Sehoul Koulho** holds an MSc degree in Bioinformatics and in Plant Breeding and Genetics, with 5 years of experience in artificial intelligence, data engineering, and the development of digital tools for precision agriculture. His work includes developing models for integration into decision support tools, automating and maintaining data pipelines and workflows for large-scale deployment, and strengthening site-specific nutrient management recommendation models across priority crops and countries. He also manages the data quality control framework and promotes best coding and documentation practices.

Administrative and other support staff

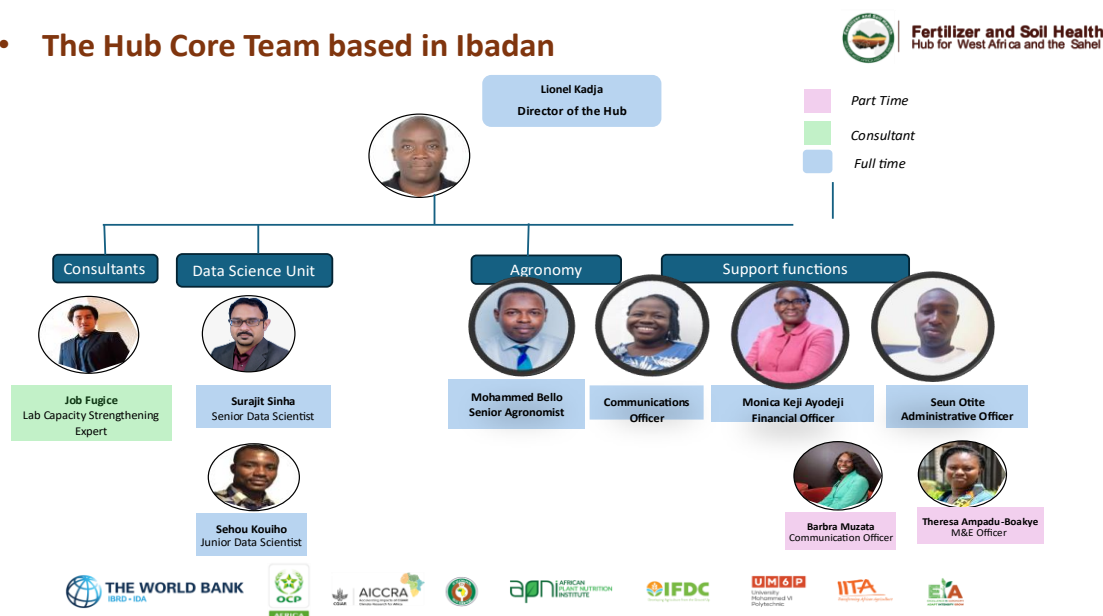


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- Finance Manager: **Monica Olubunmi Keji-Ayodeji** is a Chartered Accountant (ACA) and holds an MBA, with 10 years of experience in finance and grants management for donor-funded programs within international development, and over 7 years in the private sector. She provides financial leadership and guidance to the project team, prepares burn rate and expenditure reports, manages budgets and donor compliance, coordinates with the IITA Finance Directorate to ensure policy alignment, and oversees financial reporting, auditing, and fund utilization in line with donor requirements.
- Administrative Assistant: **Otite Seun Victory** holds a BSc and has 4 years of experience in administrative roles, providing executive and operational support. He is responsible for managing executive calendars, coordinating office logistics, tracking and monitoring inventory, and ensuring effective filing, archiving, and documentation systems.
- Communications Officer: **Ilerioluwa Oladipupo** holds a BSc and has 6 years of experience in writing, editing, publishing, event reporting, and other communication-related functions. She supports the Hub's communication strategy and stakeholder engagement efforts, curates content for traditional and digital media, manages social media platforms, and contributes to event management and reporting to enhance the Hub's visibility and outreach

• The Hub Core Team based in Ibadan



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3. Hub Governance Structures

Governance Structures

To ensure effective coordination, accountability, and strategic oversight, governance structures for the RHFSH were established and operationalized. These include forming a Steering Committee, Technical Working Groups, and a Secretariat hosted by IITA. The Steering Committee provides high-level policy and strategic direction; the Technical Working Groups bring together experts to guide thematic areas such as data systems, policy, and capacity development; while the Secretariat oversees day-to-day management, communication, and coordination among partners and country focal points.

4. Coordination Mechanism

The Hub Advisory Committee: High-Level Consultative body of the Regional Hub. It is crucial to establish a clear game plan in collaboration with ECOWAS. Key regional and development partners, including CILSS, PAFO, AGRA, WAFA, AFDB, and potentially IFAD, have expressed interest and welcomed the opportunity to serve as members of the Hub's Advisory Committee.

The Hub Steering Committee: Governing body of the Regional Hub, consisting of:

Name	Designation
Kaushik Majumdar,	Director General of APNI,
Zacharie Stewart,	Vice President of Research of IFDC,
Bernard Vanlauwe,	DDG-Research of IITA,
Mehdi Filali,	Senior Vice-President for West Africa of OCP-Africa,
Joann Whalen,	Chair of Soil Sciences of UM6P.

The steering committee is already operational, and it meets bi-monthly. However, major activity updates are sent when the committee doesn't meet. The last meeting happened on September 24, 2025.

Hub Technical Committee:

Name	Designation
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Shamie Zingore	APNI,
Kido Kouassi	IFDC
Jonathan Crouch	
Lionel Axel Kadja	IITA
Donald Madukwe	OCP-Africa
Joann Whalen	UM6P

The technical committee comprises the founding partners APNI, IFDC, IITA, OCP-Africa, UM6P, and meets monthly.

The Hub Coordination Team

The Hub Coordination Team is responsible for leading the day-to-day operations of the Regional Hub for Fertilizer and Soil Health. The team ensures effective implementation, partnership coordination, and administrative management of the Hub's technical and operational functions.

The team comprises the Hub Director, Senior Data Scientist, Junior Data Scientist, Finance Manager, Administrative Assistant, Communications Officer, and Senior Agronomist. During 2025, significant progress was made in strengthening the Hub's human resource base. Recruitment processes for key positions were completed, including the Finance Manager, Administrative Assistant, Communications Officer, and Senior Agronomist. Additionally, a Consultant Scientist, Mr. Job Fugice, was engaged to provide technical backstopping in soil data management and analytical support for regional coordination activities.

Country-level coordination teams: Country-Level Coordination Teams have been established and fully operationalized across all **Wave 1 countries**, ensuring effective alignment between regional and national implementation efforts. These teams are the **primary focal points** for engagement with national stakeholders, government agencies, development partners, and other third parties in fertilizer and soil health initiatives.

Each team comprises representatives from national research institutions, Ministries of Food and Agriculture, and relevant technical departments. Their core responsibilities include:

- Coordinating national-level activities and ensuring alignment with regional priorities under the RHFSH framework.



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- Facilitating data collection, validation, and reporting to strengthen the regional fertilizer and soil health knowledge system.
- Supporting communication and partnership between the RHFSH Secretariat and in-country stakeholders.
- Providing technical inputs to developing and implementing country-specific fertilizer and soil health strategies.

These coordination teams provide the operational linkages necessary for harmonizing regional and national activities, ensuring coherence in policy engagement, data harmonization, and technical assistance delivery across the West Africa and Sahel regions. Below are the country's local points leading the country's coordination efforts.

Name	Country
Adodo Abalo	Togo (IFDC)
Samuel Mesele	Liberia (IITA)
Alpha Kamara	Nigeria (IITA)
Alfred Dixon	Sierra Leone (IITA)
Kwame Frimpong	Ghana (APNI)
Cheickh Sadibou Fall	Senegal (IFDC)
Tahirou Abdoulaye	Mali (IITA)
Leon Zongo	Burkina Faso (IFDC)
Kokou Amouzou	Cote d'Ivoire (APNI)
Manuele Tamo	Benin (IITA)



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• The Hub in countries – Country focal points



Fertilizer and Soil Health
Hub for West Africa and the Sahel

Adodo Abalo
Togo (IFDC)



Samuel Mesele
Liberia (IITA)



Alpha Kamara
Nigeria (IITA)



Alfred Dixon
Sierra Leone (IITA)



Kwame Frimpong
Ghana (APNI)



Cheikh Sadibou Fall
Senegal (IFDC)



Tahirou Abdoulaye
Mali (IITA)



Leon Zongo
Burkina Faso (IFDC)



Kokou Amouzou
Côte d'Ivoire (APNI)



Manuele Tamo
Benin (IITA)



Maman Garba
Niger (IITA)



5. Communication and Visibility

- Branding activities are underway, including designing eight artworks visually narrating the Hub's journey from the 2006 Abuja Fertilizer Summit to its official launch in 2024. These will be mounted along the Hub's corridor to highlight key milestones and achievements. Additional communication materials, such as function-specific posters and digital soil maps, are also being developed.
- **Media outreach** will be carried out during SIS workshops and technical events.
- **Coverage in Nigeria's Presidential Soil Health Initiative launch (2025).**
- **Socials:** Hub's LinkedIn page has been created
- **Hub Branding System** designed (logos, templates, visual identity).
- **The Hub's official website** is scheduled to become fully operational by Q4 2025, complementing the recently created LinkedIn page, which is already enhancing the Hub's visibility and stakeholder engagement. Together, these platforms will serve as the primary communication channels for disseminating updates, sharing resources, and facilitating partner outreach.



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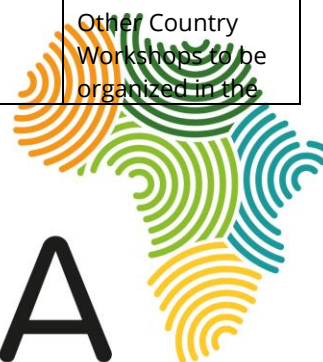
6. Deployment of the Hub Functions

The following shows how the Hub is deploying and sustaining its core Functions and activities

Function	Expected output	Process	Status
Function 1: Digital soil mapping	Updated Digital Soil Maps for the region, based on integration of primary and secondary data	- V0 digital maps based on existing legacy data have been completed. - A refined and more accurate V1 map is expected by Q3 2025 using secondary data from OCP (5K soil samples), IFDC (12K soil samples), and ISDA. - V2 digital maps are ready by Q1 2026. To get updated data for V2 maps, new soil samplings are being conducted in Nigeria (2.6m ha) and Mali (1.3m ha). An Agreement for soil sampling in Mali has been signed.	Done
	Develop plans for the national Soil Information Systems	The Soil Information System workshop has been completed in Sierra Leone, while Abuja's will start soon.	In progress
Function 2: (Lab support)	The country's investment plan for the Lab upgrade is expected for Q4 2025	Comprehensive evaluation of National Labs' ecosystems in Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone	June 17-20 Workshop done in Lomé, Togo Other Country Workshops to be organized in the



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			respective countries during Q2 2025
Function 7: Appropriate fertilizer nutrient recommendation	Crop x soil specific Fertilizer recommendation expected for Q1 2026	500 Nutrient Omission Trials are currently being conducted over an area that is higher than the target area (750,000 ha) across the 5 Wave 1 countries: - Nigeria (100% planting complete): Maize and rice in Kano, Bauchi, Jigawa, and Kaduna states - Ghana (50% planting complete): Maize, rice, and cassava in Ashanti, Upper East, Upper West, Bono, Northern, and Bono East regions - Togo (started): Maize and rice in the Kara and Savanes regions - Liberia (started): Rice in Bong, Margibi, and Lofa counties - Sierra Leone (Land preparation is underway): Maize and rice in Moyamba, Bo,	May 2025: Capacity building sessions on NOT trials with each of the Wave 1 countries June 2025: NOT Workshop for Togo July-August 2025: NOT Workshop for other Wave 1 countries



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		and Kenema districts Collectively, these regions cover more than 1 million hectares of farmland.	
Function 8: Knowledge databases	An open, standardized agricultural data infrastructure that provides: • Analytics support • Analytical infrastructure • AI-ready data	Data collection surveys in Wave 1 countries + Regional Workshops on data ecosystem implementation and management in Wave 1 and Wave 2 countries	Regional data workshops will be held in Ghana on October 27-29, 2025. The data workshop will be for Anglo (Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, and Sierra Leone) and Francophone (Mali, Togo, Senegal, and Cote d'Ivoire) countries.
Function 12: Bundling services	The Virtual Platform is fully functional	Compile existing materials, create a virtual Platform, and tailor training materials to target needs	This work is expected to start in Q3 2025
Function 13: Farmer-led experimentation	SOPs for data collation and analysis for on-farm trials		Finalized



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7. Country Support Missions

The Hub continues to engage with member countries by supporting their National Technical Teams to strengthen national soil and fertilizer systems. These efforts ensure harmonized data standards, promote evidence-based decision-making, and facilitate joint planning processes across countries.

Below are the key implementation plans and associated partnerships that will drive the delivery of Hub's core functions.

The following are the technical teams for countries and the national focal point:

Country	National Focal Point (NFP)	National Technical Team (NTT)
Ghana	Director for Crop Services - Ministry of Agriculture, not yet inaugurated	Not yet officially inaugurated. 8 members
Liberia	Mr. Harris Yanquoi (CARI)	- Mr. Prince D. Hiama (CARI) - Mr. Oliver K. Tarzo (Stella Maris University) - Dr. G. Moses Zolue (MOA) - Dr. Salia S. Sheriff (University)
Nigeria	Mr. Olanipekun Oshadiya - Director, ALCCMS, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security	- Prof. Jibrin Mohammed Jibrin (University of Kano) - Prof. James Jayeoba (Nasarawa University, Lafia) - Dr. Vincent Aduramigba (IAR&T, Ibadan) - Dr. Abiodun Ihebuzor
Sierra Leone	Dr. Abdul R. Conteh (Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI))	- Dr. Alie Kamara: P. (Njala University) - Dr. A R Conteh: Country Focal Person (SLARI) - Dr. Isata Kamanda: Secretary (SLARI) +10 members



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Togo	Mr. Herman Tezikeh, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture	• Mr. EKLOU Atsu Dzunyo (CAGIA) • Mr. KOUDJEGA Kossi (ITRA) • Mr. FIOUGOU Souglman
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For the five Wave One countries, the following are the significant updates for 2025.

Country	Subject	Major Update
Ghana	Soil Information System Upgrade, for which the SIS workshop will be held on October 27-29, 2025. The Soil Information System (SIS) workshops aim to: • Comprehensively assess national needs in soil information management. • Evaluate and document existing soil datasets, and • Identify national priorities and budgets to advance SIS development. Nutrient Omission Trials are being conducted.	Upgrade of GhaSIS
Liberia	• Soil for Liberia • Nutrient Omission Trials, which stem from country-identified gaps in understanding local soil fertility constraints, are being conducted. The Hub provides technical tools, protocols, and scientific expertise. The NOTs aim to identify nutrient limitations, optimize fertilizer use, improve rice yields, and enhance nutrient efficiency in Liberia. • Implemented in 3 counties: Bong, Margibi, and Lofa, with 50 experimental sites. • Stakeholders and the IITA Liberia team identified 50 sites across the counties. • Farmers were engaged, educated, and committed to trials. • Soil samples were collected at 0 – 20 cm in all NOTs sites following standard procedures	Soil4Liberia
Nigeria	The Soil Information System (SIS) workshop is taking place in Abuja between 21 and 23 Oct 2025. • Nutrient Omission trials (currently being carried out)	The Presidential Soil Health Initiative was launched on October 14, 2025. The Nigeria Farmers Soil Health Scheme is



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	- Nigerian Presidential Soil Health Initiative - Contribution to the AGROW program - Coalition of the Willing	meant to improve soil health and fertility, provide soil health cards to farmers, and enhance climate-smart agriculture, thereby improving food security. IITA, through the Hub, partners with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security to deliver the commitments of the initiative. Two of the visiting scientists from the Hub (Prof Vincent and Jibrin) are part of the technical committee that assists in developing the scientific content on the NFSHS portal and the NSIS website. Three pieces of media coverage were received about the launch. The Coalition of the Willing, which is a platform for joint action on soil data integration, fertilizer efficiency, and sustainable land management, includes IITA, GIZ, IFDC, AGRA, OCP-AFRICA, ACRoSAL, Sasakawa Africa Association, and academic representatives from FUT Minna and Nasarawa State University.
Sierra Leone	- Soil Information System (SIS workshop took place in Sierra Leone between 13-17 Oct 2025) - Nutrient Omission trials (currently being carried out) - Support for development of the concept for the FSRP programs - AfDB reward program	AfDB reward
Togo	- Nutrient Omission trials (currently being carried out) - Contribution to FSRP program	



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8. Technical Functions and Partnerships

The Hub has entered sub-agreements with its Consortium Partners to deliver on some of its Functions.

Partnerships Status

Partner	Function	Status
ISRIC	Digital Soil Mapping	Signed and implemented
APNI	Farmer-led experimentation, fertilizer certification	Signed and started in Q4, 2025
IFDC	Bundling services, advocacy	Signed and started in Q4, 2025
UM6P	Capacity building of National Institutions	Planned for Q2 2026

The Hub also provides backstopping and collaboration with an increasing list of local Implementing Partners, which includes the following:

Country	Intermediary Performance Indicator	Scope	Partner/institution
Mali	IPI 1.3 – Digital Soil Mapping (DSM)	Digital Soil Mapping	Institut d'Économie Rurale (IER)
Nigeria	IPI 1.3 – Digital Soil Mapping (DSM)	Digital Soil Mapping	Center for Dryland Agriculture – Bayero University Kano
Ghana	IPI 1.4 – Fertilizer recommendations	Nutrient Omission Trials	Soil Research Institute (CSIR-SRI)
Togo	IPI 1.4 – Fertilizer recommendations	Nutrient Omission Trials	Institut Togolais de Recherche Agronomique (ITRA)



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Liberia	IPI 1.4 – IPI 1.4 – Fertilizer Recommendations	Nutrient Omission Trials (NOTs)	Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI)
Sierra Leone	IPI 1.4 – Fertilizer recommendations	Nutrient Omission Trials	Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI)

9. Conclusion

The establishment phase of the Regional Hub has been completed, with notable progress achieved in governance formation, partnership development, country engagement, and delivery of technical functions. Implementation in Wave 1 countries is progressing steadily, demonstrating strong institutional collaboration and ownership.

The next phase of implementation will focus on scaling operations to Wave 2 countries, launching the Advisory Committee, and commissioning the Hub website to enhance visibility, information sharing, and stakeholder interaction. These efforts will further consolidate the Hub's role as a driver of regional collaboration and innovation in soil health and fertilizer management systems.



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