Fertilizer and Soil Health
HUB FOR WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL

JAN. 2026

JANUARY NEWSLETTER

WELCOME NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the first edition of our 2026 newsletter

At the Regional Hub for Fertilizer and Soil Health for West Africa and the Sahel, hosted by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, we are at the forefront of transforming how soil health and fertilizer use are understood, governed, and implemented across the region.

Our mandate is clear: strengthen national systems, enable smarter fertilizer use, support data-driven decision-making, and ensure that soil health investments translate into measurable agronomic, economic, and environmental gains for farmers. Working closely with governments, research institutions, development partners, and the private sector, we serve as a regional technical platform that connects science, policy, and practice.

This newsletter is part of our 2026 communications strategy to enhance transparency, amplify impact, and deepen engagement with our partners. Each month, we will share progress, partnerships, technical advancements, and upcoming opportunities that shape the soil health agenda across West Africa and the Sahel.

January has already set a strong tone for the year—marked by strategic partnerships, new country-level technical assistance, strengthened consortium collaboration, and renewed commitment to evidence-based fertilizer policy. These milestones reinforce our belief that coordinated action, powered by science and partnership, is the pathway to resilient food systems.

We invite you to stay engaged, share your perspectives, and collaborate with us as we accelerate progress toward healthier soils, higher productivity, and improved food security across the region.

TOGETHER, WE MOVE FROM DATA TO IMPACT

Together, we move from data to impact.
-***Lionel Axel Kadja***

Director, Regional Hub for Fertilizer and Soil Health for West Africa and the Sahel

A STRONG START TO THE YEAR

January marked a strong start to the year, setting the stage for activities that will shape the path toward improved soil health, smarter fertilizer use, and stronger food security across countries. It was a month that reaffirmed the importance of strategic partnerships to scaling our contributions towards soil health and fertility in the region.

From celebrating new commitments to soil health to kickstarting a major technical assistance project, welcoming a new consortium partner, strengthening key functions, and laying the groundwork for the year ahead, January signaled an impactful, delivery-oriented start to 2026.

Let’s look back at the highlights that made January 2026 impactful.

US IN THE MEDIA

Nigeria takes a decisive step toward smarter fertilizer use and healthier soils

In a move to improve soil health, enhance fertilizer efficiency, and boost farm productivity, Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (FMAFS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with IITA.

The agreement supports the implementation of the Nigeria Farmers Soil Health Scheme (NFSHS) and the development of a national soil information system. All activities under the MoU will be implemented through the Regional Hub for Fertilizer and Soil Health for West Africa and the Sahel, hosted by IITA.

| Read article

Catch a sneak peek at pictures from the signing ceremony:

Click to access pictures

ISRIC joins the Regional Hub as a consortium member

The International Soil Reference and Information Centre (ISRIC) has officially joined the Hub as a consortium member. Previously a knowledge partner, the signing of the consortium agreement formally elevates ISRIC's role within the consortium and strengthens our collective capacity to deliver impact.

| Read article

The Regional Hub launches major technical assistance project in Sierra Leone

Special thanks to the communications team supporting this project
*— **Barbra Muzata, Moses Sahr Fayiah, Christian Scott, and Ilerioluwa Oladipupo. Your efforts matter.***

Sierra Leone is set to move away from "blanket" fertilizer recommendations toward site-specific nutrient management as the World Bank-funded Food System Resilience Project (FSRP) officially commenced with a Technical Assistance Inception Workshop in Freetown.

Launched by the Regional Hub for Fertilizer and Soil Health for West Africa and the Sahel, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) and FSRP, this project is a critical step toward achieving the productivity goals of the Government's "Feed Salone" initiative.

| Read article

The Regional Hub strengthens how improvements in crop yield, farmer income, and soil health are measured

For farmers, agronomic gains are not abstract concepts — they are reflected in higher yields, improved profits, and farming systems that are more resilient and sustainable over time.

The Regional Hub for Fertilizer and Soil Health continues to strengthen how these gains are measured across West Africa and the Sahel. As part of this effort, the Hub convened specialists for a two-day technical workshop in Accra, Ghana, focused on improving how on-farm results are captured and assessed.

The workshop emphasized a practical, field-oriented approach to measurement, designed to reflect the real impacts farmers experience when they adopt improved agricultural practices and technologies. Participants worked toward a harmonized approach that moves beyond isolated data points, focusing instead on results that are measurable, meaningful, profitable, and scalable at the farm level.

A key outcome of the workshop is the development of a practical toolkit that countries and partners can use to collect data directly from the field, enabling a consistent and farmer-relevant assessment of agronomic gains.

By generating reliable field-level data, this toolkit creates the basis for validating and refining fertilizer recommendations and soil health practices. This helps ensure that the advice and technologies reaching farmers are effective, profitable, and contribute to long-term food security across the region. The first draft of the toolkit, tailored to seven priority crops in the region (maize, rice, cowpea, groundnut, cassava, cocoa, and tomato), is expected by February 2026.

Read more about the Hub's 20 technical functions driving soil health and fertilizer solutions across West Africa and the Sahel.

ZOOMING IN ON KEY DEVELOPMENTS FROM 2025

The Regional Hub is now on the web

The Regional Hub for Fertilizer and Soil Health for West Africa and the Sahel has officially launched its website. Visitors can now explore who we are, what we do, our latest reports, news, and technical resources at :

https://soilhealthwa.iita.org/

UNDER THE AICCRA INITIATIVE

CGIAR | AICCRA
Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa

Progress from climate data to farm decisions: scaling digital soil mapping for climate-smart farming in West Africa and the Sahel

Climate variability, soil degradation, and rising input costs are increasing pressure on farmers across West Africa to produce more with fewer resources. Under the Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa (AICCRA) initiative, the Regional Hub for Fertilizer and Soil Health is supporting a strategic shift from generalized agricultural recommendations to data-driven, site-specific decision-making. By integrating climate data, digital soil mapping, and precision nutrient management, the programme is strengthening national capacity to deliver climate-smart, locally relevant soil and fertility solutions.

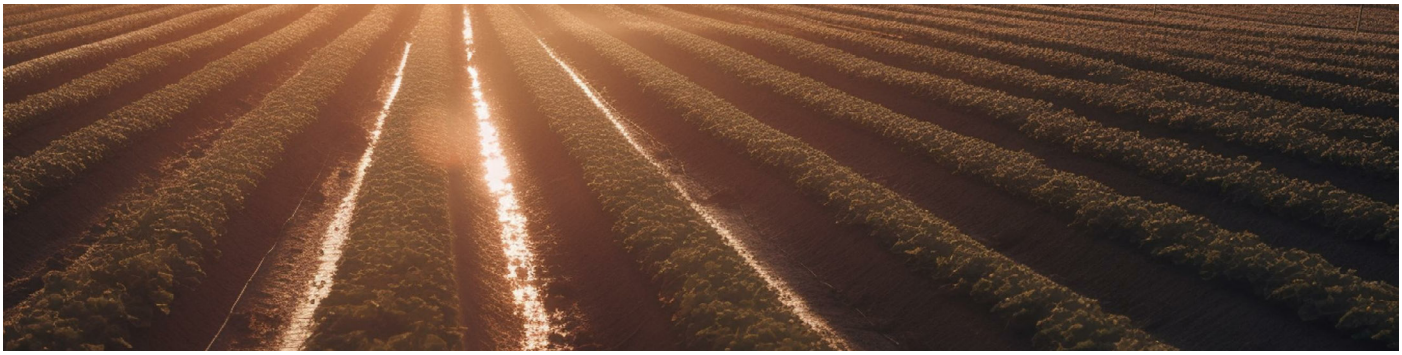
A critical foundation of this work is the establishment and operationalization of the Regional Hub under Intermediate Performance Indicator (IPI) 1.2. The Hub now provides a coordinated platform for technical backstopping, data harmonization, and institutional collaboration among national partners, research institutions, and implementation agencies. This enables countries to access integrated soil and climate expertise while embedding digital soil intelligence within national systems and long-term capacity development frameworks.

Under IPI 1.3, the programme is scaling Digital Soil Mapping (DSM) in response to government and Soil Values programme requests in priority agricultural watersheds. Current target areas cover approximately 2.9 million hectares in Nigeria and 1.3 million hectares in Mali. Progress to date includes the completion of baseline V0 DSM outputs using ISRIC SoilGrids datasets, followed by the development of V1 maps integrating legacy datasets from IFDC, iSDA, OCP Africa, and Soils4Africa. These harmonized datasets are improving spatial resolution and national relevance, moving countries from coarse, generalized soil information toward more precise digital products to support watershed planning, extension services, and climate adaptation strategies.

Building on the DSM foundation, IPI 1.4 focuses on translating digital soil intelligence into validated, crop- and soil-specific nutrient recommendations. Led by IITA and technical partners with support from World Bank financing, this work supports the development of context-specific Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) recommendations. By linking DSM outputs with crop requirements and climate risk considerations, the programme improves nutrient use efficiency, reduces input waste, and strengthens climate resilience.

What this means for farmers

For smallholder farmers, these efforts translate into actionable guidance at the plot level. Farmers will be able to access high-resolution maps and tailored nutrient recommendations that reflect the specific soil and climate conditions of their fields.



This means:

Better yields: Crops receive the right nutrients at the right time.

Lower costs: Reduced waste from unnecessary or ineffective fertilizer applications.

Increased resilience: Soils are managed to better withstand climate shocks, such as droughts or floods.

Data-driven decisions: Farmers and extension agents can plan planting, soil amendments, and input use with confidence.

Implementation is being carried out in close collaboration with national agricultural research institutions to ensure scientific rigor, national ownership, and scalability through extension and advisory systems. Together, IPIs 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4 represent a shift from data generation to decision support, helping governments, partners, and farmers turn climate and soil data into measurable impact on the ground.

View reports here

WHAT'S COMING UP

Webinar Series: From data to impact in West Africa and the Sahel

The Regional Hub is set to launch a "From Data to Impact: Sharing Achievements in Digital Soil Mapping and Site-Specific Nutrient Recommendations for West Africa" virtual learning series in March.

The series will turn complex technical insights into practical, farm-ready solutions. Participants will learn how the Hub's AgWise decision-support framework and high-resolution Digital Soil Mapping—covering millions of hectares across Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, and Senegal—are generating precise, validated nutrient recommendations to help farmers increase yields and profitability.

Sessions will be offered in both Anglophone (English) and Francophone (French) formats to ensure broad regional participation.

Interested in attending? Sign up [here] and we will send you an invitation with the webinar details so you don't miss out on this opportunity to engage with the science behind site-specific soil management.

Regional Hub partners convene in Ibadan this February

This February, the IITA Ibadan campus will host consortium members of the Regional Hub for Fertilizer and Soil Health for West Africa and the Sahel for an in-person Technical Workshop. Beyond a routine convening, the workshop marks an important milestone for the Hub—bringing partners together to align more closely, strengthen collaboration, and sharpen delivery as activities scale across countries.

The workshop will convene with its partners including APNI, ISRIC, UM6P, IFDC, and OCP Africa, alongside focal points from target countries where the Hub is supporting soil health and fertilizer solutions. As a technical workshop, discussions will centre on aligning 2026 work plans across the Hub's technical functions, identifying areas of overlap, and agreeing on clearer ways of working together, prioritizing complementarity and co-creation over duplication or competition.

At its core, the convening is about impact. Stronger alignment and collaboration allow the Hub to deploy resources more efficiently, reduce siloed efforts, and amplify proven soil and fertilizer solutions so they reach more farmers. By working better together, the Hub aims to deliver greater value at scale, supporting improved productivity, more resilient farming systems, and ultimately, stronger food security outcomes across the region.

Stay connected with the Regional Hub

This work moves faster when shared. Follow our journey, contribute your stories and experiences, and stay connected as we advance soil health and fertilizer solutions across West Africa and the Sahel.