


Unveiling of the WAVE RESEARCH logo at the opening of the Plant Health Regional Convening.

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REGIONAL LAUNCH OF WAVE RESEARCH

# In Abuja, WAVE RESEARCH makes its entrance on the regional stage

It is in Nigeria, the world's leading cassava-producing country, that WAVE RESEARCH was officially launched. At the opening of the Plant Health Regional Convening 2026, the Minister of State for Agriculture and Food Security of Nigeria unveiled the logo of the new institution, before the signing of a memorandum of understanding.

## A high-level regional gathering

For two days, Abuja hosted the **Plant Health Regional Convening 2026**, co-organised by **WAVE RESEARCH** and **Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (FMAFS)**, under the theme **"Securing Africa's Harvests: Scaling Impact through Plant Health Partnerships in Central and West Africa."**

Ministers, Heads of National Plant Protection Organisations (NPPOs), Directors of research institutes, Presidents/Vice Chancellors of the WAVE's host universities, farmer organisations, the private sector and development partners took part, alongside regional and international institutions such as ECOWAS Commission, the Inter-African Phytosanitary Council of the African Union, CILSS, CABI, IITA, icipe and FAO.

## A new visual identity unveiled, an institution launched

Following the welcome address by **Professor Angela Eni,** Deputy Executive Director of WAVE RESEARCH, and the speech by **Dr Marcus Olaniyi Ogunbiyi**, Permanent Secretary of the FMAFS, His Excellency **Senator Dr Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi, Minister of State, Minister of Agriculture and Food Security**, delivered the opening address. He then unveiled the new WAVE RESEARCH logo, marking the transformation of a twelve-year project into a lasting institution whose mandate now extends beyond cassava viruses alone.

> "Plant health is **food security**."
>
> **Senator Dr Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi**
> Minister of State, Minister of Agriculture and Food Security of Nigeria

The minister noted that climate change, the movement of plant material and weak cross-border coordination are accelerating the spread of diseases. He announced that the Ministry's plant health function has been turned into a full-fledged department and welcomed the choice of Nigeria as the first country for the demonstration of the rapid response decision-support tool developed by WAVE RESEARCH.

## A memorandum of understanding with the federal government

The **signing of a memorandum of understanding** between **WAVE RESEARCH** and the **FMAFS** was a highlight of the convening. This cooperation framework aims to institutionalise plant disease surveillance, integrate data into national biosecurity systems and co-finance sustainable phytosanitary response mechanisms in Nigeria. **"The signing of this memorandum shows that we are moving from dialogue to concrete action,"** the minister stressed.

## A threat that knows no borders

In his presentation, **Pr Justin Pita**, Executive Director of **WAVE RESEARCH**, underscored the urgency for a regional approach to the response against the Ugandan strain of East African cassava mosaic virus (EACMV-Ug), detected in Guinea and then in Sierra Leone, is now in Côte d'Ivoire. In that country, 96% of observed infections come from infected cuttings thus, healthy seed is therefore the first lever of control. The economic exposure is estimated at approximately USD 192 million per year for Côte d'Ivoire, and potential losses at USD 6.8 billion for Nigeria. He also highlighted that cassava brown streak disease is advancing from the DRC and could reach Cameroon around 2030.

Uganda's EACMV-Ug experience, shared by **Dr Titus Alicai**, has nevertheless shown that such an epidemic can be controlled: disease incidence fell from 64% to 17% in about fifteen years, thanks to coordinated national action.

## Digital tools in support of decision-making

Two regional tools were presented: the **regional plant health database**, which brings together twelve years of data and tracks more than 4,000 fields in 14 countries, and the **rapid response decision-support tool,** which combines surveillance data and modelling to evaluate control strategies and indicate where to place scarce resources, uprooting campaigns or resistant varieties, in order to maximize impact.

## A roadmap for the region

On the second day, working in workshops, delegates identified cassava, maize and rice as priority crops for extending the WAVE model. Funding emerged as the main obstacle, supporting the call made the day before during the regional panel to create an African emergency fund for plant health, financed by states.

In closing, Prof. Justin Pita announced that WAVE RESEARCH would consolidate this work into a regional proposal, accompanied by a three-year roadmap. The first agreed step: to establish, country by country, the status of EACMV-Ug, starting with Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria.

> "We need a regional approach to tackle threats that know no borders.
>
> **Pr Angela Eni,** Deputy Executive Director of **WAVE RESEARCH**




Signing of the memorandum of understanding between WAVE RESEARCH and the FMAFS