



Professor Justin Pita is the Executive Director of the Regional Center of Excellence for transboundary plant pathogens, Central and West African Virus Epidemiology (WAVE). He is an associate professor at Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire) and an adjunct faculty at the Department of Plant Pathology and Environmental Microbiology in the College of Agricultural Sciences of the Pennsylvania State University (USA). Justin Pita also serves as a member of the Steering Committee of African Women in Agriculture Research and Development (AWARD), a gender-responsive agricultural innovation program working toward agriculture-driven prosperity for Africa, by investing in African women scientists

and agricultural research institutions to deliver gender-responsive agricultural research and development.

Professor Justin Pita has over 20 years' experience conducting research on viral disease epidemiology and virus evolution at highly regarded institutions including, The Scripps Research Institute (San Diego, California, USA), The Donald Danforth Plant Science Center (St-Louis, Missouri, USA), The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Atlanta, Georgia, USA/Field Station of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire), The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation (Ardmore, Oklahoma, USA), and the Huck Institute of The Life Sciences (Center for Infectious Disease Dynamics, Pennsylvania State University, USA). Driven by his strong Pan-African commitment to agricultural research and equipped with a vast experience in senior leadership both on the African continent and globally, Prof. Pita has built a strong global agricultural research network involving several institutions from East, West and Central Africa, Europe, and America for a successful implementation of the WAVE work for food security for all in Africa. He has raised more than sixteen billion CFA francs to implement WAVE. Under his leadership, the WAVE network has expanded from 7 to 10 countries, all of which have developed and endorsed national response plans against cassava viral diseases. WAVE has become an ECOWAS Regional Center of Excellence ([RCE-WAVE](#)) for transboundary plant pathogens [inaugurated](#) in May 2021. WAVE works closely with CORAF, ECCAS and the governments of ten Central and West African countries (Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, and DRC).