



July 22, 2026

LETTER OF SUPPORT

To Colleagues, Partners, and Prospective Supporters,

I am pleased to express my support for the mission of the Enset Innovation Institute (EII), an emerging nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing awareness, research, partnerships, and investment around Enset (*Ensete ventricosum*) and its contribution to resilient and sustainable food systems.

Africa possesses extraordinary agricultural diversity and innovation that remains under-recognized globally. Building more resilient and sustainable futures will require us to invest not only in scientific discovery, but also in the institutions and partnerships that connect research, communities, and development practice. Indigenous crops and food systems offer important opportunities to advance food security, climate resilience, and sustainable livelihoods when supported by thoughtful cross-sector and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Enset presents one such opportunity. For millions of Ethiopians, it has long contributed to food security, cultural heritage, and community resilience. Its growing recognition among researchers, development institutions, and policymakers' highlights the importance of strengthening partnerships to translate knowledge and innovation into lasting impact. I am encouraged by this effort to bring together universities, government institutions, researchers, development organizations, and private-sector partners to advance collaboration around Enset and explore its potential contributions to agricultural transformation, sustainable development, and resilient food systems. The growing momentum surrounding Enset presents a timely opportunity to strengthen interdisciplinary partnerships and promote investments that are scientifically grounded, locally informed, and responsive to both present and future challenges.

I commend EII for helping advance dialogue, collaboration, and institutional partnerships around this promising area of work and encourage interested organizations, researchers, philanthropists, and development partners to learn more about its mission and activities.

Sincerely,

Dr. James (Jimmy) Smith
Director- International Development
University of Maryland

Former Director General
International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)