IITA
Transforming African Agriculture
50 1967 - 2017

IITA news
No. 2392 24–28 July 2017

Burkina Faso's Ambassador to Nigeria visits IITA Abuja station

The Ambassador of Burkina Faso to Nigeria, His Excellency Dr Firmin Ndo, accompaned by his spouse and aide, visited the IITA station in Abuja recently to "understand IITA's work and to strengthen the relationship between Burkina Faso and IITA," Ambassador Ndo said.

IITA Abuja Station Head, Dr Gbassey Tarawali, welcomes Burkina Faso Ambassador and his spouse to IITA.

Speaking through an interpreter, the diplomat maintained that "Africa cannot develop without agriculture." He expressed enthusiasm that IITA is leading Africa's journey to agriculture as a business, and assured that "There will be strong collaboration henceforth between the Government of Burkina Faso and IITA, knowing that IITA works in my country," Ndo said.

The Ambassador expressed satisfaction over the rich diversity of African nations represented in IITA and thanked Zoumana Bamba, IITA's Head of Capacity Development, and a Burkinabe who facilitated his visit and who was also on ground to receive him along with the head of Abuja station, Gbassey Tarawali.

Bamba explained that the Ambassador has shown great interest in agriculture and youth involvement.

Continued on page 2

Tanzanian Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries cites Africa RISING-NAFAKA project scaling model

The Africa RISING-NAFAKA project's model for scaling and disseminating improved technologies has been lauded as "exemplary" and the kind of approach needed to ensure sustainability of improved agricultural interventions for farmers said Tanzania's Minister of Agriculture Livestock and Fisheries, Hon Dr Charles Tizeba.

The Minister made the remarks during his visit to the Africa RISING-NAFAKA Project demonstration site at Kigugu Irrigation scheme in Mvomero District on 28 June. He further lauded the model for being demand driven and ensuring the involvement of various stakeholders and encouraged other interventions working at the local level with extension officers

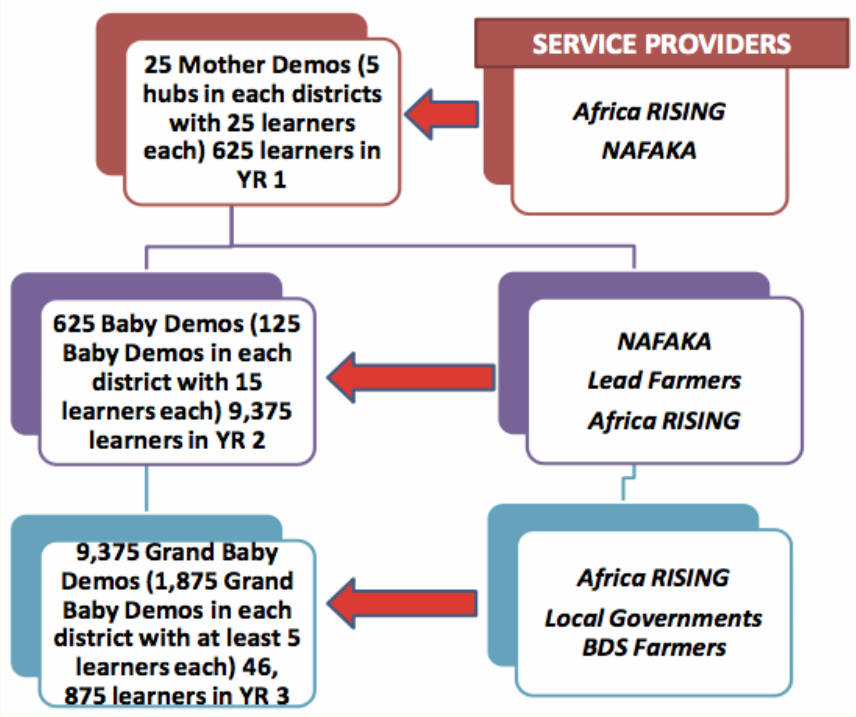
Hon Dr Charles Tizeba, Tanzania's Minister for Agriculture Livestock and Fisheries (far left), when he visited the Africa RISING Project farmer demonstration site at Kigugu Irrigation Scheme in Mvomero District.

and farmers to consider adopting the same approach.

"I urge all researchers and other stakeholders in agriculture to ensure that they provide extensive training to these extension officers for sustainability of agricultural interventions," said Hon Tizeba after he was impressed by the depth of knowledge exhibited by the Village Agricultural Extension Officers (VAEOs) who responded to the technical questions he asked during the visit.

The Africa RISING-NAFAKA project approach involves VAEOs as an integral part of the process in promoting improved rice production technologies among farmers. The scaling model involves the introduction of the technologies in the communities using mother-baby-grandbaby demo sites which serve as training/learning sites for extension staff and farmers. Extension staff and lead farmers undergo season-long training using the sites and they then train other farmers in a cascading mode, backstopped by staff from participating research and development institutions (see figure). Key principles that guide the process to make it successful include: international research institutions working with the national research institutions at all sites; close linkages and working with development partners, both government and non-government/private, that may be implementing activities in and around the project site; leveraging resources among participating institutions; close collaboration with District Agricultural Extension Officers, Ward Agricultural Extension Officers, and Village Agricultural Extension Officers; use of geographical information systems for better targeting of interventions; and ensuring regular communication via different modes (WhatsApp groups, reports, meetings) among stakeholders—farmers, implementing partners, government, and donors.

Through the USAID-funded Africa RISING-NAFAKA Project, Dakawa Agricultural Research Institute (ARI-Dakawa) is leading implementation of activities to improve rice productivity in Tanzania's Mvomero, Kilombero, Iringa Rural, and Mbarali districts. The project's aims are three-fold: Ensuring that at least 47,000 smallholder farm households in rural Tanzania can access technologies to diversify and increase their food supply and income sources, and improve the quality of degrading smallholder cropland; expanding the area under improved crop production technologies by at least 58,000 hectares; and increasing the yields of both maize and rice by 50% as a result of the technologies being applied.



The research and development model for innovation delivery and scaling as applied by the Africa RISING-NAFAKA Project for rice technologies.

Burkina Faso's Ambassador to Nigeria visits IITA Abuja station Continued from page 1

"I am excited to see lots of young people who will be leaders of agriculture for tomorrow," Ndo said after listening to the inspiring presentation by the IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA) in Abuja.

In his welcome remarks, Gbassey Tarawali, Head of Abuja Station stated that Amb. Ndo was the first African Ambassador to visit the IITA Abuja station and IITA was delighted to host him. Tarawali and other team members made presentations about IITA as well as other IITA activities in Burkina Faso.

Ouambi Yameogo, an IITA staff member who is also a Burkinabe, delivered a presentation on the Aflasafe Technology Transfer and Commercialization Project (ATTC), part of which is implemented in Burkina Faso.

Before the visitors departed, they toured the fields and fish pond, where the ambassador expressed delight at what he saw.

Burkina Faso Ambassador with IITA Abuja staff led by Head of Station, Gbassey Tarawali.

Africa RISING–NAFAKA Project legacy under the lens as partners meet for end-of-phase one review meeting

On 3-4 July 2017, partners involved in the Africa RISING-NAFAKA project implementation came together to review achievements made during a largely successful run of the project's initial 3-year phase. Partners present at the meeting reported on the milestones made on key intervention areas of the project like the introduction of improved crop varieties, good agricultural practices, natural resource management, reduction of food wastage and spoilage, and community capacity building.

An important project, a unique model

"We view this project as an important one, particularly considering that the technology delivery model is the first of its kind for Tanzania. Within this project, there is already a clear path for how research outputs will be advanced into development outcomes," noted the IITA Director for Eastern Africa Hub, Victor Manyong, during the opening session of the meeting. "We are very much interested in the lessons learned from this project because it represents the future of where research organizations like IITA are heading to in future," he added.

The Africa RISING–NAFAKA project model has also become a case study within the donor agency (USAID) on how future partnership projects funded by the Mission may look. Speaking during the opening session, USAID Tanzania's Research and Production Advisor, Elizabeth Maeda, noted: "Although we have had some ups and downs during implementation, still there was a lot of perseverance among partners in the project. The project partners really gave me the results and supporting information needed to defend and explain this partnership project. This project is lauded within USAID as a great example of how collaboration should work between an international research institute and a local partner project (NAFAKA) to create lasting impact on farmers' lives."

Numerous achievements and lessons learned

At the top of most partners' lists of key achievements by the project was the good working relationship and understanding between implementing partners. "Partners remained committed to common goals during the past three years and there was virtually none trying to compete with the other for attribution or visibility. Our third year 2016/2017 is for me the best of our collaboration because the relationships were getting better. And I believe this will continue into the second phase of this project," noted NAFAKA Project Chief of Party, Thomas Carr.

Through a gallery tour and a series of presentations, partners also highlighted the key achievements in the maize (and legume), rice, and vegetable value chains as well as aflatoxin mitigation and postharvest management. Some of the key results highlighted were:

- Successful introduction of drought tolerant and resilient crop varieties (maize, rice, legumes, and vegetables) to over 40,000 farming households in Tanzania.
- Promoting good agricultural practices among at least 40,000 households thereby contributing to sustainable intensification of agroecosystems.
- Working with at least four national agro-input companies to ensure that the improved crop varieties and associated agro-inputs are available to farming households.
- Introducing labor-saving technologies and aflatoxin management techniques in the maize/legume farming system of seven districts thereby contributing to improving the quality of agricultural produce for enhanced market access and nutrition.
- Strengthening the capacities of over 150 government agricultural extension staff and Village-Based Agricultural Advisors (VBAAs) such that they can sustain project achievements in the future.
- Use of geo-information systems (GIS) to better target project interventions to suitable agroecosystems.

Strong support from USAID

In a message delivered on behalf of the project management team, Africa RISING Manager for East/Southern Africa and West Africa Projects, Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon thanked USAID for staying steadfast in supporting the project despite ongoing changes at the agency and competing priorities for funding.

"For a long time, we in Africa RISING tried to work with NAFAKA in areas of common interest but this never took off until USAID provided us with additional funds to make things happen. Technology dissemination is costly and needs additional technical expertise. These resources allowed IITA to get this extra expertise to support the excellent work that NAFAKA has been doing so far. So, Africa RISING is grateful to USAID for providing us with resources to develop products/technologies and then also ensure they get scaled out and farmers can access them," noted Hoeschle-Zeledon.

A planning meeting is scheduled for August 2017 where partners will develop activity work plans as the project shifts gear into a new implementation phase.

Africa RISING – NAFAKA project partners pose for a group photo during the end-of-phase meeting. Photo by Gloriana Ndibalema, IITA.

GREAT appoints IITA social scientist as ambassador

An associate Social Scientist/Gender Specialist at IITA Cameroon, Lilian Wopong Nkengla, was recently appointed as one of two Africa Gender Specialists, ambassador, and advisory board member of the Gender Responsive Researchers Equipped for Agricultural Transformation (GREAT) Community of Practice.

This is indeed an important assignment for Lilian who comes on board from 1 July 2017 to 31 December 2018 to support GREAT's gender-responsive research across the root, tuber, and banana community. Her work is expected to help strengthen the gender network in sub-Saharan Africa.

GREAT is a Cornell University and Makerere University joint certificate program in applied gender training for agricultural researchers. It offers skills in gender responsiveness tailored to assist agricultural researchers to address gender issues in each stage of research along the design, implementation, evaluation, and communication pathway. The focus is on gender training linked to practice and change within institutions and national policies.

GREAT uses a blended model of two face-to-face training events bookending field work and e-learning/ mentoring, as well as post-course support. The course has three parts: (i) an introductory module on general theory and concepts of gender responsiveness and applied instruction on data collection methods focused on specific agricultural discipline based themes; (ii) practical field experience emphasizing collection of sex-disaggregated data from ongoing projects, supported by e-learning and e-mentoring; (iii) a data analysis, interpretation, and feedback/advocacy module.

GREAT will build a center of excellence at Makerere University for gender-responsive agricultural research, and establish a "Resource Hub" to bring together a growing community of practice in gender responsive agriculture, creating a people-focused resource for agricultural researchers to post calls for, identify, and contact gender experts working on key areas of interest to them. GREAT is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and is funded through International Programs in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell.

Top: Female focus group discussion in Bulabakulu Village in Zirobwe Sub-county, Luwero District in Central Uganda.
Bottom: Lilian talking to a female participant in GREAT field activities in Cameroon.

For the purpose of this role, Lilian will participate in quarterly conference calls with the GREAT project investigators and the management team; advise the board on activities listed on an editorial calendar; solicit feedback on programming and activities from the RTB cohort through listserv and other mechanisms; review, comment, and disseminate an annual outcomes survey to the RTB cohort; represent the RTB cohort at the GREAT annual meeting and provide feedback to the GREAT executive advisory committee, and counsel and advise the incoming advisory board for the next cohort.

She is also expected to remain involved in GREAT through trainer roles in an upcoming GREAT course; further develop technical and professional skill sets through sponsorship of training opportunities; and take on a leadership role within the emerging GREAT Community of Practice.

IITA is indeed very proud of Lilian and wishes her well as she settles into this new role. Congratulations, Lilian!

Got a story to share? Please email it with photos and captions every Wednesday to Katherine Lopez (k.lopez@cgiar.org), Jeffrey T. Oliver (j.oliver@cgiar.org), Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org), David Ngome (d.ngome@cgiar.org), or Adaobi Umeokoro (a.umeokoro@cgiar.org).

ACAI sets pace for 2018

The African Cassava Agronomy Initiative (ACAI) team met on 21-22 June in Zanzibar to review the second season results and plan for the project's third season activities that will be undertaken during the 2017-2018 season in Tanzania.

The ACAI in-house planning meeting organized by Dr Veronica NE Uzokwe of ACAI Tanzania included a series of presentations by the ACAI project leadership and ACAI implementing partners. The presentations highlighted the progress that the project has made as well as the challenges faced.

Mrs Bernadetha Kimata, agronomist/ plant breeder at ARI-Naliendele and leading the implementation of ACAI activities in the Southern Zone, highlighted the good collaboration with MEDA and CAVA-II that has led to successful site selection and establishment of over 200 trials across use cases carried out in the zone. ACAI is carrying out field trials for the project use cases in four zones in Tanzania; Lake Zone, Southern Zone, Eastern Zone and Zanzibar. Laurent Aswile, ACAI Site Representative from the Eastern Zone, reported that farmers in the region had started adopting ridging in their cassava farm, learning from their peers who are participating in the ACAI trials.

ACAI project coordinator, Dr Abdulai Jalloh, gave an in-depth illustration of the project critical path, pointing out milestones that the project has collectively achieved based on the project work streams. Jalloh pointed out that the project was on course with data parameterization and modelling framework for Decision Support System for Agrotechnology Transfer (DSSAT) and Quantitative Evaluation of the Fertility of Tropical Soils (QUEFTS) models.

Key issues discussed and agreed upon included modalities that will guide data collection in field trials, guidelines for the baseline survey, communication and weed management. The project will launch a Shiny App in September 2017 that will be used to track progress against milestones.

Extended sessions also had participants discuss and formulate action points to enable capitalization on the information gathered by extension workers, and the development of the framework and interface of the decision support tools. ACAI has facilitated installation of over 60 rain gauges across the project zones for collecting rain data that will provide vital data for the development of the decision support tools.

The meeting brought together ACAI's primary research and strategic partners, national research organizations as well as implementing partners at national level with representation from ZARI, ARI, FCI, FJS, CAVA-II, MEDA, Minjingu fertilizers, CABI, AfSIS, DAICO, and eSOKO.

Participants at the meeting were taken for a site visit to the on-station trial farm at the ZARI research station and to two farmers' fields within Unguja, Zanzibar.

Top: Dr Abdulai Jallo, ACAI project coordinator, and Mr James Watiti of CABI in a discussion during the ACAI inhouse planning meeting in Zanzibar. Bottom: The ACAI Team in Tanzania.