



Zanzibar president lauds IITA's research efforts to improve livelihoods of small-holder farmers

His Excellency Dr Ali Mohamed Shein, the President of the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar, has praised IITA for its work with the isle's Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (MANR) in boosting the production and productivity of root and tuber crops, especially cassava and yam, and appealed for more support in cassava value addition.

"In Zanzibar, we are good eaters of cassava since time immemorial. In the morning, we boil fresh cassava for breakfast and cook it with coconut for lunch. We also dry it for two to three days into what we call 'makopa' which we make for dinner. However, we need to help our farmers to diversify its uses beyond boiling and making *makopa* by adding value. This way, we will also diversify their income," he said.

The President was speaking to a delegation from IITA led by Director General Nteranya Sanginga that made a courtesy call at the State House in Zanzibar on 4 April. Dr Sanginga also delivered an invitation to the President from Chief Olasegun Obasanjo, former president of Nigeria and IITA's goodwill ambassador, to the inauguration of IITA's science building in the eastern African hub in Dar es Salaam, scheduled for 13 May.

Graciously accepting the invitation to the inauguration, President Shein said his government valued research and was strengthening the Zanzibar Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI) at Kizimbani to better serve its people. He congratulated IITA for investing in the science building to boost the region's research capacity and assured

IITA that researchers from Zanzibar would make use of the facility.

The DG pointed out to the President that IITA had many years of research experience in value addition of crops and was keen on supporting the government of Zanzibar in this effort. He further said that Zanzibar had been selected as one of the target areas of a project funded by the African Development Bank (AfDB) to promote the production and processing of cassava among other crops that had just been launched that same morning.

Sanginga pointed to Nigeria which, with the help of IITA, is now ranked as the number one producer of cassava in the world with more than 16 products from value addition.

"Recently in Nigeria, the government passed a policy that all bread must include 20% cassava flour. This has translated into savings of billions of US dollars in reduced wheat importation with the money going to small-holder farmers and processors instead," he said. "Our researchers have shown that it is even possible to increase the cassava flour in the bread up to 40% without compromising quality."

The DG said that IITA had a long history of building capacity of researchers in sub-Saharan Africa and that the science building was being put up to support these efforts. The state-of-the-art science building would be open to researchers from eastern Africa and students to carry out research on various problems facing small-holder farmers.

Also present at the meeting was Dr Abdulhamid Y. Mzee, the Chief



DG Nteranya Sanginga makes a presentation to the President of the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar, H.E. Dr Ali Mohamed Shein.

Secretary, Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar.

The DG was accompanied by Dr Manyong, Mr Affan O. Maalim, the Principal Secretary, and Ms Mariam Juma, Director of Planning, MANR, Mr Haji Sale, Director of ZARI, Dr Suleiman S. Muhamed, officer in charge of Pemba, and Catherine Njuguna, Regional Corporate Communications Officer.

Visit to DRC ambassador

To drum up more support for the inauguration of the science building, the DG paid a courtesy call on the Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo in Dar es Salaam, H.E. Mr Juma Mpango.

The DG briefed the ambassador on IITA's research activities in eastern and Central Africa. He explained that DRC was the institute's hub for Central Africa with a Director, who at the moment—for logistical reasons—was based in Nairobi. He added that the institute had invested in a science facility at Kalambo near Bukavu and would in the very near future also put up a science building in Kinshasa as the headquarters of the hub.

Ambassador Mpango warmly welcomed the DG, Dr Manyong, and Ms Njuguna.

The ambassador said IITA was playing a very important role in supporting agriculture in the region and that DRC was rebuilding itself after many years of war. He said agriculture holds immense potential to support the country's efforts to become food sufficient and to reduce poverty.



The president of the revolutionary government of Zanzibar, H.E. Dr Ali Mohamed Shein, in a group photo with the delegation from IITA. From left, Suleiman S. Muhamed, Catherine Njuguna, Affan O. Maalim, DG Nteranya Sanginga, Abdulhamid Y. Mzee, Victor Manyong, Mariam Juma, and Haji Sale.

Nigeria, Benin, Mali, and Ghana develop work plans for massive dissemination of drought tolerant maize

Researchers, policy makers, and other stakeholders working under the Drought Tolerant Maize for Africa (DTMA) project from Mali, Benin, Ghana, and Nigeria have converged at IITA in Ibadan to develop work plans to ensure the rapid dissemination and adoption of drought tolerant maize.

The meeting in Ibadan also provided participants the opportunity to take stock of the past work and chart a way forward.

Addressing participants at this year's annual planning meeting, Dr Tsegede Abate, Coordinator of the DTMA Project, reminded stakeholders that the project provided a platform for researchers to demonstrate to donors and policy makers in Africa the benefits of research.

"This is an opportunity for us to show our policy makers that with the right kind of approach, we can make a

difference," Dr Abate added.

According to him, increasing the cultivation of drought tolerant maize varieties in Africa will bring the necessary transformation and the needed boost for maize production in the continent.

Other drivers of adoption of drought tolerant varieties, he noted, include increasing the participation of women in maize projects and also the creation of new/strong partnerships.

Dr Abate said that the focus on women was strategic considering their invaluable contributions to agricultural development in Africa.

Dr Ylva Hillbur, IITA Deputy Director General (Research for Development), commended the researchers for their efforts in developing and disseminating DT maize.

She noted that the DTMA project is important to Africa as it is addressing

one of the most important constraints to maize production in the continent--drought.

Launched in 2007, the DTMA project provides insurance against the risks of maize farming, using conventional breeding to develop and disseminate varieties that can provide a decent harvest under reduced rainfall.

Dr Baffour Badu-Apraku, IITA Breeder who is also the West Africa Coordinator of the DTMA project, said that the project had so far recorded impressive milestones, mostly through the development of new varieties.

For instance, between 2007 and 2010, Nigeria released 18 drought tolerant maize varieties while Ghana released 13 in the same period.

Dr Badu-Apraku is hopeful that regional governments would support efforts to make these varieties available to farmers.

Participants from Mali, Nigeria, Ghana, and the Republic of Benin said farmers in their respective countries love the varieties.

To effectively make the varieties available to more farmers, they proposed the strengthening of community seed producers to complement efforts of seed companies in the region.

"We cannot not bring in the community seed producers if we want more farmers to have access and adopt drought tolerant maize," says the Director General, Nigeria Seed Council, Dr Olatokun Olusegun.

Implemented by CIMMYT, IITA, and national partners in 13 African countries of sub-Saharan Africa, the third phase of the DTMA project will end in 2016.



Participants to the DTMA wrkshop in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Central Africa Hub Director introduces new staff in Kalambo Station, DRC

Dr Bernard Vanlauwe, R4D Director of the Central Africa Hub, visited IITA/ Kalambo station in DR Congo on 15-22 March to introduce the new persons in charge of the station. Dr Christopher Okafor is the new chief of station and the administrator of the CGIAR

Research Program on Integrated Systems for the Humid Tropics (Humidtropics) and Mr Delvaux Baly is the station administrator. Dr Vanlauwe also presented Dr Marie Octavie Yomeni, SARD-SC project Cassava Specialist.

Dr Vanlauwe also met staff based at Kalambo where he presented the vision of the station. He also presided over the workshop on the local national launching of the SARD-SC project cassava component in South Kivu province.



Top (L-R): Mr Samuel Munkiba, Administrator of IITA/Kinshasa, Dr Bernard Vanlauwe, R4D Director, IITA Central Africa Hub, and Dr Chris Okafor, IITA/Kalambo Chief of Station. Right: Group photo of staff in front of the Kalambo Station, DRC.



Fifty participants receive training on seed marketing

About 50 officials of different seed companies and ABU/IAR in Nigeria received training on sales and marketing of seeds.

The training, conducted by IITA in collaboration with Purdue University and CSIR/SARI, is part of efforts to diversify/open new marketing channels for seeds.

At the moment, seed distribution in West Africa is mainly targeted at national governments which buy and later distribute to farmers. However, the system has been less successful as not many farmers have access to improved seeds.

Researchers believe that if seed companies rejig the distribution system by directly targeting small-holder farmers, that would create more impact by offering farmers easy access to improved seeds.

During the training held in Zaria, Nigeria, participants were guided in drafting a Marketing Action Plan (MAP) for their company that would guide their sales and delivery strategy.

Dr Joan Fulton, Professor and Associate Department Head, Department of Agricultural Economics at Purdue University, said that the training was very successful.

"I feel so good about this program because you know, as we help these companies do a better job with seed



Participants to the training titled "Increasing seed access for small farmers: a win win situation for seed companies and farmers" held in Zaria, Nigeria.

sales we help small-scale farmers get higher yields and profits from growing the new varieties," she explained.

Similar such training are planned for Ghana and Mali also in 2013. The series of workshops is funded by a grant from the CGIAR Research Program on Maize (MAIZE) and also by the DTMA project. The program waived participation fees to seed companies that paid fees to attend the course. This was a testament to their commitment to improve their marketing and the performance of their companies.

Dr Tahirou Abdoulaye, IITA Economist, said the training workshop was important, considering the critical role that seed companies play in the dissemination and adoption of new/improved varieties.

He feels that the effective participation of seed companies in the value chain would offer farmers easier access to improved seeds and help improve productivity and incomes. IITA is committed to continue this capacity building to strengthen the private sector.

IITA organizes meeting of partners and field visit in South Kivu, DR Congo

IITA staff met with key partners (Food for the Hungry [FH], FAO, Catholic Relief Services, Inspection Provinciale de l'Agriculture, Pêche et Elevage, Service National de Semences, Institut National pour l'Etude et la Recherche Agronomique (INERA), L'Organisation Inter Eglises de Coopération au Développement, Women for Women,

and Démarche pour une Interaction entre Organisations de Base et Autres Sources des Savoirs) in South Kivu, DR Congo, between 26 and 29 March to introduce Humidtropics with focus on the upcoming launch of the East and Central Africa (ECA) Action Area workshop scheduled on 20-24 May in Bukavu.

The meeting also included a field trip to Walungu and Katana where Banana Xanthomonas Wilt (BXW) outbreaks have been reported. The field visit aimed to assess disease incidence, raise awareness, and sensitize farmers on symptom recognition, transmission pathways, prevention, and control measures.

Xanthomonas wilt arrived in Katana and Walungu some 2 years ago and so far no intervention has taken place in these villages. Heavily infected banana fields in Katana are currently being uprooted and replaced with maize/beans, sweet potato, sugarcane, and tomatoes. Partners agreed on a plan to foster synergies among actors for common strategies to control and stop the spread of BXW in South Kivu.

Fields of improved cassava and banana germplasm introduced by IITA in the framework of a partnership project with FH for participatory evaluation and selection were also visited. Farmers appreciated the clean appearance of leaves and the vegetative growth of improved varieties and are eager to receive planting materials to establish their own fields in November this year. Emmanuel Njukwe in Burundi, Paul Dontsop and Delvaux Kabike of Kalambo/Bukavu office represented IITA at the meeting and field visit.



Awareness and sensitization among important stakeholders—the farmers.

Early maturing maize parental lines at IITA hold drought tolerance that could save farmers

Researchers have identified maize parental lines and hybrids with high levels of drought tolerance among the early as well as the extra-early maturing maize genotypes developed and conserved by IITA in Ibadan.

This successful identification has led to the availability and the possibility of sustainable development of more resilient maize varieties with dual characteristics of escaping and tolerating drought in the near future.

The discovery of a high level of drought tolerance among early maturing maize parental lines is

also seen as 'good news' for farmers, especially in drought-prone areas of Africa where maize is a key staple.

Delivering a presentation on the topic, "Genetic Analysis and Molecular Characterization of Early Maturing Maize Inbred Lines for Drought Tolerance," as part of the IITA Western Africa Hub monthly seminar series, Muhyideen Oyekunle said that 48 percent of the early maturing lines under study from IITA were drought tolerant with tolerance indices ranging from 0.17 (low) to 15.31 (high).

The study, which was supervised

by Drs Baffour Badu-Apraku, IITA Maize Breeder; S. Hearne, CIMMYT Geneticist; and Prof M.E. Aken'Ova, of the University of Ibadan, involved screening of over 150 early maturing maize inbred lines and hybrids for drought tolerance over a 2-year period across six agroecological zones of Nigeria.

Other activities undertaken by researchers to spot the promising parental lines included Assessment of early maturing drought tolerant hybrids under drought stress, molecular characterization of early maturing maize inbred lines, and genetic analysis of early maturing maize inbred lines for drought tolerance genes.

Oyekunle found that under drought conditions, hybrids perform better than open-pollinated varieties and could provide safety nets for farmers during bouts of drought. He also identified five diverse groups among the early maturing maize inbred lines studied and two inbreds as the best in terms of combining ability for future hybrid production.

Dr Badu-Apraku said the study offers significant contributions to efforts to address the effects of drought on maize production.

As one of the key staples in Africa, maize production is being thwarted by the reoccurrence of drought along the maize growing belt with farmers reporting losses close to 90 percent in severe instances. Measures being adopted by researchers to prevent the negative consequences of drought include the development of early and extra-early maturing cultivars that complete their life cycles before the onset of drought, and the development of drought tolerant cultivars that possess drought tolerant genes.

Oyekunle explained that general considerations in breeding for drought tolerance in maize include information on genetic diversity among tropical maize lines and populations, hybrid performance, and inheritance of drought tolerance.

IITA, in collaboration with national programs, NGOs/CBOs, and seed companies has made early and extra-early maturing maize varieties and hybrids available to farmers in West Africa. These are being widely adopted to the extent that maize cultivation is largely replacing sorghum and millet in the savanna ecologies. Early and extra-early maize varieties fit into the hunger gap in the savanna zones that normally occurs before the year's crops mature. They are also used for early planting as well as late planting when the rains are delayed and fit very well into intercropping systems because they are less competitive with the component crops. These varieties are used as green maize in the forest zones as well as in peri-urban areas of West Africa.



The West African Hub has started a monthly seminar series that features researchers based in the hub or headquarters and important guests visiting IITA. One of the presenters was Muhyideen Oyekunle of the Maize Improvement Program.

IITA women celebrate International Women's Month

The IITA Women's Group marked International Women's Month by feting the ladies of IITA that included spouses of staff to an afternoon of friendship, camaraderie, testimonials, and good food.

Organized by Mrs Charlotte Sanginga, "the forum was interactive, educative, and informative," according to the Women's Group Chair, Idara Ahmadu.

"My husband has been working for IITA for many years now, but this is the first time that I had been invited

to a social event for women by women in IITA," said one of the spouses in grateful recognition of the efforts of Mrs Sanginga and the women of IITA to uphold the status of women and to celebrate womanhood.

The women spent the afternoon sharing their rich experiences as wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, friends, mentors, leaders, and career women.

For many of the women, it was a great start to new friendships and relationships.



Celebrating International Women's Month at IITA.