



IITA Central Africa launches new research facility



IITA Science Building in Kalambo. South Kivu Governor Marcellin Cishambo makes a speech at the inauguration of the building

IITA and partners launched a research center in Kalambo, Bukavu, South Kivu province in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) yesterday (5 June 2014) that would deal with emerging challenges in the agricultural sector.

The DRC Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Hon. Jean Chrisostome Vahamuitsi, representing the DRC President, His Excellency Joseph Kabila Kabangi, commissioned the center with the Republic of Burundi's Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, Her Excellency Odette Kayitesi, in an event that was attended by more than 200 stakeholders consisting of policy makers, representatives of the donor community, development practitioners, partners, researchers, private sector representatives, and farmers from within and outside of the country.

The IITA Kalambo research center includes a state-of-the-art laboratory, machine fabrication shop, and crop processing and training facilities that would support agricultural development in the country and the Central Africa region as a whole. It was constructed with partial support from the African Development Bank-funded project called Support to Agricultural Research for Development of Strategic Crops (SARD-SC).

During the launch, the DRC Agriculture Minister expressed his government's happiness in hosting the IITA research center in South Kivu.

"We welcome this research center in our midst and are happy to host and support a facility that would help build the capacity of researchers and farmers in DRC and the region. Such a facility would help the country and the region as a whole in addressing pressing agricultural challenges that prevent the production of more food for the region's teeming populations."

In a press briefing held earlier in Bukavu, the South Kivu Governor Marcellin Cishambo said that "agriculture is the most important sector in DRC, providing 42% of the country's GDP and employing over half of the population."

"However, out of our 80 million hectares of potential agricultural land, only approximately 10% is being used," he said. "The government is therefore very keen to develop this sector to diversify and catalyze the overall economic development of the country."

Also during the press briefing IITA Director General Dr Nteranya Sanginga noted that the Central Africa region would become an important bread basket for the continent by tackling some of the problems of smallholder farmers in the region through research.

"With this new center, together with our partners in the region, we are now better equipped to handle the existing and the new emerging challenges to agriculture through research," Dr Sanginga said. "Research alongside education is one of the most important investments in any country seeking

socioeconomic transformation."

Also speaking at the press briefing, the IITA Director for Central Africa, Dr Bernard Vanlauwe, said: "We are working with farmers to increase their agricultural production on the same piece of land to reduce and ensure food security for densely populated areas and reduce the deforestation in forested areas. This is through introducing smart farming practices—including use of high-yielding improved varieties and better farming practices including soil fertility management."

The launch program included a tour of the facilities and an exhibition of products and research outputs by researchers and agricultural entrepreneurs ("agripreneurs") from IITA's Central Africa hub and stations. Scientists and young researchers talked about their work on the following research themes: tackling pests and diseases; increasing productivity; improving nutrition; adding value; and other initiatives that included ongoing work on biocontrol, natural resources management, and "agripreneurship".

Last year, IITA had launched a similar facility in its eastern Africa office in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; and laid the foundation stone for its facility in Southern Africa in Lusaka, Zambia. The construction of science and training centers in the hubs are all in line with the institute's new refreshed strategy and its vision of becoming a leading research partner facilitating solutions to hunger and poverty in Africa.

Impact of IITA's maize germplasm in Africa higher than imagined



Dr Kim (3rd from left) with IITA Youth Agripreneurs and Sylvia Oyinlola, Regional Administrator for Western Africa Hub (Right)

Improved maize germplasm developed by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and disseminated across Africa is improving livelihoods, and the impact on the continent is greater than earlier imagined, according to the President of the International Corn Foundation, Dr Soon Kwon Kim.

In a seminar organized by IITA West Africa Hub today (6 June 2014) entitled: "Promotion of IITA maize streak resistant (SR) varieties and *Striga* tolerant or resistant (STR) varieties to ten African countries with Korean Government Support," Dr Kim reviewed the contribution of maize streak resistant varieties and *Striga* tolerant or resistant varieties across the continent.

Probably the most devastating disease that attacks maize in Africa, maize streak virus (MSV), leads to stunting, and farmers may lose 100 percent of the crop. *Striga* (a parasitic weed), on the other hand, attacks cereals and legumes and losses are in the neighborhood of US\$8bn, endangering the livelihoods of millions of farmers in sub-Saharan Africa.

Dr Kim who is currently also Chair-Professor,

Handong Global University, Pohang, South Korea had worked at IITA at a time when MSV ravaged maize farms in sub Saharan Africa (SSA), and he was part of the team that developed the maize streak resistant varieties. The work earned IITA the first King Baudouin award. The team also made remarkable breakthroughs in developing *Striga* tolerant/resistant maize varieties.

Dr Kim noted that after the development of those varieties, IITA with funds from the Korea International Cooperation Agency, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of South Korea, promoted them in Bénin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Togo with the joint efforts of FAO-PASCON (Pan African *Striga* Control Network) and the Semi-Arid Food Grain Research and Development (SAFGRAD) project.

But beyond these countries, several other African countries have benefited from this work.

For example, Dr Kim recalled that Kenya's maize that was ravaged by streak virus two/three years ago, recovered after germplasm from IITA

resistant to the disease was introduced.

He called on IITA to do a more in-depth study that would put into perspective the contribution of IITA improved maize varieties across the continent.

Dr Kim also shared some thoughts on the way forward for Africa's agriculture, stressing the need for sustainable intensification that would not abuse the natural resource endowment of the continent.

He lauded IITA's research approach that integrates more than one trait in the breeding objective and also called on African governments to invest in IITA.

"If we adopt and use IITA's approach to breeding, we will solve Africa's problems... My suggestion has always been that IITA should be given the first consideration when it comes to funding in Africa," he said.

Dr Sam Ajala commended Dr Kim for his work in helping the maize program in Africa in particular and global maize research in general, stressing that most of the high yielding maize varieties grown in the continent were built on past efforts/foundation laid by Dr Kim.

Though he left IITA 17 years ago, Dr Kim has kept touch with IITA and the Nigeria's Maize Association.

The President of the Maize Association of Nigeria, Pastor O.A. Adenola, praised Dr Kim's efforts and passion for improved livelihoods of farmers. He said the support to research given to maize by the government was partly because of Dr Kim's advocacy for more attention to maize especially in Nigeria.



Dr Kim making a point

Capital base of IITA CICS climbs to \$1.94 million



Happy IITA staff at Annual General Meeting

The Staff Cooperative Investment and Credit Society (CICS) Limited of the institute which was formed on 1 February 2004 to

create wealth and empower its members marked its 10th year anniversary and also had its Annual General Meeting on 26 May at the Conference Center in Ibadan. The event also provided a platform to review the achievements of the society in the previous year.

Since the formation of the society, it has been observed that membership has increased yearly. Today, membership is currently at 956 from 612 in 2012, representing a 56% increase. According to the report of the President of the society, Ali Adeleke, the increment in membership has also led to an over 70% increase in the capital base of the society from N10.5 million in 2004 to a laudable sum of N310 million (\$1.94), while the "Excess of income over expenditure" rose to N30 million

(\$187,500) in only about 10 years.

Speaking at the opening, Adeleke welcomed all cooperative members while affirming that the vision of establishing the society is still alive. "This society has brought about a positive change in the socioeconomic development of its members and has projected the image of IITA to the public. We will continue to train and retrain our members through seminars and workshops to better their lot" he said.

This year's celebration was attended by officers from the Ministry of Cooperatives and Commerce and OSCOFED who advised members to use the cooperative as a springboard for retirement, while enjoining the management to ensure a control mechanism was put in place to secure the interests of its members.