

## Aflatoxin project launched in East Africa Community



*Aflatoxin contaminates major African food crops, such as maize and groundnuts.*

A regional project on aflatoxin control kicked off this week with an inception workshop at the Sun Safari Hotel in Bujumbura, Burundi. The Honorable Minister of Agriculture and Livestock of the Republic of Burundi, Hon. Odette Kayetesi, officially opened the workshop, attended by partner states officials, experts, the African Union, development partners supporting the project and IITA, and the media.

Commenting ahead of the Inception Workshop, the EAC (East Africa Community) Deputy Secretary General in charge of Productive and Social Sectors Hon. Jesca Eriyo noted that millions of people living in the East African region consume high and unsafe levels of aflatoxin

through their diets on a daily basis, posing adverse health and economic effects along the food production and supply value chain, undermining efforts to improve nutrition and enhance agricultural production, and minimizing economic gains from agricultural products, especially for small-scale farmers.

“The inception workshop therefore introduced to key stakeholders the components and implementation arrangements of the EAC Regional Project on Aflatoxin Control and Prevention and constituted the Regional Experts Working Group on Aflatoxins.”

“We need a holistic and multisectoral approach that encompasses Agriculture, Health, Trade, and Industry sectors in

implementing this project at the national and regional levels.” concluded the EAC official.

The EAC regional project on aflatoxin will be implemented with financial support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The EAC will also work closely with IITA as a collaborating partner that will be responsible for technical backstopping.

Dr Victor Manyong, Director for IITA Eastern Africa hub based in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, noted that East Africa is one of the hotspots of aflatoxin contamination – it has all the right conditions that the natural occurring fungi that produce aflatoxins thrive in. This has led to the destruction of millions of tonnes of grains, leading to huge losses of much-needed income and food, and trade and with health consequences.

“Researchers at IITA have been researching on ways to control aflatoxins for the past decade—with considerable success—and we are very excited to be part of this project to share the knowledge and technologies we have developed and to support the East Africa Community to find sustainable ways to deal with aflatoxins”.

IITA will be responsible for developing the regional biocontrol aflatoxin program, technical papers, and policy briefs that will inform the development of an evidence-based EAC Regional Policy on Aflatoxin abatement. Technical papers will be generated in the areas of standards for food and feed, impacts on human and animal health, biocontrol and postharvest handling, alternative uses and disposal systems, economic impact on trade, and a communication strategy.

## IITA alumni to meet in Ibadan for 6th reunion, 12-14 March

IITA alumni will converge on the Ibadan campus for its sixth reunion, beginning 12 March.

Confirmed participants will be arriving from different parts of the world including Europe, Africa, the US, and Asia.

The event will provide an opportunity for former and current staff, training participants, and students to come together, share experiences, and revisit IITA and get reacquainted with its programs and

activities. Many fun-packed activities have been scheduled for the week-long event including meetings with staff, social events, sports events and recreation, lab and field trips, and visits to interesting sites in Ibadan to allow greater interaction.

The field trips are being arranged to visit places in Ibadan City, outside the IITA-Ibadan campus. The reunion will also highlight IITA’s scientific breakthroughs in the last 47 years.



Got a story to share? Please email it with photos and captions to Andrea Gros (a.gros@cgiar.org), Katherine Lopez (k.lopez@cgiar.org), Jeffrey T. Oliver (j.oliver@cgiar.org), Godwin Atser (g.atser@cgiar.org), or Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org).

## M&E training conducted for staff from IITA-led projects and sub-units

This week, about 30 staff members representing various sub-units and IITA-led projects participated in a 3-day monitoring and evaluation (M&E) training to learn about M&E processes and to identify areas in need of strengthening for the improvement of effectiveness and efficiency of projects and sub-units.

According to Dr Thomas Wobill, Head of IITA's Monitoring and Evaluation office, who conducted the training, the workshop aims to introduce M&E focal persons to the basis of M&E and how to apply them to IITA's approach to results-based M&E; introduce participants to results and logical frameworks, indicator development, and data matrix construction; and conduct M&E system assessment of units.

Participants at the workshop worked on developing data matrix frameworks for their sub-units or projects and completed the IITA M&E system assessment tool introduced during the workshop.

When asked for a comment, Olayiwola Olatunji of the Resource Mobilization, Protocol & External Liaison, said that the training comes at a crucial time for IITA, referring to the reforms that are currently taking place in the institute. He said that educating key personnel on the processes



*Dr Thomas Wobill introduces M&E concepts to participants of the training.*

of M&E is key to meeting institutional objectives.

Sanghamitra Mazumdar of the Youth Agripreneurs and Humidtropics, said that the training was a great first step towards standardizing M&E across IITA. She indicated that the diverse participation--ranging from research, technical services,

partnerships, to support services aided in the discussion on the M&E approaches. She said that she was impressed with how the resource person set up the logical framework that allowed for the consideration of the existing M&E frameworks in each unit to be adapted in the new M&E assessment tools.

## Research at IITA excites Ethiopian envoy

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ethiopia, H.E., Ali Abdo Suleiman paid a courtesy visit to IITA (2-4 March) and lauded the efforts of the Institute in fighting hunger and poverty.

The envoy also sought closer collaboration between his government and IITA especially in the area of research and technology transfer.

He underscored the need for a stronger partnership between international

agricultural research centers such as IITA and national agricultural research systems, stressing that such interactions could engender capacity development.

Painting a picture of Ethiopian agriculture, HE Suleiman explained that the sector is characterized by small-holder farmers and added that interventions targeting that group would bring great benefits.

Receiving the Ambassador, Deputy Director General (Research), Dr

Ylva Hillbur gave an overview of IITA, highlighted the institute's vision and mission, and its geographical spread in terms of offices across sub-Saharan Africa.

A presentation by the Director for Western Africa, Dr Robert Asiedu on the activities of the Institute in West Africa, provided a glimpse of and mirrored IITA's work in the East African hub which also covers Addis. The ambassador was provided a list of IITA's activities in Ethiopia, which included work on bacterial wilt control on enset (false banana), COMPRO II or *Institutionalization of quality assurance mechanism and dissemination of top quality commercial products to increase crop yields and improve food security of small-holder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa*, partnership engagement and development, technical advisory to Ethiopian research institutions and universities, and capacity building. Thereafter, the ambassador went on a tour of the Institute including the labs, Genetic Resources Center, research fields, postharvest section, and the Youth Agripreneurs' office.

The ambassador also held one-on-one discussions with Dr Abebe Menkir, Maize Breeder, and Melaku Gedil, Head, Bioscience Center.



*Dr Emmanuel Alamu, Research Administrative Manager, talks to Ambassador Suleiman (center) about some of the research activities undertaken by the Crop Utilization Unit at IITA, while Dr Bussie Maziya-Dixon (left) look on.*

# SARD-SC project annual workplan and retreat workshop held in Abuja



SARD-SC Project Coordinator, Dr Chrys Akem at the project planning meeting and retreat.

The SARD-SC project management unit held its annual retreat in Abuja recently to deliberate on the year's workplan and budget for all the commodities. Hosted by IITA in its Abuja Office, the retreat was attended by all the four commodity specialists: Dr Olupomi

Ajayi, AfricaRice; Dr Sam Ajala, Maize Commodity Specialist; Dr Marie Yomeni, DR Congo Cassava Specialist; and Dr Solomon Assefa, Wheat Commodity Specialist, the four commodity procurement specialists, and the accountants of the commodities.

In his welcome remarks, Dr Chrys Akem, SARD-SC project coordinator, said that the retreat was an opportunity for everyone to be open and frank with one another about issues concerning the project and its implementation. "This is the first opportunity that we are coming together as a project and not as separate components, so, it is essential to share and learn from one another. We need to understand our workplans and budgets and procurement plans to summarize them for the bank's endorsement." He also spoke on the importance of communication and the need to adequately report on project activities.

According to him, "The Bank considers Monitoring & Evaluation, Procurement and Communication as important areas of the project."

## Help conserve electricity!

Before leaving the workplace at day's end, make sure that you have:

1. Powered off all unnecessary electrical office/lab equipment;
2. Turned off air conditioners; and
3. Switched off all lights.

## Consortium Board to meet in Dar next week

Agricultural experts from the world's leading partnership for agriculture research, CGIAR, will come together in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, for its biannual board meeting to be hosted by IITA, from 17 to 21 March.

The CGIAR Consortium is made up of 15 international agriculture research centers that work in close collaboration with hundreds of partner organizations, including national and regional research institutes, civil society organizations, academia, and the private sector, towards ensuring a food secure world, and at the same time reducing rural poverty, improving human health and nutrition, and ensuring more sustainable management of natural resources.

Most of CGIAR's research-for-development activities take place in the tropical developing world, including sub-Saharan Africa, where many of the countries are still not self-sufficient in food and agriculture is the mainstay of the economies. The region is rich in natural and human resources which, if well harnessed, can make it the world's leading food basket.

After structural and governance reforms initiated in 2010 were implemented the research partnership is working more collaboratively with partners in 16 cross-cutting research themes through

the CGIAR Research Programs. The progress of the reform will be one of the agenda items during the meeting, which brings together the Consortium Board and the Director Generals of all the 15 international centers.

Dr Frank Rijsberman, CEO of the CGIAR Consortium, said "The ongoing reforms will help CGIAR to ensure that we work better and smarter with each other and with our partners so we can have more impact."

In Tanzania, the CGIAR centers and the Research Programs are carrying out a wide range of research activities on various themes with national and international partners.

Director General Nteranya Sanginga, said IITA had worked in Tanzania for over 20 years supporting the national research partners to increase the production of key staples, such as cassava, banana, and soybean in the country and the sub-Saharan region. He singled out cassava as one of the crops the institute had extensively studied in the country.

Dr Sanginga also pointed out that the institute had received very good support from the Government of Tanzania which is investing heavily on its agriculture sector not only to ensure food security for its people but to reduce poverty and for economic development.

## Upcoming events

### Central Africa Hub

- Commissioning of IITA Science Building, 5 June, Bukavu, DR Congo

### Eastern Africa Hub

- CGIAR Consortium Board Meeting, 19–21 March, IITA, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

### Southern Africa Hub

- Cassava World Africa. Theme: "Transforming Cassava in Africa - Enhancing Food Security through Agro-industrial Products", 20–21 March, Radisson Blu Hotel, Lusaka, Zambia. <http://www.cimtevents.com/eventschedule.aspx?ev=140312&>.

### West Africa Hub

- Sixth Reunion of IITA Alumni, 12–15 March, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria
- IITA Board Meeting, IITA-Benin, 6–9 May, Cotonou, Benin