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IITA's impact on cassava continues to spread…

The impact of IITA's 5-year collaboration with USAID and Shell Petroleum Development Company in the Cassava Enterprise Development Project (CEDP), from 2004 to 2009, continues to shine.

CEDP aimed to increase economic opportunities through agroenterprise development and the sustainable and competitive production and marketing of cassava in 11 States in the South-South and South-East zones of Nigeria. Within the 5-year period nearly 500,000 farmers were supported with IITA's improved Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD)-resistant varieties; over US$51 million revenue was generated from gross sales of cassava products by enlisted participants; nearly 1000 processing enterprises were established; over 10 improved CMD-resistant varieties were developed and released; and more than 15,000 new jobs were created. Other outcomes included an increase in farmers' cassava yields from 12 t/ha to 30 t/ha, a decline in CMD incidence, the training of over 21,000 farmers and processors, the development of cassava recipes, and technical support to the new Cassava Presidential Initiatives in Africa.

The IITA team at the partners' exhibition led by Dr Tarawali (fourth from left).

Visitors taste IITA plantain wine and cassava products.

As a result of these successes, the Shell Partners Forum invited the IITA Cassava Value Chain Team to its 2014 "Road show and Exhibition" at the Nicon Transcorp Hotel, Abuja, on 29 October, to showcase the project's achievements and also show recently developed technologies as part of efforts to explore possible areas for collaboration in 2015.

IITA displayed publications, posters, and products which included food items such as cakes, bread, and biscuits, and recipes with 100% cassava (chin-chin, doughnuts, cookies, egg rolls, and strips). Also showcased were IITA's technologies including aflasafe, aeroponics, NoduMax, high quality yam flour, vitamin A cassava, plantain-based PITA wine, banana jam, plantain flour, and the activities of the IITA Youth Agripreneurs.

"...We expect that the event will open doors for further partnership with Shell and other multinational organizations that could be interested in promoting agriculture," said Gbassey Tarawali, IITA Representative in Abuja of the DG and DDG-PCD. He added. "Our guests were amazed at the intensity of work going on in IITA. The visitors tasted the food products and they were surprised that such products and beverages of such good quality could come out of cassava, plantain, banana, and other crops… what remains is for IITA to follow up with relevant departments interested in continuing their partnership with IITA in 2015 and confirm possible areas of collaboration."

IITA Women's Group announces 52 lucky scholarship recipients

Fifty two recipients have been selected in the annual scholarship competition organized by the IITA Women's Group for children of staff. Over 60 applications were received from candidates in the Junior-, Senior- and Post-Secondary categories.

On 31 October, contestants in all the categories were screened in both written and oral examinations for eligibility and 49 successful candidates from Nigeria and 3 from Bukavu, DR Congo, were chosen to receive the 2014 scholarships. Results are still being compiled for Kampala and will be announced at a later date.

On 15 November, during the IITA Open Day ceremony, the successful candidates in the three categories will receive, as follows: JSS, US$150; SSS, US$ 200; and students in the Universities and Polytechniques US$250.

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

AVEC-BF provides options for small-scale cowpea farmers in Burkina Faso

The IITA AVEC-BF project recently conducted farmers' participatory varietal selection (FPVS) with over 900 participating farmers from 15 villages in the north and south of the country, assisting researchers to identify and select cowpea varieties suiting the needs of small-scale producers.

Dr Haruki Ishikawa, IITA AVEC-BF project leader, said, "We have been working with small-scale farmers in Burkina Faso since 2010. In the first three years, we achieved so much, including the development of a new scheme for the dissemination of improved cowpea varieties. In the second phase we are developing a scheme to promote large-scale distribution."

The FPVS tool was adopted to promote the improved varieties because it plays a vital role in helping researchers to understand farmers' preferences better, aiding further breeding work at IITA and the Institut National d'Environnment et des Recherches Agricoles (INERA). In 2013, AVEC-BF registered improved cowpea varieties developed by IITA, prompting their multiplication and promotion in the country through the World Bank-sponsored WAAP project.

Dr Ishikawa explains about the AVEC-BF project to participating farmers.

Dr Issa Drabo, cowpea breeder at INERA, further explained that Burkinabe farmers are exploring agriculture as a business, thanks to the project. "This project is building the capacity of our farmers. They have been trained on cowpea production and storage techniques, which is why they have contributed through FPVS to select new varieties. Trained farmers are producing certified seeds for their communities and for other farmers. This also provides new business opportunities for small-scale farmers."

The AVEC-BF project is being implemented with funds from the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and aims at the wide dissemination of improved cowpea varieties jointly developed by IITA and INERA.

N2Africa Phase two reviews its progress in boosting legume production in Africa

The partners and project team of the *Putting nitrogen fixation to work for smallholder farmers* (N2Africa) Phase 2 met in Arusha, Tanzania on 28-31 October, to review the progress made and challenges encountered in the first year.

During the first phase, different technologies for boosting legume production were tested together with farmers in eight countries across sub-Saharan Africa and the most promising ones identified. The technologies include improved high-yielding varieties of four legumes: cowpea, groundnut, soybean, and common bean, as well as inputs such as appropriate fertilizer mix and inoculants (bacteria that strengthen ability of legumes to fix nitrogen).

The second phase of the project, which started in March 2014 aims to reach more than 550,000 smallholder farmers in 11 countries with these improved technologies and to ensure they triple their investment by getting three dollars back for each dollar invested.

"… the focus is now on commercialization of these technologies and institutionalization of the project in the 11 countries we are working in. While the new project countries such as Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda are pretesting the promising technologies to identify the most effective and appropriate one," Dr Fred Kanampiu, the IITA N2Africa coordinator, said.

Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the project, is led by a consortium comprising Wageningen University, IITA, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), and is implemented by over 164 partners.

The project also explored ways to strengthen partnerships with ongoing similar initiatives for sustainability. These include the Commercial Products phase 2 (Compro2) project led by IITA; Triple Legumes phase 2 (TLII) led by the International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and the CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) on Grain Legumes and Humidtropics. Other initiatives included the Soil Health Program of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and Scaling Seeds and Technologies Partnership, project by USAID through its Feed the Future Program and AGRA.

N2Africa Africa team meeting with some members of farmers' cooperative.