



IITA top brass meet in East Africa hub, deliberate on institutional strategies

The institute's top management team were in Dar es Salaam this week for a three-day retreat during which they mulled over the implementation of the institute's revamped 10-year strategy and resource mobilization efforts, among other issues.

The retreat, which was held on 4-6 September, was the first by the new management team headed by Dr Nteranya Sanginga as Director General and the second to be organized at the institute's Eastern Africa Hub in Tanzania.

Present at the retreat were the DG, DDG for Partnership and Capacity Building Dr Ken Dashiell, DDG for Research Dr Ylva Hillbur, R4D Directors' Drs Bernard Vanlauwe (Central Africa), David Chikoye (Southern Africa), Robert Asiedu (West Africa), and Victor Manyong (Eastern Africa).

Also in attendance were Mr Kwame Akuffo Akoto, incoming DDG for R4D Support; Ms Jacqueline Musiimenta, Senior Finance Officer, representing Director for Finance Mr Sholola Shalewa; Mrs Hilde Koper, Head of the Contracts and Grants Office; Mrs Toyin Oke, Head of the newly created Resource Mobilization, Protocol, and

The IITA management team during their site inspection of the science building at the Eastern Africa Hub in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.



External Liaison Office; and Mrs Jenny Cramer, Secretary to the IITA Board of Trustees.

The management team also visited the hub's offices at Mikocheni where they met with staff, toured the soon-to-be-completed science building, and had a luncheon with all the staff at the hub. They also saw a demonstration of a technology in an on-going project to determine the levels of mycotoxin contamination in maize, cassava, and groundnuts in Tanzania which is led by Dr Fen Beed, IITA Plant Pathologist based at the hub.

Dr Manyong welcomed the management team to the hub, noting that it was important for staff particularly in the regional hubs to personally interact with management to keep them motivated.

Dr Dashiell, while speaking during the luncheon, assured staff of management's continued support of their research activities and commended them for their good work, professionalism, and motivation to contribute towards realizing the institute's refreshed strategy and its mission and vision.

Training on identification & management of fruit flies in Cameroon

From 28 to 30 August, IITA-Cameroon organized a workshop on the identification and management of highly destructive fruit flies infesting mango, guava, and other fruits. The workshop was held in collaboration with the Institute of Agronomic Research for Development (IRAD) of Cameroon at its Regional Centre in Fombot, West Region.

About 15 key-area farmers and extensionists from the Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development and IRAD participated in the training that aimed to provide them with knowledge to effectively identify and manage fruit flies found in Cameroon through



Field demonstration of trapping fruit flies.

modern techniques. The participants are involved in the on-going research on the ecology and management of fruit flies supported by IITA with funds from the

German Federal Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ) in collaboration with the International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology (icipe). These farmers will participate in the area-wide integrated management campaign of fruit flies in 2013.

Ntchoutnji, Head of IRAD's Fombot Centre, at the close of the training urged participants to make good use of the skills they learned and share their knowledge with other farmers. A similar workshop will be held in Garoua in the North Region of Cameroon in September.

Agriculture minister lauds AVEC-BF efforts in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso's Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Dr Abdoulaye Combari, has commended the IITA-led AVEC-BF project for helping cowpea farmers and seed producers cope with the knock-on effects of a long-drawn drought that hit the country in 2011.

The minister visited Laongo village, one of the sites of the AVEC-BF project, on 22 August. Here, project-trained farmers are producing certified cowpea seeds of suitable varieties for distribution to other farmers.

Dr Combari held discussions with the farmers and the project implementers and partners, lauding their achievements even in the face of adverse conditions such as drought. He also assured the government's support to them and to the project.

In 2011, a number of West African countries, including Burkina Faso, were hit by serious drought and suffering great loss in income from agricultural products and low food security. The drought also had a ripple effect on this year's agricultural production since there were not enough certified seeds produced last year. Because of this, the government of Burkina Faso has realized the importance of the seed sector and the need to urgently strengthen it.

Laongo started in 2010 with just 3 ha

and one farmer group to produce certified seeds. Despite the 2011 drought, the community was able to expand its cowpea seed production area to 16 ha managed by four seed producer groups trained by AVEC-BF.

"The AVEC-BF project is designed to establish village-based dissemination system of improved cowpea varieties,"

said Dr Satoru Muranaka, a JIRCAS scientist working with IITA on the project. He added that with AVEC-BF, suitable cowpea varieties are rapidly disseminated in target regions through farmer participatory varietal selection, establishment of regional seed production capacity, and improvement of cultivation skills through farmer field schools.

"AVEC-BF can supply what farmers really want and need," added Haruki Ishikawa, IITA scientist and the project's coordinator. This year, certified seeds of IT98K-205-8 – an extra-early maturing cowpea variety – produced by the seed



Dr Ishikawa briefing the minister during the latter's visit to Laongo village, one of the project sites of AVEC-BF.

producers from five project sites were distributed to farmers in various regions of the country. It is envisioned that this will help stabilize cowpea production in Burkina Faso.

The minister advised Dr. Ishikawa to look at upscaling the project at the national level. He also promised to help IITA and INERA in fast tracking the release of new cowpea varieties.

On their part, the certified seed producers of Laongo promised the minister that they will continue to produce cowpea seeds even after the AVEC-BF project ends.



Minister Chiza (R) and Dr Manyong (L) discussing during IITA's courtesy call to the minister's office.

Tanzania's Minister of Agriculture, Honorable Christopher Chiza, has said that the government will back all efforts to improve the livelihoods of cassava farmers and optimize the production and use of the crop.

Chiza was speaking to a delegation from IITA led by Dr Victor Manyong, Director for Eastern Africa, during a courtesy call to the minister's office.

The minister noted that in Tanzania cassava still suffers from the image of being a fall-back crop during famine; while the prevalence of cassava mosaic and cassava brown streak diseases hamper its production. He also pointed to lack of modern technologies to minimize wastage of the root crop.

To this end, he urged IITA to continue

Tanzania, IITA to broaden joint efforts to develop country's cassava industry

assisting farmers to optimally produce and use cassava through research. In return, he assured the team of his ministry's full support.

He said the country

needed research on processing and marketing, and these need to actually reach farmers. He added that farmers also need access to varieties that can withstand the two main cassava diseases.

In response, Dr Manyong said Tanzania is one of IITA's priority countries and that the institute is investing a lot of resources to boost its R4D capabilities and activities there. He cited the soon-to-be-completed modern science building that IITA was constructing in its Mikochehi station as proof of its commitment to this effort.

He also lauded the strong support by the government to agricultural development, which he said was a key factor in IITA's decision to establish its Eastern Africa Hub in the country.

Dr Manyong assured the minister that IITA will bring to bear its abundant technical expertise on supporting Tanzania in improving its agricultural sector, focusing on cassava commercialization.

Dr Edward Kanju, Cassava Breeder who was also with the IITA delegation, added that IITA, together with relevant partners in the country, had achieved significant successes in developing cassava varieties that were tolerant to the two diseases, adding that some of these varieties have already been released to farmers. However, he said that the challenge now is producing enough planting materials for farmers. To address this, he indicated that IITA is spearheading multi-partner planting material multiplication initiatives.

Minister Chiza said that he will help IITA with the multiplication efforts and explore the possibility of tapping into institutions such as prisons and the National Youth Service.