



IITA-Kano's participation in agric show excites farmers

Hundreds of farmers thronged to the exhibition booth of IITA at this year's agricultural show in Kano seeking solutions on constraints to agricultural productivity from researchers.

The event, organized by the Kano State government with the theme: Agricultural development in Kano State, a promise fulfilled" provided an opportunity for farmers to interact with experts and other actors in the value chain.

Farmer Hajia Amina Musa said she was happy coming in contact with researchers from IITA.

"I have known IITA for more than five years and they give us improved seeds and beneficial information. Today I have gained new knowledge about inoculums and their application and benefits. I hope to get some and use on my farm next year," she said.

Like farmer Musa, several other farmers also commented on the work of IITA and its participation at the show.

Mr Garba Ahmed, an agricultural science teacher with Government Secondary School, Gerege, thanked the Institute for providing books and flyers for visitors.

He said that such literature was necessary for transforming the livelihoods of farmers and eliciting interest in agriculture.

"I found the publications here very useful and will take some to our school library so that students can learn more about modern farming," he said, adding, "Let me also thank IITA for coming to this event and giving knowledge to us free of charge."

Another farmer, Alhaji Ado Abdullahi, said, "Today I learned about how to control Striga and also about new soybean varieties. I will be contacting researchers next season to get these improved varieties for my farm."

Abdullahi also said he enquired from researchers concerning pests and diseases attacking his cowpea farm and found solutions to his problems.



IITA-Kano staff at the exhibition booth

This year, IITA Kano Station under the leadership of Dr Alpha Kamara participated at the agricultural show, with a package of agricultural solutions including improved varieties of maize, cowpea, and soybean, inoculums, and publication materials on best-bet technologies.

Dr Mel Oluoch, IITA Scientist and leader of the Striga control project, was among the panel of judges for the best local council in Kano in terms of agricultural investment and development.

He commended the Kano State government for organizing the event, stressing that the face-to-face interactions with farmers and other stakeholders in the agricultural sector were necessary for easy and quick uptake of scientific research outputs.

Kano State in northern Nigeria is reforming its agriculture in line with the country's agricultural transformation agenda, and hopes to make agriculture a major contributor to the state's Gross Domestic Product.



Farmers crowding at IITA booth to seek info

Ghana's Cocoa-Eco Project to receive support from IITA

IITA has expressed interest in supporting interventions to address the impact of climate variability and climate change on Ghana's cocoa production.

The Institute will partner with the SNV Ghana to understand how cocoa farmers can "best find a balance between intensification, adaptation, and mitigation and identify short- and long-term risks and benefits" under the Cocoa-Eco Project, involving the Kuapa Kokoo Farmers Union.

The 30-month pilot project, covering 10 cocoa growing districts, aims at limiting the encroachment of cocoa plantations



Farmers sorting cocoa beans

into forest lands and conservation of biodiversity by creating environmental awareness among cocoa farmers, especially on issues of land degradation and deforestation.

The Project connects with IITA's goal of driving knowledge development, pushing innovations, and preserving natural resources and biodiversity.

IITA is convinced that intensified and diversified cocoa farming systems can help to raise farmers' incomes, protect against biodiversity loss, enhance conservation efforts, and reduce rates of deforestation.

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).

MIRACLE gave us back our 'humanity,' says HIV+ beneficiaries in Zambia



MIRACLE Project Manager Melba Mussagy and farmer Deborah.

HIV-positive beneficiaries of the IITA-led and Sida-funded MIRACLE Project in Zambia say that the project has given them back their 'humanity'. Cynthia and Deborah—two of the numerous HIV-positive individuals being helped by MIRACLE—shared their stories.

The two women are from the Mukuni Camp in Kazungula District located in the southern part of Zambia. More than their deteriorating health, both recalled how they suffered marginalization because of their "condition".

"Instead of helping us, our neighbors laughed at us and ridiculed us because of what we had," said Cynthia, a widow in her late 30s. "Whenever people like us met in a group, passersby laughed and called the meeting an assembly of *chumbwe ceenda* (walking graves)," added Deborah, 40 and a single mom.

Cynthia used to depend on her husband who earned income from curio making. When he died, her condition worsened, so she went back to live with her mother. Deborah provided for herself and her child by selling various small items in the community.

Then in 2011, hope came in the form of MIRACLE.

"When Charles Meseka, an Extension Officer, listed us for the project, people said he has gone mad, saying how can he count on people who are too sick to even plow," recounted Cynthia.

"We did not know anything about agriculture before MIRACLE," they admitted, "but we were willing to learn and do anything to survive and have better lives."

Together with other beneficiaries, they received seeds of new and improved crop varieties, including *obatemala*, a maize variety rich in high-quality protein, as well as some legumes. They also participated in livelihoods training on crop and poultry production, processing, and utilization. Deborah also received a male and female chicken.

In only 2 years after joining MIRACLE, Cynthia and Deborah said that Mr Meseka's trust in them has truly paid off.

"Because of MIRACLE, I became self-reliant. I now have sufficient and nutritious food at home, not just maize but also cowpea and traditional vegetables," Cynthia said. Deborah shares the same positive sentiment. "From just two chickens I now have 50 and about a dozen chicks. And as agreed under the project, I have shared 4 chickens with another family. I and my child eat some of the chickens and eggs, but I sell most of them. I use the proceeds to pay for household necessities, school fees, and my medication, which I would never have been able to do without MIRACLE."

Cynthia and Deborah attest that MIRACLE's interventions have also helped them fend off the complications of HIV. Cynthia recalled that her CD4 count stood at a dangerous 53 when she was first diagnosed and before she went into antiretroviral treatment (ART).

CD4 is a type of white blood cell responsible for fighting off infections. A normal CD4 count is 500-1500 cells per cubic millimeter of blood. Preventive ART is recommended if CD4 counts fall under 200.

"My CD4 count increased to 200 after 5 years of ART. However, in only just 2 years of having sufficient and varied nutritious food introduced by MIRACLE, my CD4 count rapidly improved and now stands at 1000," Cynthia happily added.

Deborah said the same: "I feel strong that I can do anything. From a 204 CD4 count at the start of MIRACLE, I am now at 863."

"Had this project not come to our community, we would not be what we are today. MIRACLE gave us back our humanity and our dignity. We are proud of what we have achieved with the help of MIRACLE's unique approach. We are no longer ridiculed; instead we are now recognized as lead farmers. Thank you MIRACLE!" Cynthia and Deborah concluded.



Farmer Cynthia and Melba (in the back).

What's happening this month?

We are now at that time of year again: Open Day is just around the corner, and R4D Week and the Board Meeting are almost here! What's in store for us this year?

The **IITA Open Day** will be held on Saturday, 16 November. This promises to be another exciting event for staff (and their families) based in Ibadan, Nigeria. About 5,000 staff and family members are expected to participate in this event, which features long-service awards, recognition of retirees, tree planting as part of the Reforest IITA project, talent presentations by staff, cultural numbers,



open house, exhibitions and displays, video showing, fun events for children, lunch, and raffle.

R4D Week will be on 25-29 November. We are expecting more than 100 scientists and staff to converge in Ibadan for this annual planning and review meeting. This year's theme is "It is IITA's time." The program includes presentations on current programs and projects, discussions on

new initiatives, workshops on specific research themes and CGIAR Research Programs, poster presentations, meetings, and social and fun events.

Watch out for the final program and further announcements about the activity from the local organizing committee.

Other activities that are ongoing and planned for this month are:

- Sports fest, part 2, ongoing
- Board Meeting, 25-29 November
- NRS and IRS Performance Appraisal, deadline: 30 November