IITA
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IITA signs Memorandum of Understanding with Osun State Government and Agronet Limited

IITA, the Government of Osun State Nigeria, and Agronet Limited have signed a Memorandum of Understanding that will facilitate the establishment of a profitable seed and seedling multiplication business in Osun State. The MoU comes into force from 9 January 2015 and is expected to improve job creation and enhance livelihoods by strengthening entrepreneurship and agribusiness capacity. Speaking during the signing ceremony Dr Kenton Dashiell, IITA Deputy Director General for Partnerships and Capacity Development, explained that limited access to certified seeds, including planting materials for yam, plantain and cassava was one of the major problems smallholders were facing. He said,"The MoU is an important step forward in guaranteeing food security and employment for the population of Osun State via public-private partnerships."

IITA Deputy Director General for Partnerships and Capacity Development, Dr Ken Dashiell (right) shakes hands with the Director General of the Office of Economic Development and Partnerships Osun State, Dr Charles 'Diji Akinola (center) and Managing Director of Agronet Limited Mr Ayokunle Fatokun (left) after signing the MoU.

Nigeria releases two early maturing yellow maize hybrids developed at IITA

Two early maturing yellow endosperm hybrids (90-95 days to harvest) with combined resistance/tolerance to Striga, drought, and low soil N were released and registered in Nigeria by the National Varietal Release and Registration Committee in December 2014.

The early maturing single-cross hybrid, originally designated TZEI 124 × TZEI 25 or EYH-29, is now to be known as SAMMAZ 40 and the top-cross hybrid, formerly TZE-Y Pop STR C4 × TZEI 13 or EYH-27 is now SAMMAZ 41. They were developed by IITA with the very active collaboration of national programs in Nigeria. The hybrids were tested extensively in multi-locational and on farm trials in collaboration with IAR, UNILORIN, and OAU-Ife with funding support from the project *Drought Tolerant Maize for Africa* (DTMA).

One of the factors limiting maize production in West and Central Africa has been the non-availability of varieties specifically bred for adaptation to the savannas. These agro-ecological zones are characterized by a short rainy season, the occurrence of unpredictable sporadic drought during the growing season, and terminal drought. In addition, low soil nitrogen and infestation by the witchweed *(Striga)* are yield-limiting constraints. These three factors (*Striga*, drought, and low N) occur simultaneously in the field, resulting in very low yields and eventually forcing farmers to abandon their fields.

Dr Baffour Badu-Apraku, IITA's maize breeder, said, "Hybrid development and promotion are promising strategies to ensure an appreciable increase in maize production and productivity, and to revolutionize agriculture in West Africa. Therefore, during the past decade, IITA in collaboration with national scientists in Nigeria has been involved in extensive testing of early hybrids."

The potential yield of the two new hybrids is 7.8 t/ha whereas local varieties yield about 2 t/ha. They are also resistant to foliar diseases, including maize streak virus, rust, curvularia, and leaf blight. Because of their outstanding performance and wide adaptation across environments in West Africa, both varieties were released in Mali in June 2014 and are scheduled for release in Ghana. The top-cross hybrid SAMMAZ 41 (TZE-Y Pop STR C4 × TZEI 13) is intended for emerging seed companies still learning the rudiments of hybrid seed production. Its release in Nigeria will offer seed companies the opportunity to market the hybrids in Mali and other neighboring countries, such as Benin Republic and Niger.

These hybrids can contribute significantly to food security especially in areas of marginal rainfall in West Africa. In addition to being compatible with cassava for intercropping they have the value addition of adaptation to early planting in the forest regions and peri-urban areas and provide farmers with the opportunity to market the early crop as green maize at a premium price.

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).

Learning Alliance on Climate Change launched in Tanzania

A group photo of the PACCA workshop participants.

A Learning Alliance that will facilitate information, knowledge, and experience sharing on climate change in Tanzania has been launched. The Alliance was initiated during a recent workshop organized by the Policy Action for Climate Change Adaptation (PACCA) project which is led by IITA on 16 December 2014 in Dar es Salaam.

The Alliance aims to use interdisciplinary science-based recommendations to influence the development and implementation of policies that encourage adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices across multiple platforms and actors. To achieve this goal, the Alliance also brings together policymakers from central and local governments, national and international research organizations, civil society, the private sector, and the media.

"The Learning Alliance will work as a platform where different stakeholders will come together to influence policy and actions on climate change through facilitating knowledge sharing between policy makers and climate change intervention implementers," notes Perez Muchunguzi, a Multi-stakeholder Specialist with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) based in Kampala, Uganda.

Formation of the Alliance drew praise from senior officials representing the Government of Tanzania at the meeting. Speaking during the event, Dr Julius Ningu, the Director for Environment at the Vice Presidents' Office, noted that climate change had affected every sector in the country in different ways. Various actors have therefore been involved with different initiatives that could now be harmonized for greater impact by the new alliance.

"There has been little sharing and learning across the different initiatives on climate adaptation in the country" he said. "I therefore commend the PACCA project for initiating the formation of a Learning Alliance to encourage communication and dialog among policy actors and implementers of climate change adaption initiatives to enhance cooperation in the policy implementation process."

Based on the ensuing discussions at the workshop, some of the immediate challenges and gaps the Alliance is expected to address include lack of financial resources, human capacity, institutions, and policies to adequately address climate change issues. General lack of awareness as well as weak knowledge generation and sharing were also cited. Four working groups have been formed under the Alliance to address these challenges.

PACCA is a project of the Climate Change Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) of the CGIAR, led by IITA and being implemented in both Uganda and Tanzania. In Tanzania, the project is coordinated by the Environmental Management Unit (EMU) of the Ministry of Agriculture Food Security and Cooperatives (MAFC) as well as the Vice President's Office. It is being implemented in collaboration with the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), Bioversity International, and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF).

Career Opportunities

- Agricultural Economist - Foresight Modeler
- Project Manager - Soybean technology scaling project in Malawi
- Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist - Soybean technology scaling project in Malawi
- Geospatial analyst - Maize-based systems
- Research Associate
- Postdoctoral Fellow - Banana Plant Pathologist
- Postdoctoral Fellow - Enset Transformation
- Station Accountant - Cameroon

More details about these positions available online at http://www.iita.org/careers

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2. Turned off air conditioners; and
3. Switched off all lights.