



## SLU and IITA explore areas of collaboration

IITA and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet (SLU) are exploring diverse areas of research for possible implementation as part of the SLU Global program.

Launched last year when IITA Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga, visited the university and signed a five-year memorandum of cooperation, SLU Global aims to strengthen the university's commitment, through a scientific approach, to issues related to improved agricultural productivity, food security, and sustainable livelihoods in low-income countries.

Scientists from both institutions are keen to harness synergies and contribute to sustainable development under this new initiative.

Welcoming the delegation to IITA in Ibadan, Dr Sanginga reiterated the Institute's commitment to research for development, stressing that IITA's research aims to be relevant to the development challenges facing tropical nations.

He said that the systems approach adopted by IITA allows the Institute to research across the value chain and into areas such as natural resource management and capacity development.

Deputy Director General (Research) Ylva Hillbur made a presentation highlighting new research areas, including the CGIAR Research Program on Integrated Systems for the Humid Tropics (Humidtropics)

which IITA is leading. She spoke on the decentralization of IITA into hubs, which allows the Institute to work efficiently across the various regions in sub-Saharan Africa and even beyond.

Founded in 1977, SLU offers a number of educational programs, including veterinary medicine, forestry, and landscape architecture. The university is heavy on research – about two-thirds of the annual turnover goes to research, and close to two-thirds of the staff are researchers. SLU participates in a number of national and international academic networks within the life

science field.

Carolyn Glynn, Associate Director, Agricultural Sciences for Global Development, SLU said the aim of the visit was to identify areas of joint collaboration that would attract funding and foster global sustainable development. Prof. Håkan Marstorp, theme leader for "Efficiency of farming systems" at SLU Global, initiated the workshop.

The SLU delegation said they were "impressed with the research, infrastructure, and human capital at IITA".



*The SLU delegation with IITA management and staff who participated in the discussions to explore closer research collaboration.*

## RTB gender workshop held in IITA, Ibadan

A workshop geared towards understanding the importance and addressing the gender issue in projects, activities, and strategies of the CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB) was conducted at IITA, Nigeria this week. Organized by

IITA's Capacity Development Office, the workshop provided a platform for RTB researchers and projects and their partners to share experiences and lessons on gender, discuss key issues, understand challenges, explore good practices, and identify key action areas.

About 20 participants from partner organizations, IITA, and other CGIAR centers attended the workshop, which included a field exercise that provided participants with practical experience on working with farmers' groups in addressing gender concerns.



*The gender workshop aims to contribute to enhancing the quality of project design and implementation and to achieve the desired impact or result in RTB research and projects.*

# Tanzania launches its chapter of AfDB-funded project to boost cassava and rice production

Key stakeholders in the cassava and rice subsector in Tanzania met in Zanzibar, 4-5 April, to officially launch and plan for the implementation of the “Multinational-CGIAR Support to Agricultural Research for Development of Strategic Crops in Africa (SARD-SC)” project funded by the Africa Development Bank (AfDB) in the country.

The project was officially launched by Dr Khalid S. Mohammed, Principal Secretary, Ministry of State, Second Vice President Office, Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, who assured the participants of his government’s support to the initiative which he said was in line with his government’s efforts to develop the agriculture sector, one of the key drivers of the country’s economic growth.

“I would like to assure you that the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania and Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar will provide all the necessary support to ensure the success of this project to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers of cassava and rice,” he informed the project team and partners.

Speaking at the launch, IITA Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga, said that this partnership-project holds great potential to improve the livelihood of smallholders through improving the value chains of the four priority crops in Africa--cassava, maize, rice, and wheat.

Dr Sanginga further noted that the project was in line with IITA’s research strategy that was moving away from focusing only on increasing production to working along the value chains to ensure that farming becomes a profitable business and that people

are able to make money from research products.

The Tanzania country representative of the AfricaRice Center, which is leading the rice component of the project, Dr Paul Kiepe, said that the project will support rice production in the country by promoting good farming agronomic practices and mechanization--the two main challenges of rice production.

The project’s cassava work will be carried out in Zanzibar, the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT) area and Kigoma, while that of rice will be carried out in Mwanza/Shinyanga area.

The District Commissioner for Kakonko District in Kigoma region, one of the project sites, Toima Kiroya, welcomed the initiative, noting that cassava had been earmarked as one of

the cash crops to replace tobacco in the district. Tobacco production, he noted, degrades the environment, affects honey production, and is hazardous to human health, and farmers need an alternative cash crop.

Chris Akem, SARD-SC project coordinator, also attended the launch, with Dr Marie Octavie Yomeni, who is leading the cassava component; Dr Adebayo Abass who is coordinating the project in Tanzania; and Dr Nzola Mahungu, who heads the project in DRC.

Project partners from relevant government ministries, agricultural research institutes, Sokoine University of Agriculture, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and farmers’ organizations also took part in the launch and in planning for the project’s implementation.



Participants to the country launch of the African Development Bank-funded SARD-SC project in Tanzania.

## IITA Western Africa seminar series features global crop expert



Dr Gary Atlin of Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation talks about how to increase genetic gain in staple crops.

IITA Western Africa hosted Dr Gary Atlin, a Senior Program Officer with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation during its monthly seminar series.

Dr Atlin made a presentation on the topic “Increasing rates of genetic gain in staple crops in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.”

The seminar, which came at a time when stakeholders were rounding off the annual planning of the Drought Tolerant Maize for Africa (DTMA) project, attracted a large audience with an impressive participation.

Dr Atlin highlighted the importance of improving genetic gain in research programs.

He explained that genetic gain could be on several fronts: It could be yield under optimal conditions, yield under stress (drought, flooding, heat, low fertility), improvement in nutritional

quality, or disease resistance.

According to him, the emphasis on genetic gain stems from the fact that steady, long-term improvement from effective breeding programs transforms agriculture.

Dr Atlin noted that the rate of genetic gain, though hard to measure directly, is the key metrics of breeding program effectiveness.

Dr Robert Asiedu, IITA R4D Director for the Western Africa Hub thanked Dr Atlin for taking time out to share some thoughts with researchers.

He said that some of the points raised from the presentation would be considered by researchers in their research programs for the future.

The IITA Western Africa seminar series is being facilitated by Ms Sylvia Oyinlola, the regional administrator for the hub.

# Hailstorm severely damages crop experiments in Zambia

A freak hailstorm caused extensive damage to crop trials being conducted by IITA and the Zambia Agriculture Research Institute (ZARI) at the latter's Msekera Research Station in Chipata in the Northern Province of Zambia. The crop experiments are part of the IITA-coordinated Zambia Feed-the-Future Research and Development Program of which ZARI is the national partner.

According to Mathias Zulu, ZARI Senior Agricultural Research Officer based at the station, the hailstorm happened on 18 March at about 8:00 pm, lasting for about 40 to 45 minutes.

"The hailstones were about the size of a tennis ball. You could just imagine the destruction that objects of that size falling from the sky could cause. Even the windscreens of some of our office vehicles that were parked in the open were cracked by the hailstones," Mr Zulu recounted.

"Most of our crop trials on cassava, sweet potato, maize, cowpea, soybean, and groundnut were either severely damaged or entirely destroyed. We could still probably salvage the cassava and sweet potato since they are underground, but the rest of the grain

and legume experiments are simply destroyed. There was nothing we could do but to cut them down, and that's an entire season's worth of data lost," he glumly added.

"Unfortunately as it may have been, there was some silver lining to this hailstorm. For one, we are thankful that the hailstorm happened in the evening when there were not too many people at the station; otherwise we could have had more than just crop casualties. Secondly, and quite curiously, the event was confined within the area of the station and no farmers' fields outside of our perimeter were damaged."

"And from a scientific point of view, this actually presents us with a rare opportunity to study how and how fast crops rebound from such a natural calamity. For example, only 3 weeks after the hailstorm, we could already see leaflets sprouting from the stems of our damaged cassava and sweet potato trials," he explained.

Just barely a week before the hailstorm, on 12 March, IITA DDG Dr Ylva Hillbur was at the station along with IITA-Zambia and project staff for a monitoring visit, during which she also met with ZARI researchers to discuss how the two institutions could further improve research partnerships.



Left: Cassava experimental plot being viewed by DDG Hillbur during her visit to ZARI's Msekera Station on 12 March. Right: The same cassava plot after the hailstorm on 18 March.

## Announcements

### Norman Borlaug Award for Field Research and Application

The World Food Prize Foundation is seeking nominations for the Norman Borlaug Award for Field Research and Application.

This \$10,000 award recognizes an individual under the age of 40 who has emulated the traits demonstrated by Dr Borlaug as a young scientist working in the field in the struggle to eliminate global hunger. It was presented for the first time at the 2012 World Food Prize Borlaug Dialogue international symposium to Dr Aditi Mukherji, of the International Water Management Institute, for her field work and data analysis that led to improved groundwater policies benefitting farmers in India.

The deadline for submitting nominations is on 30 June. For details on the criteria and nomination procedure for this prestigious award go to [www.worldfoodprize.org/borlaugfieldaward](http://www.worldfoodprize.org/borlaugfieldaward).

The 2013 Borlaug Field Award will be presented on 16 October at the new World Food Prize Hall of Laureates as part of the Borlaug Dialogue. This event will inaugurate the year-long Centennial Observance of Dr Borlaug's birth. One of the ways in which the organizers plan to celebrate

his passionate mentoring of young field scientists and extension workers is by bringing special attention to the recipients of the Borlaug Field Award.

### New IITA partner in Korea

Mr Yang-Ho Lee has been appointed as the new Administrator of the Rural Development Administration (RDA) effective 18 March, announced the Director of RDA's International Technology Cooperation Center, Dr Sae Jung Suh.

RDA is the national agency mandated to conduct agricultural research and extension services as well as to collaborate with international organizations and foreign research institutes. In collaborating with international research organizations, it aims to contribute to global development through sustainable food production, high-tech agriculture, and vibrant rural areas. RDA has been an IITA partner for many years.

Partnership with the Korean government has been viewed as being "of paramount importance under the present challenges facing the international agricultural environment..." and the collaboration is expected to "contribute much to the development of agricultural science and technology, and ultimately to the welfare of farmers around the globe."

## Passage

Mr Adeniran Festus Adesoye, 51, passed away on 7 April, at the University

College Hospital (UCH) Ibadan, where he was receiving treatment after a vehicular accident which occurred the day before.

Mr Adeniran hailed from Ile-Ogbo, Osun State, Nigeria. Until his death, he was Research Technician I in the Nematology Unit. He was a diligent, amiable, and hardworking staff during his life time.

DG Nteranya Sanginga expresses his condolence to the family of the deceased, on behalf of the Institute.



## Help conserve electricity!

Before leaving your workplace at the end of the day, 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.