



Liberia, AfricaRice & IITA sign agreement for West Africa Agriculture Productivity Project

An agreement valued at over US\$ 2.2 million has been signed between Liberia's Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice) and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). AfricaRice will receive US\$ 1,540,112.00 to steer the rice aspect of the West Africa Agriculture Productivity Program (WAAPP) Project, while IITA will get US\$ 751,133.13 for the cassava breeding component. The funds are being drawn from the US\$ 14 million provided by the World Bank for the implementation of WAAPP in Liberia.

In the agreement, AfricaRice will support activities that lead to the intensification and commercialization of locally grown rice, mostly through participatory methods and processes and in inclusive partnerships and networks to guide project implementation, monitoring, and impact assessment. The process will also include the improvement of rice research, training, and information discrimination, with respect to rice-based production systems and value-chain development in Liberia by enhancing research and disseminating appropriate technologies. The passing on of skills and discipline to young scientists and trainees and the provision of technical expertise by experienced foreign scientists to the Central Agriculture Research Institute (CARI) are all part of AfricaRice's scope of assignment.

On the other hand, IITA will be responsible for the research planning and designing of the cassava strategy and workplan for CARI, the release of varietal and technology releases and transfers of cassava products consistent with international standards, the building of teams that will conduct research using appropriate methods, as well as passing on skills and discipline to young scientists in the area of cassava breeding.

Signing on behalf of AfricaRice at the Ministry's main office on Somalia Drive

on Friday, Dr Inoussa Akintayo, the head of the Rice Development Program expressed relief that a date to put pen to paper had finally come. He pointed out that it had taken so long and precious time was passing by while the agreement lingered in the bureaucratic corners of the funders. Dr Akintayo assured the Ministry of his organization's commitment to the development of rice in Liberia, as demonstrated by the other agriculture projects being implemented by AfricaRice in the country. He also called on the Ministry to be committed in their support to the activities being carried out at the country's only Agriculture Research Institute in Bong County.

For his part, IITA's Country Representative Dr Amare Tegbaru who labeled the occasion as historic, reassured the Ministry of IITA's commitment to move forward in performing its duties and responsibilities under the agreement. According to him, since cassava is a staple food in Liberia, IITA will provide all the technical and other forms of support spelled out in the agreement to assist the country to increase cassava production and ensure food security.

Dr Florence A. Chenoweth, Minister of Agriculture who signed on behalf of the Ministry, noted that the two partners are no strangers to the MOA, and there should be no question in their potential and capacity to deliver. The seasoned agriculture scientist pointed



(Top) Dr Amare Tegbaru, IITA Country Representative to Liberia, exchanging signed documents with Dr Florence A. Chenoweth, Liberia's Minister of Agriculture; (Bottom) Minister Chenoweth and Dr Inoussa Akintayo, AfricaRice Representative, exchanging signed documents.

out that more was required from the partners since the Ministry is expected to deliver tangible results in the area of agricultural development. Minister Chenoweth said the issue of poverty reduction in Liberia heavily hinged on agreements of this kind.

WAAPP is a regional program funded by the World Bank, and currently being implemented in 13 West African countries. The Liberia project mainly focused on increasing productivity of rice and cassava, while adding value, as well as the provision of new technologies along the value chain.

Yam strategy for Nigeria underway

Researchers and partners met in IITA-Ibadan on Monday to draw a strategy for yam for Nigeria.

The strategy aims to put yam on the national agenda as the oil-rich nation embarks on efforts to transform its agricultural sector.

IITA convened the meeting and participants were drawn from other national research institutes such as the Federal Institute of Industrial Research, Oshodi (FIIRO), Lagos; the agricultural development programs (ADPs), the private sector and other key stakeholders/actors in the yam value chain.

Addressing participants at the workshop, Dr Robert Asiedu, IITA Director for West Africa reechoed the importance of yam not only in Nigeria, but also globally.

He said the need to draw a strategy for

yam is driven by the desire to harness the exceptional qualities of the crop which are yet to be fully exploited for economic growth and food security.

"The strategy will guide us in ensuring synergies and focus on real priorities as we work with partners to unlock the potential of yams" he said.

With about 68 percent of global output coming from Nigeria, yam plays a key role in the country and the West Africa region as a whole, contributing to protein and dietary calorie intake. The crop is also used for cultural events including marriages and annual festivals.

However, yam production is declining in some traditional producing areas due to declining soil fertility, increasing pest pressures and the high cost of labor, Dr Asiedu said, a reason why a roadmap for the crop is imperative.

So far, Ghana has developed its strategy, paving the way for increased export and other industrial uses for the crop.

Dr Antonio Lopez, IITA Yam Breeder, said having a strategy for yam that would dovetail into the national agricultural policy of the government would bring several benefits to the country, including increase in economic development.

Participants commended IITA for convening the participatory meeting and bringing yam to the front burner. According to them the strategy would enhance more coordinated efforts towards addressing the constraints to increased yam production in the country, and would give farmers the opportunity to better their incomes and livelihoods.

The participatory meeting in Ibadan was co-facilitated by Ms Sylvia Oyinlola, IITA Regional Administrator for West Africa.



Participants of the Nigeria Yam Strategy Workshop held at IITA-Ibadan on 8 July 2013.

IITA Clinic upgrades facilities to better tackle health and medical challenges



Some of the IITA Clinic's new facilities.

The upgrade of the IITA Clinic in Ibadan has repositioned the unit for better service delivery and to effectively tackle new and emerging health challenges of staff and their families.

Speaking to a cross section of staff and their spouses, and IITA Women's Group who visited to have a glimpse of the clinic, Dr Samson Adeleke, Head of IITA Clinic, noted that the clinic would use the new equipment to offer staff better medical care.

He praised the goodwill of DG Sanginga who took special interest to upgrade the clinic and commended the management for setting aside resources for the upgrade.

The IITA Clinic is considered crucial to the institute as it provides quick medical services to staff and their families and responds to risks from research operations.

Visitors at the clinic were ecstatic for the renovation and upgrade.

Some of the interventions in the clinic include a theatre with state-of-the-art theatre bed and theatre lights for minor surgical procedures as well as the furnishing of standard wards for males and females, Diathermy machine, Oxygen concentrator,

Rotofix Centrifuge, Mindray Haematology Analyser, Reflotron Plus Chemistry Analyzer, Pulse oximeter, Haemoglobin Electrophoresis for genotype testing, Ultrasound machine, among others.

Got a story to share for the Bulletin? Please email your stories and photos to Andrea Gros (a.gros@cgiar.org), Jeffrey T. Oliver (o.jeffrey@cgiar.org), Godwin Atser (g.atser@cgiar.org), Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org), or Katherine Lopez (k.lopez@cgiar.org).

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