



RTB-Cassava NextGen project organizes gender research workshop in preparation for Phase II

Partners in the [NEXTGEN Cassava](#) Project and the CRP on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB) were in Ibadan on 29-31 January to review the work already done in gender research and to discuss preliminary findings on gender roles in cassava production and selection of cassava variety preferences. These were based on results from pilot sites of 8 villages in Southwest and Southeast Nigeria.

Among the participants were IITA scientists from Ibadan and Cameroon and partners from Ghana, the National Root Crops Research Institute, Umudike, and Bowen University. The lessons learned will enable those implementing the Project to note what has worked well and what still needs to be improved, especially as they map implementation strategies for Phase II in 2015.

Dr Hale Tufan from Cornell University, Project Manager for the NEXTGEN Cassava Project, said during the workshop that Phase II would focus on balancing and promoting those variety characteristics most desirable and appealing to cassava farmers, men, women and the youth, as well as to processors.



Project partners observe different traits on cassava varieties.

“...Before we go back to the field,” she said, “we need to refine what has already been done and map strategies for including more stakeholders, such as breeders and food technicians. Phase II will be more field based and will center on deploying desirable traits in cassava varieties to farmers.” A trip to the field was also organized for the workshop participants.

Among other objectives, Phase II of the Project aims to:

- Develop a checklist to note the cassava varieties actually being cultivated on farmers’ fields.
- Describe more in-depth the morphological characteristics of these varieties on farmers’ fields.
- Involve food scientists and technicians in describing the products that can be derived from the varieties.
- Identify the ideal traits that farmers and processors prefer in cassava to promote breeding efforts to solve identified problems.



Dr Elizabeth Parkes (middle) describes the yellow root cassava to workshop participants.



Dr Hale Tufan speaks about the results from the preliminary studies.



Dr Chiedozi Egesi of NRCRI Umudike (left) and Dr Peter Kulakow examine a cassava root in the field.

IITA Kalambo hosts RTB-BXW, Cluster RBM workshop

Research and development partners met on 27 and 28 January in Kalambo to share and exchange research results and development experiences in controlling Banana Xanthomonas Wilt (BXW) in South Kivu, DR Congo. The meeting was jointly organized by IITA and Bioversity International and had 35 participants representing 12 organizations from the private and public sectors including local and international NGOs, national agricultural research systems, extension system, and farmers' associations. Dr Chris Okafor, [Humidtropics](#) coordinator for East and Central Africa, welcomed participants, highlighted the impact of BXW on livelihoods, and urged concerted and collective action from stakeholders to combat the disease.



Workshop participants learn about single diseased stem removal technique for combating BXW on Mrs Elena Mwajimbi's farm in Katana village.

Honorable Adolphine Muley, Provincial Minister for Agriculture in South Kivu, gave the opening remarks and highlighted the [efforts](#) made by the government in managing BXW. She said that overcoming BXW was a matter of great concern in DR Congo and South Kivu in particular as the disease had rendered banana producers vulnerable and unable to make a living and send their children to school. She thanked IITA for providing modern infrastructure and facilities/equipment for diagnostics, technology development, and capacity building to overcome agricultural challenges.

Research and development partners made presentations on efforts to control

BXW including the innovative technology on single diseased stem removal, vulnerability assessment, and coping strategies. The meeting allowed time for interaction and discussion on research products, the impact pathway, and indicators for results-based management (RBM). Four pathways were identified for South Kivu: appropriate models for refinement and scaling, national strategies and measures to limit/control the spread of BXW, production and use of healthy planting material, and improved agronomic practices.

Participants then went on a field visit to Mrs Elena Mwajimbi's banana farm in Katana village that was devastated by

BXW and that recovered with the use of the single diseased stem removal technique. Mrs Elena now harvests more than 30 banana bunches each month. This provides enough food and raw material for processing into beer for sale to cater for household needs, children's school fees, and medical care.

The meeting provided a forum for stakeholders to discuss and agree on a common approach to communicate and scale out technologies to control BXW in South Kivu.

Closing remarks were given by Mr Matata Ngowa, advisor to South Kivu's Provincial Minister for Agriculture.

Farmers in DR Congo meet and share their perceptions

Over 150 farmers and partners including representatives from local authorities, health centers, schools, and church organizations in Walungu district of DR Congo met on 29 January, to share their perceptions and discuss needs as part of IITA's project with Food for the Hungry International DR Congo. It was also an occasion to discuss major challenges and opportunities in achieving the project's objectives.

In the meeting, farmers indicated that due to the high population density, continuous cropping on small-sized farms had resulted in highly degraded soils leading to serious food insecurity, while cultivated crop varieties remain susceptible to diseases and are low yielding.



Participants in a group photo.

In addition, the introduction of livestock has caused conflict between pastoralists and crop producers as the grazing area is extremely limited with little or no fodder available to stabilize livestock. To address these production constraints, IITA is promoting integrated crop management practices, regenerating genetic material, enhancing seed systems with postharvest value addition, and capacity development.

Farmers indicated their needs which included improved communication, transportation and access to markets, and credit. They also noted the need for quality planting materials and soil fertility restoration; collective decision-making in project planning; and that projects should be designed to attract more young people and women.



Farmers brainstorm about the project and how it can address their needs.

DR Congo Cassava Team activities give rise to an agroprocessors' network

Several training provided by the Support to Agricultural Research for Development of Strategic Crops (SARD-SC) project for different actors in the cassava value chain in the South Kivu Province of DR Congo have led to the establishment of RATSK (Reseau d'Agro Transformateurs du Sud-Kivu), a network of cassava agroprocessors. This network is made up of individuals from different local and national organizations who have actively participated in the training organized by SARD-SC on the new technologies developed to produce and transform the cassava crop into many marketable products.

RATSK was established in 2014 to promote agriculture in DR Congo and is led by the

Association Cooperative en Synergie Femme. Mrs Felicite Kabonwa Naweza, the coordinator of the Association and RATSK, said the network was established to raise farmers' awareness by grouping and training them to improve their methods of cultivating cassava and helping them to create avenues to sell their finished products.

RATSK has been building its own capacity by adopting the newly introduced technologies from SARD-SC. Naweza said members of the network had begun to grasp the opportunities these technologies offered. "As a result," she said, "they are committed to spreading these new technologies in their local areas to develop

other farmers' capacity to increase their cassava yield. They are also encouraging many who had abandoned agriculture and those who did not have any interest in it to take up agribusiness in North and South Kivu provinces." This initiative also provides employment opportunities for the unemployed youth and others.

When RATSK became operational, only three organizations agreed to be members. But due to the remarkable achievements of the network in such a short time, such as the introduction of different recipes, the production and sale of many new products made from cassava, such as high quality cassava flour, and soy milk, many new members joined the organization within a few years. Participation of the network in several agricultural shows and fairs piqued the interest of many people who eventually became members. The network now has over 300 members from 10 local organizations (ISANDA, ACOSYF, GRADEM, FONIMIS, PAMED, IPAPEL, AGIR, IPLCI, CEDC, and 8em CEPAC). Each organization has between 30 and 35 members.

The activities of RATSK are not limited to South Kivu but extend to North Kivu Province of DR Congo. The network has already conducted training in many regions of DR Congo, such as IDJWI, Walungu, Mwenga, Uvira, Kalehe, Shabunda, Fizi, and Kabare. Two thousand households have already been trained to disseminate the new technologies.



RATSK members display different products from cassava.

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).