



AfDB and researchers launch \$63M initiative to lift Africans out of poverty

The African Development Bank (AfDB) and researchers last week launched the US\$63.24 million AfDB-funded initiative that aims to raise agricultural productivity and also lift millions of Africans out of poverty.

The 5-year, multi-CGIAR center initiative known as "Support to Agricultural Research for Development of Strategic Crops in Africa" (SARD-SC) is a research, science, and technology development initiative aimed at enhancing the productivity and income derived from cassava, maize, rice, and wheat—four of the six commodities that African Heads of States, through the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program, have defined as strategic crops for Africa.

During the launch of the initiative in

Ibadan, Nigeria, IITA Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga, called on researchers to deliver 'quick impact' to justify the investments in research.

"We should begin to demonstrate impact in the next two years using available technologies already developed. Everything in SARD-SC is about impact and not only writing scientific papers," Dr Sanginga said.

The SARD-SC Project comes at an opportune time when food security and nutrition are high on the national agenda of the AfDB Regional Member Countries (RMCs), as rising food prices push millions of people into extreme hunger and poverty. The SARD-SC allows—for the first time ever in a single project—a continental coverage of the food security challenges in Africa.

"What we intend to achieve goes beyond food security. We are looking at boosting incomes and reducing poverty in Africa," said Mr Ousmane Dore, Resident Representative, Nigeria Field Office of the AfDB, who launched the event on behalf of AfDB's President, Dr Donald Kaberuka.

"Apart from supporting research with broad sectoral and/or economic-wide objectives, the social impact of this intervention is significant. This is underscored by the all-inclusive nature of the project beneficiaries: farmers' groups, youth, private sector, policy makers, rural entrepreneurs, national agricultural research and extension systems (NARES), community based organizations, and nongovernmental organizations," he explained.

The project, which will run until 2016, will be co-implemented by three Africa-based CGIAR centers: IITA, Africa Rice Center, and the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas. IITA is also the Executing Agency of the project.

Another CGIAR center—the International Food Policy Research Institute, will support the other three centers.

Dr Kenton Dashiell, Deputy Director General (Partnerships & Capacity Development), said the distinctive nature of the project offered an opportunity to improve food security in Africa.

He also called on partners and researchers to work towards building a new and better future for Africa using the project as a tool.



Woman vendor selling dried cassava, one of the strategic commodity crops for Africa

Delegation from Cameroon visits IITA-Burundi

A delegation from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Cameroon visited IITA-Burundi between 15 and 21 November. The team was composed of Mr Abdou Namba, the director for agriculture; Mr Emmanuel Obate, coordinator for plantain program; Mr Daniel Akono, supervisor, plantain nursery operations; and Mrs Victorine Fornkwa of the tissue culture unit, IITA-Cameroon. The objective was to visit private tissue culture laboratories and share experiences on banana and plantain seed systems supply chain in the Great Lakes region via the concept of tissue culture mother gardens. Emmanuel Njukwe, associate scientist in Burundi, said that the concept of mother gardens was initiated for further propagation of healthy suckers because tissue culture

planting material cannot withstand dry weather conditions and require extra care and management for successful field establishment. Healthy suckers can be readily distributed and handled by farmers and bridges the gap between the farmer and the supply chain providers of planting material.

This approach is expected to promote the plantain subsector revival program (PRFP) "Programme de Relance de la Filière Plantain" of MINADER in Cameroon to rapidly produce and disseminate healthy plantain planting material. The team visited PHYTOLABU and AGROBIOTEC tissue culture laboratories in Bujumbura and the farmers' association in Muyinga and Cibitoke provinces with tissue culture mother gardens from where suckers are



Field visit at Muyinga, with banana plants established from macropropagated plantlets

obtained for macropropagation and false decapitation techniques.

The delegation urged for continuous collaboration and technical backstopping.

IITA strengthens links with FOFIFA and Madagascar

IITA scientists James Legg and Danny Coyne recently visited Dr Hery Andriamazaoro, Head of the Vegetable Department with the national research organization FOFIFA in Madagascar to initiate activities and strengthen links. FOFIFA is a partner in the GIZ-supported project 'Local Focus: safe and effective pest and crop management strategies to strengthen the vegetable value chain in the humid tropics'.

IITA and FOFIFA are beginning project activities, initially focusing on the accurate diagnosis of pests and diseases affecting tomatoes and pepper. Further work will involve screening new germplasm for resistance, and the development of improved pest and disease management strategies.

Tomatoes are a key vegetable crop in Madagascar, produced largely in areas surrounding the capital city—Antananarivo. The current visit opens the door to establishing further activities in this area of research, which are additionally aimed at developing stronger and improved ties with FOFIFA.

Madagascar has been identified as a future benchmark for the CGIAR Research Program on Integrated Systems for the Humid Tropics (Humidtropics). As a

consequence, there is strong interest to build linkages between IITA and R4D partners in Madagascar, not least since such links are currently very limited. During the visit, Drs Coyne and Legg were warmly welcomed by the Director General of FOFIFA, Dr Aime Lala Razafinjara, who is also the Chair, Board of Directors, Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA). Dr Razafinjara welcomed stronger ties with IITA, and especially with respect to assisting in the development of capacity in strategic areas of agricultural research.

The IITA team also visited D. Rafalimanana Hialitiana at the University of Antananarivo, with a view to exploring the potential for involving students in collaborative research activities. This initiative was also warmly received, and all parties (IITA, FOFIFA, and the University of Antananarivo) recognized significant potential for both short- and long-term partnerships based around capacity building.

The visit served to highlight the need to maintain the momentum of this progress and encourage more active engagement in efforts to identify and seek funds for shared research interests with partners



Scientist James Legg with farmer.

in Madagascar. All parties stand to gain greatly from such new endeavors, with excellent opportunities for these initiatives to impact favorably on food security and poverty reduction.

IITA participates in global workshop on measuring agric greenhouse gases

IITA scientists participated in a Global Research Alliance (GRA) workshop, jointly hosted by the governments of

Ghana, Canada, France, the Netherlands, and New Zealand, on measurement and inventory of agricultural greenhouse gases in African farming systems, 19-21 November in Accra, Ghana. Forty participants representing governments, national and international research institutes (e.g., CCAFS, ICRAF, IRRI, FARA), universities, and invited experts attended the workshop.

The workshop aimed to improve understanding of the challenges in different farming systems and to document critical data, knowledge, and capability gaps that need to be addressed to enhance the countries' ability to find ways to improve productivity and resilience of agriculture under climate change in a sustainable manner.

Jim Gockowski and Sander Muilerman represented IITA and did a presentation on how tree crop and especially cocoa farming systems have been the major

driver of deforestation in the Upper Guinean Rainforest and on how sustainable intensification and improved land tenure arrangements can prevent further deforestation while improving both yield and income levels.

During the workshop, participants identified a series of outcomes and next steps for continuing discussions on agricultural measurement and mitigation opportunities for Africa. Proposed activities related to (1) the development of a scientific network to improve emission factors and activity data, (2) improving links between science and policy to transfer knowledge and develop feedback loops between science and governments, industry, and the private sector, and (3) training and capacity building. African participants were encouraged to look into how their countries could join the Global Research Alliance to advance research and collaboration in this area.



Jim Gockowski (left) and Sander Muilerman (right) at the Global Research Alliance workshop

Oyo Commissioner of Police says "IITA is important to the world"

State police chief, Mr Mbu J. Mbu, recently paid a courtesy visit to IITA and described the Institute as an important asset not just to Africa but also the whole world.

The police chief also commended the work being done by IITA. He restated the police command's commitment to providing the Center with adequate security.

Mr Mbu was received by the Deputy Director General (Corporate), Mr Kwame Akuffo-Akoto. Also in attendance were IITA DG Nteranya Sanginga, Toyin Oke, David Oluwadare, and Dr Gbassey Tarawali.

Mr Akuffo-Akoto thanked the police command for their support to the Institute. The police commissioner also did a tour of the campus.



L to R: Deputy Director General for Corporate Services Kwame Akuffo-Akoto, Police Commissioner Mbu Mbu, and DG Nteranya Sanginga.