



## DG Sanginga: Agriculture has come to stay in Africa



L-R: IITA Director General N. Sanginga, FARA Executive Director Akinbamijo, FARA Board of Trustees member, Dr A. Traoré, and Dr K. Atta-Krah, Director of Humidtropics at the FARA meeting in IITA Ibadan.

IITA DG Sanginga, in brief remarks at the week-long meeting organized by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), said agriculture has come to stay in Africa and that it would help reduce the rate of unemployment in the continent.

The meeting focused on leadership training and corporate governance and the induction of FARA board members;

Dr Sanginga's assertion on the role and importance of agriculture was reechoed by different speakers including the Executive Governor of Oyo State, Senator Abiola Ajimobi, who was represented by his Deputy, Otunba Moses Alake Adeyemo.

While commending the partnership between FARA and IITA, the Governor described agriculture as the key to wealth

creation, a veritable tool to strengthening democracy, and hope for lifting the continent out of poverty.

To transform the sector, Senator Ajimobi said Africans needed to grow and patronize their own food rather than rely on importation. Also critical is the need to tackle the poor image of farmers and the illusion that farmers are always poor.

He also stressed the need for youths to take up agriculture as a profession and promised that his government would increase funding for agriculture and research extension to rekindle farmers' interest.

The high point of the event which was held in IITA Ibadan was the induction of Dr Charity Kruger as the chairperson of the

## IITA announces 2014 Talent Development Competitive Grant

As part of efforts to develop the capacity of staff, IITA Management has again allocated a sum of \$40,000 as a Talent Development Competitive Grant for staff training this year. The grant will be awarded to NRS who want to gain advanced knowledge and improve their skills in their areas of specialization to enhance their productivity. A maximum of \$4000 will be awarded to each successful member of staff after competitive selection.

Interested staff members are requested to fill out and submit the application form (found on IITA Intranet) adhering strictly to the program rules. The deadline for submission of all applications is 28 March 2014. As previously done, the scheme will be implemented in close collaboration with HRS, and the names of successful awardees announced after the selection committee has completed its work.

FARA Board of Trustees.

In her speech, Dr Kruger thanked the Governor and expressed delight for honoring FARA's invitation.

In attendance were Dr Kenton Dashiell (DDG Partnership and Capacity Development); Mr Kwame Akuffo-Akoto (DDG Corporate Services); and Dr Yemi Akinbamijo (FARA Executive Director); and other board members of FARA and IITA staff.

Facilitators for the training were Dr Joshua A. Okumbe, Anne Nugo, and Rev Geoffrey Njenga all from the Centre for Corporate Governance, Kenya.



Oyo Deputy Governor, Moses Adeyemo (7th from left) with members of FARA Board and IITA DG Sanginga (6th from left) in Ibadan.

Got a story to share? Please email it with photos and captions to Andrea Gros (a.gros@cgiar.org), Katherine Lopez (k.lopez@cgiar.org), Jeffrey T. Oliver (j.oliver@cgiar.org), Godwin Atser (g.atser@cgiar.org), or Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org).

## IITA Scientist Emeritus donates forest land to IITA

On Friday, 7 February, Dr Peter Neuenschwander, donated over 14 hectares of forest land to IITA to be conserved and used for research purposes as it relates to the Institute's projects on natural resource management, indigenous plant protection and as investigations on soil degradation processes. Dr Neuenschwander, Scientist Emeritus of IITA, had been, over the years, gradually acquiring forest land in Drabo Gbo, an area located in the Abomey Calavi region of the Republic of Benin. The forest also serves as a sanctuary for the red-bellied monkey—*Cercopithecus erythrogaster erythrogaster*—considered by many conservationists as a vulnerable species. As a contribution to natural resource and wildlife conservation, Dr Neuenschwander, decided to entrust the Institute with the forest, assured that it will be preserved and at the same time provide a platform for natural resource management research at IITA.

The handing-over/document-signing ceremony, which was well attended by representatives of relevant ministries, government agencies, and NGO based in Bénin, started off with a welcome address by the IITA Country Representative in Bénin, Dr Manuele Tamo, a brief presentation on the forest, and all activities carried out therein by Dr Peter Neuenschwander.



L-R: Peter Neuenschwander, Kwame Akuffo-Akoto, Sylvia Oyinlola, and Manuele Tamo during the signing of the forest-transfer agreement.

The DDG-CS, Mr Kwame Akuffo-Akoto representing the DG, IITA, thanked Dr Neuenschwander for his donation and promised the inhabitants of Drabo Gbo that IITA will be a good guardian of the forest as well as a good neighbor. He enjoined all present to continue to research on sustainable natural resource usage and management. Attendees were entertained to traditional Fon dances and masquerades.

Invited guests to the event were full of praises for Dr Neuenschwander, “yovo” as he is called by the villagers, for his kind gesture and IITA's commitment to the preservation of the Benin's natural

resources. Prof Leopold Fakambi, first Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture in Bénin and the person behind the establishment of IITA-Bénin in 1985, expressed his joy that IITA's continued presence in Bénin has been a collaborative and successful partnership, by accepting to hold the forest in trust for future generations of Bénin's citizens, IITA is keeping up with its promise of improving the lives of Africans. The event ended with a vote of thanks by Sylvia Oyinlola, Regional Administrator for the Western Africa Hub, who represented the Director for IITA West Africa, Dr Robert Asiedu.

## IITA Women's Group supports community school



Mrs Charlotte Sanginga in a handshake with the Principal of Sasa Community Grammar School, Adelabu (right), accompanied by Mrs Dashiell and Boukar.

The IITA Women's Group has constructed a fence for the Sasa Community Grammar School as part of efforts to enhance a conducive learning environment for children in that community. They also donated water tanks that could be used to store water for the students. These activities cost the

group about N160,000 (about \$1000).

On Tuesday, the IITA women led by Charlotte Sanginga, Gloria Dashiell, and Yata Boukar visited the project site to inspect their project completion and to also restate their commitment to supporting the school, which had been adopted by the SOS Children's Village.

The School's Principal, O.B. Adelabu, in her

speech, thanked the IITA Women's Group for assisting the less privileged and prayed to God to continue to strengthen the group.

Mrs Sanginga, in her response, thanked the principal for her support towards the completion of the project and promised that the group would continue to assist

the school. She also thanked the SOS Children's Village for making the project a success, and Yata Boukar and Gloria Dashiell for helping the group in monitoring the project in their leisure time. She stressed that it was due to their support that the group was able to achieve the project.

To recognize the efforts of the Women's Group, the school's authority has put a plaque on the wall as a mark of commemoration. SOS Children's Village is a worldwide organization that enables children to have a loving home with parents or carers and with the help of many donors and coworkers, the organization has grown to help children all over the world.

Guests at the event included: Gabriel Okeowo, Gabriel Adajie, Ayorinde Elegbe, Gabriel Omikunle, Gabriel Ajunwon, Bukola Adekunle, Victoria Festus, Arisekola Yusuf, and Bosede Jaiyeola (all from the SOS Children's Village).

# Project implementers and partners of Africa RISING West Africa Project convene in Mali to map out year 3 plans



Annual review and planning event participants in Bamako February 2014. Photo: Agathe Diamo, ICRISAT, Mali.

On 3 and 4 February 2014, over 50 people which included Africa RISING researchers, managers, partners, peers from other regions, donor, and the press, gathered in AZALAI Grand Hotel - Bamako Branch, for the Africa RISING West Africa Project annual review and planning meeting.

The forum provided a good opportunity to discuss the way forward for the project which kicked off 2 years ago.

The welcome remarks were given by Jerry Glover, Senior Research Advisor, USAID; Robert Asiedu, IITA Director for West Africa; and meeting host Farid Waliyar, Regional Director of ICRISAT.

Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon, Africa RISING Coordinator West Africa, gave a brief update on the Africa RISING program from 2011 to date. In her presentation, she stressed the goal of the program which is to create pathways for smallholder farm households to move out of hunger and poverty through sustainable intensification of their farming systems.

The meeting aimed to share success stories and partners' experiences, discuss challenges and proffer solutions, assess previous outputs, and review 2014 draft work plans and work packages to ensure that

the project achieves its goals. Other issues discussed were monitoring and evaluation, link between Africa RISING and CGIAR research programs (Humidtropics, Dryland Systems), and the different communication tools that will help share, update, and disseminate information to partners and other audiences.

Various group meetings were convened, including the meetings of team leaders of the work packages, and the Project Steering Committee to strengthen areas that needed to be addressed.

In an interview, conducted by local media personnel on the first day of the meeting with a representative of the donors (USAID), Jerry Glover, he said, "The project now becomes more complete and complex gradually, and it requires additional funding. We plan to increase funding from USAID Washington but also want to attract funding from the USAID mission here in Bamako. The project involves two countries, Ghana and Mali, for about \$3.2 million per year."

Farid Waliyar, the Africa RISING team leader in Mali said "The project aims to integrate a set of systems-level agricultural activities; during the past years; these systems integrations have improved

agricultural productivity of several farmers in southern Mali. The project has also contributed to capacity building through platforms and farmers associations".

At the end of the event Jerry Glover urged all partners to give their best in ensuring that the goals and objectives of the project are achieved.



Dr. Robert Asiedu, IITA Director for West Africa, making his welcome speech on the first day of the annual review and planning meeting in Bamako, Mali.



Jerry Glover, USAID Senior Research Advisor, and Farid Waliyar, ICRISAT Regional Director, responding to questions from the Press. Photo: Faith Afolabi, IITA Ibadan.

## Come celebrate the "King of Crops"!

The Yam Improvement for Income and Food Security in West Africa (YIIFSWA) project of IITA is organizing a "Yam Day" on 22 February to promote yam, considered the "king of crops". An exhibition will be held to promote key advancements made through research for development on the crop. YIIFSWA and IITA will showcase agricultural technologies and innovations designed to increase yam production and to boost smallholder farmers' incomes, ensuring food security and economic development.