IITA Research to Nourish Africa
CGIAR
No. 2275 11–15 May 2015

THE BULLETIN

Feed the Future Malawi Improved Seed Systems and Technologies project launched

The Feed the Future Malawi Improved Seed Systems and Technologies project which is being implemented by a consortium of four CGIAR centers was launched, alongside other USAID-funded projects, in a colorful ceremony held on 6 May in Liwonde, Machinga district.

In attendance during the event were senior officials from Government, the private sector, representatives of beneficiary communities, implementing partners, USAID/Malawi, and the guest of honor, the US Ambassador to Malawi, Virginia Palmer.

In her speech, Ambassador Palmer said the launching of the projects represent a core pillar of the US Government's plans for advancing sustainable economic growth in Malawi over the next five years.

She acknowledged the problems Malawi is currently facing, such as shortage of improved seeds, malnutrition, widespread deforestation, and dwindling fish reserves.

The projects have been designed to bring solutions to these challenges and make the country food secure.

"Despite the scale of the challenge, the conditions necessary for meaningful progress are clearly taking shape…" she said. "All the projects we are launching today were designed to reinforce one another. This integration is the hallmark of USAID development projects in Malawi and may soon become a model for development worldwide."

The Government of Malawi said the event came at an opportune time as it was working to address issues of sustainable crop production and food security in the face of persistent droughts and floods.

"I applaud the US Government, through the USAID, for supporting the multiplication and distribution of high quality seeds, not just for the traditional maize crop but also for those usually neglected: soybean, pigeon pea, groundnut, and orange fleshed sweetpotato," said Dr Allan Chiyambekeza, the Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development.

Dr Chiyembekeza bemoaned the shortage of certified seeds on the market despite the fact that high yielding, disease resistant, and drought-tolerant varieties had been developed and were available at research centers.

Ambassador Virginia Palmer making her speech during the official launch of the project.

"The challenge is getting the seeds to the farmers," he said. "Consequently, the use of improved seeds, especially for the non-traditional crops, is still very low among our smallholder farmers."

Speaking with the media afterwards Dr Arega Alene, IITA Malawi Country Representative, said that IITA was using the public-private partnership approach (PPP) to ensure that smallholder farmers in the target districts gained access to improved seeds of high yielding and early maturing varieties of soybean such as Tikolore (TGx 1740-2F)."

Dr Alene explained, "We have a seed road map which we are putting into action through the PPP approach and this represents a departure from the way we used to do things in the past. We have brought on board the private sector and community-based organizations and farmers' groups in an effort to enhance the dissemination and adoption of these improved technologies." He added, "This project will allow us to reach a large number of farmers with improved seeds and agronomical practices. This will help us to bridge the yield gap, increase farm incomes, and move people out of poverty." The project consists of four CGIAR centers: IITA, ICRISAT, CIP, and CIMMYT. The main areas of focus for the consortium in the seven target districts in central and southern Malawi are (1) Biological control of aflatoxin in maize and groundnut; (2) Multiplication and distribution of seeds of improved varieties of maize, groundnut, pigeon pea, soybean, and sweetpotato; and (3) Demonstration of improved varieties and complementary agronomic practices to create technology awareness, demand, and adoption by farmers.

Dr Arega Alene making a presentation to USAID and government officials on IITA's work in Malawi prior to the project launch in Liwonde.

SARD-SC Mid-Term Review records key emerging shifts in countries' agricultural policies

The just-concluded Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the SARD-SC project conducted by the African Development Bank (AfDB) has highlighted some successes in terms of implementation and in the development of the value chains of the four mandate crops–rice, wheat, cassava, and maize.

Dr Chrys Akem, SARD-SC Project coordinator, addressing participants during the medium-term review.

Already impacts in the agricultural policies of some of Bank's Regional Member Countries (RMCs) have been observed within two years of project implementation. Key emerging shifts noted in policy as a result of SARD-SC intervention include youth empowerment. Also prototype farming tools from Asia are now being fabricated locally by small to medium-scale entrepreneurs and made available for women to reduce drudgery in rice value chains in Africa. Wheat has been included as a priority in the Nigerian Government's Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and domestic production is targeted as a solution to the ever-growing dependence on imports and for ensuring food security. Governments are changing some policies to boost wheat production in their countries and reduce the importation of wheat grain or flour. In Nigeria, the Government has put a ban on wheat importation. In Sudan, the Government is adopting the innovation platform (IP) approach for its national agriculture extension system.

In addition, the IP approach in delivery of new technologies such as multi-stress, nutrient-dense, and mycotoxin-free maize varieties has proved successful in the beneficiary countries. Systematic information dissemination and experiential learning and sharing among project partners are beginning to enhance the quality of interaction, team work, and technical and financial reporting.

Dr Yahaya Sabo, the independent consultant, said: "Over the period 2012-2014, the implementation of the SARD-SC project was generally satisfactory; both project outcomes and outputs are rated at least satisfactory. The project has demonstrated the potentials of contributing to the food and nutrition security and poverty reduction objectives in the Bank's low- income RMCs."

Progress has also been made in the generation of agricultural technologies and innovations as well as capacity strengthening of stakeholders across the value chains. Despite the progress made, there are still serious challenges in the dissemination and adoption of agricultural technologies and innovations across the value chains. The project complied strictly with procurement systems and procedures. Level of accomplishment for all procurements averaged 70% which indicates a satisfactory achievement and major procurements under the project through the force account and other methods have been accomplished and proved successful.

However, the implementation of the project was deemed slower than anticipated due to the late take-up of project activities, delayed funding from the Bank, and poor commitment of implementing partners in the benefiting countries. Project coordination has been functioning effectively. "More effort, understanding, and commitment are required from the project implementation units (AfricaRice, ICARDA, and IITA) and IITA as the executing agency needs to be proactive in ensuring the needed oversight function to the project," added Dr Sabo.

Dr Sabo said that there was a need for a comprehensive review of collaboration with partner institutions. "Technical and financial backstopping to NARS was weak across the value chains except for wheat. The project should improve on backstopping to ensure judicious use of project funds."

The SARD-SC MTR by the AfDB ended with the Stakeholders Consultation Workshop held on 13 and 14 May, and attended by over 100 participants from all the implementing countries of the project. The MTR assesses the outcomes achieved in project implementation and draws lessons for its continuation to 2017. The MTR started on 4 May and ended on 14 May. The AfDB officials had visited many project sites and attended field days to assess the performance of the SARD-SC project.

MTR participants pose for a group photo.

PACCA supports review of second draft of Tanzania's National Environment Policy

Participants in groups reviewing the second draft environmental policy at the workshop..

The Policy Action for Climate Change Action (PACCA), in collaboration with the Tanzania Vice President's Office convened the second meeting of a multisectoral task force of representatives from government, non-government organizations, and research and academic institutions to review the second draft of a new National Environment Policy (NEP) for Tanzania.

The four-day workshop held in Morogoro, Tanzania, was a follow-up of an earlier meeting where stakeholders evaluated the revised NEP using possible future scenarios to ensure that the policy adequately addresses future climate uncertainties. Participants came up with recommendations to improve the policy further.

The recommendations were shared at the meeting with the committee tasked with developing the revised policy and incorporating them into the draft.

Speaking at the workshop, Mr Faraja Ngerageza, the country coordinator of the NEP review process, lauded the initiative saying that it had made a significant improvement to the policy review process.

"There are some new emerging environment issues that need to be covered in the policy, such as electrical and electronic waste, invasive alien species, and biofuel," he said. "Developing scenarios and using them to evaluate the policy has helped in identifying these policy gaps and providing strategic directions to the NEP review process."

This was echoed by Mr Patrick T. Kihenzile, a representative of the Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF), a consulting firm that is charged with the task of reviewing the NEP. He said that testing the policy against different scenarios was vital in ensuring that it was responsive to the many environmental issues at national and international levels. The technical review team formed four working groups to incorporate the scenario-generated comments in the different sections of the second draft of NEP which will be used to come up with a third draft.

"The comments developed here will be incorporated into the policy which will be forwarded to the Vice President's office, and advanced for consultative workshops at zonal levels," Mr Ngerageza said. "The zonal perspective will provide an opportunity for stakeholders at the grassroots to review the NEP policy; their comments will provide a stepping stone towards making efficient and strategic policies and implementation."

Speaking during the closing session, Dr Edidah Ampaire, the Project Coordinator from IITA-Uganda, appreciated the joint efforts made by the Government, institutions, and NGOs in developing a climate resilient policy. She further expressed her sincere gratitude for the coordination done by the Vice President's office and the commitment and dedication of the participants in the NEP review process.

Attending the meeting were stakeholders from the Vice President's Office, University of Dar es Salaam, and Ministries of Water, Trade, Energy, Health, Transport, President's Office, and Agriculture. Also present were representatives from National Environmental Management Committee (NEMC), ESRF and IITA, among others.

PACCA is led by IITA and is part of the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) Flagship Program on Policies and Institutions on Climate-Resilient Food.

Africa Editor Jonathan Rosenthal (middle) from The Economist Group and a delegation from Nestle visit IITA Ibadan

WASHC-IITA, Nigerian higher institutions, explore opportunities for scaling up ISFM technologies

Land degradation and the low fertility status of most tropical soils are quickly becoming a catastrophe for African farmers and resulting in very low returns on their investments.

"To raise agricultural productivity and achieve food security in West Africa it is imperative to enhance the soil-crop response to fertilizer applications," Dr Jeroen Huising, Project Leader of the West Africa Soil Health Consortia (WASHC) project, said.

The WASHC project is working to develop and deploy technologies which intend to control the problem of land degradation and declining soil fertility by establishing soil research links with relevant stakeholders and institutions in West Africa.

Recently, the project enlisted two higher institutions in Nigeria in a partnership that will ensure that the technologies developed to combat issues of soil fertility are readily available for farmers everywhere. This collaborative relationship was initiated on 5 and 6 May during a courtesy visit to the institutions by Dr Huising and Mr Samuel Mesele, WASHC Research Support Officer.

Specifically, the University of Ibadan (UI) Department of Agronomy, and Institute of Agricultural Research & Training Ibadan, will assist project implementers to reach its objectives of facilitating Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) research and uptake, strengthening Soil Health Consortia technical capacity, ISFM data, and information management.

"The Agronomy Department has the capacity to tackle, along with IITA, the problem of soil fertility through soil quality monitoring and synthesis of ISFM data," said Prof E.A. Akinrinde, representative of the Head, Agronomy Department at UI. He continued, "We are ready to participate in the WASHC and Soil Research for Development (SR_4D) Platform program of activities."

Dr E.J. Huising (WASHC Coordinator) (center), Mr S.A. Mesele (WASHC Research Support Officer), and Prof J.A. Adediran (Director of IAR&T) (right), explore opportunities for partnerships.

Prof J.A Adediran, IAR&T Director, said he was happy to have a focused discussion with IITA on the issue of soil resource management.

"We are interested in having institute-based collaborations such as this rather than with individuals, which has proven to be less effective" he said. "To show our commitment, IAR&T will also participate in the WASHC training workshop on management and analyses of ISFM data to be held at IITA, Ibadan, 25–29 May."

Dr Huising highlighted the importance and objectives of a regional platform for soil research in West and Central Africa to be called 'Soil Health Platform' or 'Soil Research for Development (SR_4D) Platform'. It will be launched in October 2015 by IITA and partners. The platform will address challenges for attaining food security and economic growth in Africa posed by declining soil fertility and very limited growth rates in the production of agricultural commodities and staple crops.

WASHC team led by Dr Jeroen Huising (fourth from right) and lecturers at the Department of Agronomy, University of Ibadan.

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).

AgResults inducts 15 implementers to promote aflasafe

Agriculture in most developing countries is characterized by small-scale farming that relies heavily on the public rather than the private sector for delivery of available technologies. However, the complexities of the challenges faced by smallholder farmers call for novel approaches in forms that they can appreciate.

For the second time in the last three years, the AgResults project has successfully demonstrated that private sector involvement in innovation delivery can greatly influence the ways farmers are reached with available technologies, thereby making it easier for resource-poor farmers to benefit from and have access to the technology and knowledge needed for production.

Since its inception in 2012, the project has been working with private-sector experts known as implementers to disburse aflasafe™. This biocontrol product was developed by IITA and partners and proven to reduce aflatoxin contamination in maize and groundnut by 80 to 99%, starting from the field and extending to the warehouse. For now, the implementers are by far the primary means by which small-scale farmers get access to the biocontrol product.

Specifically, each implementer is expected to cater for at least 300 smallholder farmers annually. But besides ensuring that farmers use aflasafe™ implementers also facilitate access to technical knowledge and inputs that farmers require to boost their productivity and, essentially, move them from being subsistence to become commercial producers.

So far, nine such experts have worked with farmers cultivating maize in Kano, Kaduna, Zamfara, Oyo, and Ekiti States, providing them with aflasafe™, monitoring their farm management practices, and linking them to market outlets to sell their aflatoxin-reduced maize. Additionally, there is an important interaction between implementers and established markets whereby the aflatoxin-reduced maize produced by the farmers they oversee is aggregated and sold.

By this method, these implementers successfully assisted more than 4,000 smallholder farmers in the last two years to produce grain with aflatoxin contents far below the limits set by US (20 ppb) and Europe (4 ppb), thereby getting premium prices for their crops.

On 5-7 May, 15 more implementers were trained and inducted at IITA, Ibadan, to expand the network of farmers within Nigeria who will benefit from using the biocontrol product. With these new entrants, farmers in Edo, Katsina, Kogi, Ogun, Jigawa, and Enugu States as well as the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja will join their counterparts in using aflasafe™ and thus produce good quality grain for better health and financial benefits.

As part of the induction and training, the implementers benefited from knowledge on aflatoxin management, maize agronomy practices, postharvest management, and agribusiness. The training sessions were conducted by IITA scientists.

The implementer functions in various capacities. To the AgResults aflasafe project, he is a business person, but to the farmers, the implementer provides agricultural support services, adding value to the smallholder farmers' work along all the value chains of their produce. Debo Akande, AgResults Pilot Manager, explains that implementers can exploit these multiple functions to make profits while at the same time helping farmers to produce better quality grain.

"Selling grain is an important source of income for most farmers. But it can also be for you as implementers… To ensure you succeed as implementers, AgResults is ready to expose and link you to all available resources in cultivating and marketing aflatoxin-reduced maize," Debo said during the induction.

The AgResults project is supported with funds from Australia/AUSAID, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Canada/ Finance Canada, United Kingdom/DFID, United States/USAID through Deloitte Consulting LLC on behalf of the World Bank.

Debo Akande (leftmost), Joseph Atehnkeng (rightmost), and some members of the IITA Youth Agripreneurs join the implementers for a photo shoot during the induction ceremony.

Training of trainers of local NGOs on seed yam production using minisett technique

In preparation for the participation of new local NGOs in YIIFSWA project activities, a training of trainers' workshop was organized to harmonize the interventions on clean seed yam production using the minisett technique. Twenty participants from Nigeria and Ghana took part in the workshop, 5 to 7 May at IITA Ibadan.

The NGOs are Justice, Development and Peace Movement (JDPM) (Oyo State), Arimatheas Foundation for Development (Nasarawa and Benue States), Umuasua-Isuikwuato Smallholder Oil Palm Farmers' Cooperative Society Ltd (Abia, Enugu, and Akwa Ibom States), in Nigeria; and Ecumenical Association for Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development (Atebubu) and Sustenance Ago Ventures & SKY-3 Farms (Kintampo) in Ghana. These NGOs were enlisted into the program to have "more boots on the ground" to effectively facilitate the dissemination and adoption of improved technology for sustainable productivity and growth of smallholder farmers in Ghana and Nigeria.

The participants were trained on the minisett technique for seed yam production. Other methods of seed yam propagation such as vine cuttings, aeroponics, tissue culture, and the bioreactor were also discussed.

Dr Norbert Maroya addressing participants from Ghana and Nigeria.

The course included a detailed step by step demonstration on seed yam production using the minisett technique, and discussed the development of business plans for seed yam production with an emphasis on maximizing efficient use of resources to get the most out of the investment. Each NGO is expected to train at least 1000 yam farmers on clean seed yam production through demonstrations in various YIIFSWA locations.

NGOs have a huge role in improving the access of smallholder farmers to quality seed tubers through seed yam production and dissemination of good agricultural practices. Mrs Etokeren Ubong Emmanso, a participant, said that the training on the minisett technique would be a big help to her community. Although farmers were her primary target, she would also train secondary school children in seed yam production using the technique.

At the workshop, the gender gap notoriously associated with yam production was evident: out of 20 participants only three were women. Women have less access to resources such as information and extension services although they play a critical role in trading and marketing crops such as yam.

IITA to host AWARD Women's Leadership Program in June 2015

IITA is collaborating with African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) in hosting the AWARD Women's Leadership and Management course to be held in IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria in June.

IITA warmly invites participants from partner organizations, colleagues, and other interested parties. Reservation deadline is 5 June 2015. Click http://bit.ly/1Cd7lz8 to view details on how to apply.

Adegboyega Pelemo shows participants the minisett technique.

IITA training alumnus to support cassava postharvest upgrade

Nigeria-based local fabricator Niji Lukas has agreed in principle to support the upgrade of IITA's Cassava Postharvest Unit.

This commitment follows a recent meeting and tour of facilities on 28 April. The tour was facilitated by Dr Alfred Dixon, Head of Partnerships Coordination Office at IITA. Dr Dixon invited Mr Kolawole Adeniji, Managing Director of Niji Lukas, to IITA to engage the private sector in research and seek their support.

L-R: Kolawole Adeniji, Thierno Diallo, and Alfred Dixon comparing notes at Cassava Processing Unit.

Mr Kolawole said he was excited by the leadership of Dr Nteranya Sanginga, IITA Director General, and the rapid transformation of IITA; he said would like to support the Institute's efforts towards the postharvest utilization of crops.

"It's great how the Institute has changed. My contribution to this transformation is to support the Postharvest Unit," he said.

Niji Lukas is among the successful private sector operators in Nigeria who are cultivating and processing cassava on a large scale. His firm processes cassava into gari, fufu, and high quality cassava flour. Last year, he received requests for cassava-based products from Europe, the United States, and the UK. He has a semi-automated gari processing unit and has been involved in building cassava flash dryers. Mr Kolawole had his early training at IITA and is willing to share notes with the Institute to enable some of the prototype machines to become functional.

"I am excited to work with Dr Dixon again… I will be willing to share our technology with IITA and to see that the Cassava Processing Unit becomes a viable entity and achieves the mandate of training and technology transfer," he said.

Dr Dixon said he was happy with Mr Kolawole's pledge to support the Institute.

"With this commitment and support, we will have a positive impact on the lives of resource-poor farmers who depend on cassava for their livelihood," Dr Dixon said.

Dr Dixon has been charged to turn around the Cassava Postharvest Unit and make it a selling point for IITA's postharvest work on cassava and other mandate crops.

ICRISAT DG assures IITA Abuja Station of collaboration

As part of efforts to expand the activities of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), and create a vibrant network of partners to scale out improved agricultural technologies in Nigeria, Dr David Bergvinson, ICRISAT DG, visited the IITA Abuja station on 26 April to discuss key areas of potential collaboration that could help bridge this gap.

Suggested areas in this partnership deal include the use of IITA Abuja as a demonstration site for ICRISAT's mandate crops and innovations; promoting farmers' use of aflasafe™, the biocontrol product used against aflatoxins in groundnut production; multiplication of sorghum for aflasafe™ production; and the integrated control of Striga in sorghum, millet, and maize.

Dr Bergvinson was accompanied by Dr Hakeem Ajeigbe, ICRISAT Country Representative; Dr Ramadjita Tabo, Director, West and Central Africa; Dr Babu Motaji, Groundnut breeder; and Dr Ijantiku Ignatius Angarawai, Sorghum breeder. "I am impressed by the facilities I see here," said Dr Bergvinson; "I am already looking forward to the good results that we can collectively achieve from working closely with IITA's scientists and products…ICRISAT will definitely keep in touch with the IITA Directorate." As a start, ICRISAT will participate in the next Participatory Analysis for Community Action meeting in Senegal to discuss further the avenues to be explored in promoting aflasafe™ as a remedy for aflatoxin contamination on farmers' groundnut fields.

Dr Gbassey Tarawali takes Dr Bergvinson (right) around the facilities of the IITA-Abuja station.

23 complete IITA cassava utilization training in Zambia

Twenty-three village-level cassava processors, farmers, and those engaged in small-scale and cottage food industries, have completed a training-of-trainers (ToT) workshop on cassava utilization and processing held 13-17 April at the National Institute for Scientific and Industrial Research (NISIR) in Lusaka, Zambia. The training was sponsored by the cassava component of the IITA-implemented Support to Agricultural Research for Development of Strategic Crops (SARD-SC) program in collaboration with the Scaling-Up Nutrition project of IITA/Development Aid from People to People (DAPP).

The cassava utilization ToT aimed to empower local cassava processors, especially women, with the necessary knowledge and skills for preparing primary and secondary products from cassava roots, as well as to improve the nutritional quality of traditional cassava-based products in Zambia. In addition to nutrition and safety, the training focused on the production of high-quality cassava flour (HQCF) and its use in producing various kinds of bread and confectionary, preparing nutrient-rich dishes using cassava leaves and cassava *nshima* (a local staple), making traditional and non-traditional cassava products.

"When they go back to their communities, our trainees are expected to share what they have learned and train other people as well. This way we will multiply and maximize the benefits to be gained from utilizing cassava," said Dr Emmanuel Alamu, IITA Food Technologist based in Lusaka.

Cassava! Training participants and facilitators celebrate the completion of the cassava utilization training in Lusaka.

"This training becomes even more relevant as the effects of climate change on agriculture and food supply in Zambia become more emphasized," added Prof Francis Tembo, NISIR Director, during the closing ceremony of the week-long workshop. "Cassava is one of Africa's primary staple crops and it is probably the hardiest as well. It could withstand bouts of drought and still produce a substantial harvest."

"In a changing climate, droughts are becoming more severe and long lasting. In Zambia, which is primarily a monocrop (maize)-based country, this could have severe repercussions on our food security. We need to have alternatives to maize, and cassava is an excellent alternative and addition to the national food basket," he added.

Prof Tembo also called on the media present at the closing ceremony to spread the word about the various uses and products derived from cassava showcased by the trainees. "Let every Zambian know that cassava is more than just boiled roots. Cassava, if properly processed, has a myriad uses that could provide people not only with food but also with incomes and livelihoods."

The training workshop was facilitated by Ms Ronke Popoola, research associate with the Crop Utilization Laboratory of IITA-Ibadan; Mr Terence Chibwe, country program supervisor for SARD-SC cassava, based at IITA-Zambia; Mr Chisenga Shadrac of NISIR; and Dr Alamu.

Events

Training Workshop on Management and Analyses of ISFM data, IITA Ibadan Nigeria, 25–29 May
Participants: Representatives of the five Soil Health Consortia from Ghana, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria

AfricaYam Inaugural Workshop, Mensvic Hotel, Accra, Ghana, 26–29 May

Tropentag 2015, Humboldt Universitaet zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany, 17–19 September

First World Congress on Root and Tuber Crops, Nanning, Guangxi province, southern China, 5–10 October

The 7th International Conference of the African Soil Science Society Announcement of Special Program: Soil Fertility Management for Sustainable Intensification in West and Central Africa, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 25 October – 1 November

Africa RISING ESA Project Steering Committee Meeting, Mangochi, Malawi, 16 July

Africa RISING ESA Project Annual Review and Planning Meeting, Mangochi, Malawi, 14–16 July

Annual Review and Planning Meeting - Africa RISING, NAFAKA and TUBORESHA CHAKULA Scaling Project, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, 8–10 July

Africa RISING Program Coordination Team retreat, Washington D.C., USA, 2–5 June