



USAID, IITA, Africa RISING go on joint project monitoring visit

A joint delegation from USAID, IITA, and Africa RISING recently completed a tour of project sites of the Zambia Feed-the-Future Research and Development Program in Chipata in Zambia. The monitoring visit was held on 9-11 March in the eastern province of Zambia.

The group was composed of Dr Jerry Glover, Agricultural Research Advisor with the Bureau of Food Security (BFS) of USAID-Washington and Activity Manager for Africa RISING; Dr Tracy Powel, also of USAID-BFS, Washington; Dr Harry Ngoma, Head of USAID's Zambia Mission and Activity Manager for Zambia FtF R&D Program; Dr Ylva Hillbur, IITA Deputy Director General R4D; Dr Mateete Bekunda of IITA-Tanzania and Africa RISING-ESA Chief Scientist; Dr Belyou Haile of IFPRI-Washington and Africa RISING M&E Specialist; Dr Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon of IITA-Nigeria and Coordinator of Africa RISING's ESA and WA projects; Dr David Chikoye, IITA R4D Director for Southern Africa; and Dr Naomi Kamanga, Coordinator of the Zambia FtF R&D Program. They were accompanied by project staff and local partners.

The delegation visited sites of the Zambia FtF R&D Program's six component projects but particularly focusing on the Sustainable Intensification of Maize-Legume Systems in the Eastern Province of Zambia (SIMLEZA) project, which is being led by IITA in collaboration with CIMMYT.

Dr Glover indicated that USAID was looking at how SIMLEZA and Africa RISING could better complement each other, given that both projects



The joint USAID, Africa RISING, IITA delegation listening to a presentation by a woman-farmer beneficiary of SIMLEZA during the field visit to a project site at Chanje Camp, Chipata.

are being funded by USAID and both deal with maize-legume systems. "We are looking at how Africa RISING and SIMLEZA could be streamlined. With what we have seen in the field, I think this complementation is more than possible."

"We just need to hammer out the specifics, but I think working together will be more efficient, beneficial, and practical for both projects in the long run," he added.

"I am very impressed by the work being done by SIMLEZA here in Chipata, most especially by the farmers. Their understanding of the technical aspects and principles of the project is truly astounding," he emphasized, referring to the group's interactions with the farmers in the sites.

"It is always good to be out in the field and get a feel of what's really happening on the ground," added Dr Hillbur. "These visits put into context what you read in reports, and one gets to appreciate more the hard work being done by those in the field," she emphasized.

This is Dr Hillbur's first visit to the Eastern Province of Zambia since she became IITA's DDG for R4D about eight months ago. "It's really nice to

be here at this time of the year, to see all this greenery and to meet these farmers. This would probably become an annual event for me," she said.

"The Zambia FtF R&D Program represents, on a small scale, what we intend to do under the CGIAR Research Programs – that of the different CGIAR Centers working together harmoniously under one umbrella project. This is not an easy task to accomplish, which is why I am commending the various Centers' staff working on this project and the program's coordinating office for a job well done," she concluded.

Aside from the on-farm project activities, the group also visited trial sites being carried out at the Msekera Research Station of ZARI, the project's main NARS partner.

In the previous week (4-5 March), the Africa RISING team also visited project sites in Dedza and Ntcheu, Malawi under the Sustainable Intensification of Cereal-based Farming Systems in East and Southern Africa project led by IITA. The team was accompanied by a group of project implementers and officials from the University of Michigan and Bunda College, project collaborators in Malawi.



The group interacting with some farmer beneficiaries.

IITA and AATF agree to strengthen collaboration to improve livelihoods

IITA and the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) have agreed to explore new opportunities and strengthen ties with a view to improving the livelihoods of farmers.

The Executive Director of AATF, Dr Denis Kyetere and IITA Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga reaffirmed this position during a courtesy visit of the former to IITA headquarters in Ibadan this week.

Dr Sanginga reassured Dr Kyetere

that IITA was ready to put more effort in collaborating with AATF to benefit farmers.

The IITA and AATF partnership is not new. Both organizations are currently working on projects aimed at controlling aflatoxins, Striga, *Maruca vitrata* in cowpea, and banana improvement, to mention a few.

Dr Kyetere said the challenge in Africa is huge, stressing that "there is a lot to work together for." He added

that AATF is willing to more than ever before join forces with IITA to make a difference in people's lives.

Dr Kyetere who was accompanied by Drs Jacob Mignouna, Prince Addae, and Alhaji Tejan-Cole later made a tour of the IITA campus in Ibadan.

The AATF is a not-for-profit organization that facilitates and promotes public/private partnerships for the access and delivery of appropriate agricultural technologies for sustainable use by smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa through innovative partnerships and effective stewardship along the entire value chain.

Among the top management that accompanied Dr Sanginga to receive the AATF team were Mr Kwame Akuffo-Akoto, Deputy Director General (Corporate Services) and Dr Kenton Dashiell, Deputy Director General, Partnerships and Capacity Development. Other members of staff were Katherine Lopez, Head of Communication; Toyin Oke, Manager, Resource Mobilization, Protocol and External Liaison, Dr Joseph Atehnkeng, IITA Scientist; Dr Christian Fatokun, Cowpea Breeder; Delphine Amah, Regional Banana Breeder; Dr Abebe Menkir, Maize Breeder; Kayode Awobajo, Project Resources Manager; and Godwin Atser, Communication Officer (West & Central Africa).



IITA and AATF staff have been collaborating on many research and development projects for many years. AATF officials recently visited IITA Headquarters in Nigeria.

IITA participates in First Feed Africa Project Exhibition

The maiden exhibition of the First Feed Africa Project was held on 4 and 5 March at the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library, Abeokuta.

The agricultural exhibition which was organized by the Centre for Human Security, Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library was conceived as a forum to showcase best practices in fostering food security in Africa and Nigeria. The exhibition brought together national, regional and international agricultural firms, research institutions, private agribusinesses and local farmer groups.

The IITA booth attracted much attention and high turnout, featuring research products, product samples, improved varieties, and posters reflecting ground-breaking research work on the six IITA mandate crops, crop utilization work, and aflasafe.

Visitors to the IITA booth expressed a lot of interest about the display. Saudia Mohammed, a French woman from Comoro Island, working at Union des Femmes Africaine, expressed wonder at seeing the large cassava roots on exhibit and the vitamin A cassava, among others. She stressed the importance of the government's involvement in promoting cassava transformation.

Another visitor, Mrs A.M. Okonkwo, from the National Gallery of Art,



International Trials Manager Peter Ilubbe of the IITA Cassava Unit (in printed shirt above) explains the many different products that can be made from cassava.

Abeokuta, commented on the cassava and wheat flour products from the Crop Utilization and I-House stands: "These products are a departure from what we used to have. This is a big improvement and if the federal government can enhance and magnify this program, it will alleviate poverty and hunger in Nigeria,"



YIIFSWA round table talks on yam seed system establishment in Nigeria

Seed, the paramount objective of the YIIFSWA project was discussed in a three-day meeting held 12 to 14 March at IITA. The current seed production practice in West Africa is self supply of seed yams which is disadvantageous in many ways to the farmer's production of yam. A farmer's knowledge may be significant in certain areas, but limited in others, for instance seed-transmitted diseases. YIIFSWA is thus promoting the establishment of a formal seed system for the benefit of yam producers in Nigeria.

Present at the workshop were the implementing scientists and social scientists from Farmer Organizations Support Centre in Africa of the Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (FOSCA/AGRA), Natural Resources Institute (NRI/UK), National Centre for Genetic Resource and Biotechnology (NACGRAB), National Agricultural Seed Council (NASC), National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI) Umudike, Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary (MSHR), and IITA.

Dr Norbert Maroya welcomed the project partners and cited their accomplishments for the second year activities. He highlighted the importance of seed yam to the project stating that "seed yam was the foremost agenda of the project," hence the need for detailed plans for production of different categories of seed and precise coordination of seed production by the project partners.

In his opening remarks, Dr Robert Asiedu reaffirmed IITA position as project management with strong

interests in developing partnerships that lead to achieving goals. He stated that 'IITA's management is eager to see projects such as YIIFSWA bring about relief to poor yam farmers in Africa'. He told the team to expect difficulties and not shy away from them, indicating that difficulties illuminate loopholes and show solutions and achievements.

During the meeting the team has been discussing in working groups and plenary the sites of common interest and seed yam by partners. The activities to be carried out in Nigeria also included dissemination of findings of the value chain study and farmer organizations, services providers and gender scoping study, quality declared seed production, demonstration plots and technology development.

After much deliberation on the year's activities, the implementing members agreed on the following:

- To prioritize common localities of project activities in 6 states (Nasarawa, Federal Capital Territory, Benue, Oyo, Kogi, and Edo)
- To produce up to 14,500 different categories (breeder and foundation) of seed yam tubers of improved varieties
- To produce at least 300,000 quality declared seed foundation and commercial certified seed yam of landraces

The project manager also informed participants that officials from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will go on monitoring tours of project sites in Ghana and Nigeria from 19 April to 3 May.

Strengthening diplomatic relations

To foster diplomatic ties between IITA and DR Congo, Ms Toyin Oke, Manager, Resource Mobilization, Protocol and External Liaison (RMPPEL) and Dr Gbassey Tarawali, who represents the Director General and Deputy Director General (Partnerships and Capacity Development) in Abuja, on 26 February, paid a courtesy visit to the Embassy of DRC in the Nigerian capital. They were accompanied by Mrs Charlotte Sanginga.

The visit was part of advocacy and also aimed at improving relations between the country and IITA, especially in the area of issuance of visa to IITA staff and the overall support of DRC to IITA's research work.

At the embassy, they were received by the Ambassador, Her Excellency Marie-Louise Olengha Kombe, and the First Counselor.

The Ambassador promised to support IITA in its mission to improve food security in Africa. She also promised to visit IITA in the near future to see the Institute's research activities/facilities.

Besides the visit at the DRC Embassy, the group also visited the IITA Abuja station.

Mrs Sanginga later met with the only two IITA spouses, who live on the farm, Mrs Olajumoke Olaniyan and Mrs Olanike Akinola – a professional caterer and wife of Oyedele Akinola. Mrs Sanginga encouraged them to support the work of their husbands in IITA. She said she was happy to meet them as she earlier met with their counterpart groups at IITA headquarters.



YIIFSWA project implementers' t-shirts say it all: Yam it up! and Keep on yamming! YIIFSWA stands for Yam Improvement for Income and Food Security for West Africa.