



## IFDC and IITA to expand R&D collaboration

The International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC) and IITA have agreed to work closer particularly in the areas of soil nutrient enhancement, value chain development, and integrated farming systems management, initially on cassava and, later on, other crops.

The consensus was reached during a dialogue on 16 August between a team from IFDC and IITA management and scientists. The IFDC team consisted of Dr Scott Wallace, IFDC-Nigeria Country Representative and Cassava Plus Roll-out Coordinator; Mr Han van de Meerendonk, Nigeria Project Leader for Cassava Plus; Dr Herman Odhiambo, Lead Agronomist, Cassava Plus; and Dr Chris Okonkwo, former IITA staff. The IFDC contingent visited IITA in Ibadan to hold talks on future partnership activities in Nigeria and possibly other areas in sub-Saharan Africa.

Cassava Plus is implemented by IFDC in Nigeria to commercialize cassava production by linking farmers to value-added markets.

Dr Nteranya Sanginga, IITA Director General, said "Although IFDC and IITA have partnered in some activities before, these have mostly been 'spotty' and need to be harmonized and expanded."

"Cassava in Nigeria could be the take-off point, but these initiatives could also include other crops in other countries where both IITA and IFDC operate," he added.



*IFDC and IITA staff pose for a group photo*

Dr Wallace explained that although IFDC is strong in extension and social development, its research arm needs further strengthening.

"And this is where IITA can really help us. We believe that this cooperation will mutually benefit both organizations, and that the ultimate beneficiaries will be the farmers," he emphasized.

"For example, the proper fertilizer blend for cassava or best farming practices to optimize the effect of this blend—these are areas that IITA could initially work with us in," added Dr Odhiambo.

"Other areas such as understanding the broader cassava ecology, yield studies, and farming systems—these are things that IITA is known for," added van de

Meerendonk. "We have some innovation funds that could be used for these IITA-IFDC collaborative initiatives."

"We can also look at cassava pests that we do not normally encounter. IFDC can also help IITA bring its technologies farther down to the grass roots farmers where we have a strong base," emphasized Dr Okonkwo.

Dr Sanginga suggested that concrete action be immediately taken to kick-off this renewed partnership. He requested the IITA scientists and management staff to sit down with the visiting IFDC team immediately after the meeting to hammer out a short-term action plan that both organizations could straightaway implement in the next couple of months.

## "I want to see people working with me advancing"

IITA DG, Dr Nteranya Sanginga says he desires staff working for IITA to advance just as the Institute makes progress in breaking the chains of poverty and food insecurity in tropical nations.

Staff growth, according to him, will come through training and retraining to be able to meet the challenges of today and the future.

"We have to increase our performance and learn new techniques, and investing in people must be our priority," said Dr Sanginga during his address to staff after commissioning the IITA building in Kinshasa on 3 August.

The DG urged staff to develop team spirit, stressing that everyone has a role to play for the progress of IITA.

He said the presence of IITA in DRC was a strong message to the world

on the stability of IITA which would in turn draw investors to the Institute. He expressed his desire to have all the other CGIAR centers hosted in the IITA building in both Kinshasa and Kalambo (a site in Bukavu) as this would harness synergies among partners and create much more impact.

In addition to meeting the staff, the DG was also received by the Prime Minister of DRC, His Excellency Augustin Matata Ponyo. The Prime Minister commended IITA for its efforts in agricultural development, promising that the government of DRC would give the Institute the necessary support.

Dr Sanginga also met with various government officials including ministers, funding agencies, universities, and private and public sector partners.

The DG was accompanied by Dr Nzola Mahungu, IITA country representative.



*Dr Sanginga and staff in DRC*

# IITA and partners review FtF project on mitigating cassava disease threats in Eastern Zambia; plan next steps



Participants at the planning meeting

IITA, in collaboration with the Zambia Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI) and the Seed Control and Certification Institute (SCCI), concluded the first annual review and planning meeting of "Mitigating Cassava Disease Threats for Improved Cassava Production in Zambia, with a Special focus on Eastern Province". The 4-year project is being implemented under the USAID's Feed-the-Future (FtF) Program and is one of six that IITA is coordinating in the country.

The meeting, which was held in Lusaka on 1-2 August, attracted representatives

from partners, including ZARI, SCCI, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Japan International Cooperation Agency, farmer-beneficiaries, and other cassava stakeholder agencies in Zambia.

Dr Pheneas Ntawurhunga, IITA Cassava Breeder based in Malawi and Project Manager,

welcomed the participants and briefed them on the objectives of the meeting. Mr. Harry Ngoma, USAID/FtF research-for-development component focal point person representing the donor agency, gave a broad overview of the FtF program in Zambia. He especially cited the project's importance in helping Zambian farmers deal with the threat of cassava diseases now and in the future.

Mr Moses Mwale, acting director of the local lead agency ZARI, opened the meeting by reiterating the importance of cassava in Zambia, particularly in the

northern part of the country, for food security and livelihoods. He emphasized that current ecological, economic, and policy challenges in cereal crops production in the country underscore the importance of cassava and the timeliness of the project.

The ZARI Acting Director thanked the US Government through the USAID-Zambia Mission for the support it has extended through the FtF Program and the cassava project, which he said would definitely benefit the farmers in Zambia. He also reiterated ZARI's appreciation to IITA for its continued partnership not only in this project but also in other initiatives in Zambia as well.

During the meeting, participants reviewed project activities carried out during the year, including challenges encountered. They were also guided by USAID/FtF M&E unit in developing key performance indicators at both the project and program levels. Dr Naomi Kamanga, FtF-R4D Program Coordinator, discussed ways to mainstream gender issues within the project. Participating institutions then developed individual work plans with detailed budgets for the following year.

## Oyo State and IITA explore areas of possible collaboration

The Oyo State Commissioner for Agriculture, Mr Bimbo Kolade, on 16 August led a delegation of 21 persons made up of directors and senior officials in the agriculture ministry to IITA in Ibadan. He was received by IITA Director for West Africa, Dr Robert Asiedu. The invitation to visit IITA was extended to the Commissioner by DDG for Partnerships and Capacity Building, Dr Kenton Dashiell. The meeting provided both the Oyo State government and IITA the opportunity to discuss future collaboration.

Mr Kolade said the state would want to partner with IITA with a view to making sure that technologies in IITA get to the farmers.

According to him, joint efforts between the state and IITA will transform agriculture by making it more attractive to youths, thereby creating jobs and improving livelihoods.

He said the state would want IITA's support in cassava, maize, postharvest technologies, and capacity building in areas such as baking of bread with cassava flour.

Dr Asiedu thanked the Commissioner for the visit and expressed the willingness of IITA to support the state in its efforts to transform agriculture.

Dr Asiedu thereafter led the team on tour of campus facilities.



Oyo State Commissioner, Mr Bimbo Kolade (center, in blue tie) with his team and IITA staff

## Obituary



The late Mr John

With heavy hearts and a deep sense of loss, we announce the death of Mr Odiaka John Onyenibedi who died on Sunday, 12 August at his residence.

John hailed from Idumobu village, Idumuje-Unor, Aniocha North Local Government, Delta State, Nigeria. He was 48. He was Electronics Technician III in Facilities Management Services (FMS) and was a diligent and hardworking staff during his life time, according to colleagues.

The Institute's flag was hoisted at half mast for three days as a mark of respect for the deceased.

Dr Sanginga, on behalf of the Institute, expresses his sympathy to the family of the deceased.

May his gentle soul rest in perfect peace.

## Talking Drums out

The maiden issue of the new staff bulletin is out. Called **Talking Drums**, this monthly newsletter serves as a main source of information for all staff.

For feedback and contributions please contact [s.obasemola@cgiar.org](mailto:s.obasemola@cgiar.org).

