



Farmers in Burkina Faso get IITA improved cowpea varieties

Burkina Faso has released two improved cowpea varieties to help advance better nutrition for women and children, and boost the incomes of farmers.

The two varieties, IT99K-573-2-1 and IT98K-205-8, were developed by IITA, and have undergone participatory varietal selection with farmers in the central and northern region of Burkina Faso. Local farmers and researchers selected the varieties from a basket of options after a two-year trial funded by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF).

The varieties selected are early maturing and high yielding and are also resistant to Striga—a parasitic weed that limits the yield of cowpea.

“These varieties mature in about 60 days as opposed to local varieties that mature in about 80-90 days,” says Dr Haruki Ishikawa, IITA Project Coordinator for the Appropriate Varieties of Early maturing Cowpea for Burkina Faso (AVEC-BF) project.

Generally, cowpea is an important crop in Burkina Faso as it provides food and cash for farmers, and fodder for livestock. Most



Dr Haruki Ishikawa of IITA hands over improved cowpea varieties to the Burkina Faso minister.

local varieties in the country record a yield of between 400 kg and 600 kg per hectare.

“But the new varieties have a potential yield of 2170 kg/ha,” Dr Ishikawa said.

Farmers love the varieties for their yield, color, and cooking qualities, and have given the varieties the following local names: Yiis yande for IT99K-573-2-1, meaning a crop that helps farmers to escape from

shame arising from hunger; and Niizwe for IT98K-205-8, meaning a crop that has brought an end to hunger.

Burkina Faso’s Research, Science & Innovation Minister, Grissa Isaïe Konaté, who is also a researcher, said that the physical qualities of the varieties such as color and bigger size were appealing and would make farmers more competitive in the region.

“These varieties will also help farmers to adapt better with climate change,” he added.

Dr Satoru Muranaka, a scientist with the Japan International Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS), who initiated the project while working for IITA, notes that the improved varieties offer many benefits to farmers.

“For instance, because these varieties are early maturing, they will help cowpea farmers to escape from drought. Also farmers now have a crop that they can harvest early, consume, and sell to generate income when other crops are still on the field. Such incomes help farmers to pay school fees for their children. And, with a protein content of about 20%, cowpea provides a good option to tackle malnutrition in local communities,” Dr Muranaka added.

Dr Issa Drabo, a cowpea breeder with INERA further explained that the early maturing characteristics of the varieties mean that the varieties could be successfully grown in the drier regions with low rainfall of between 400 and 800 mm.

The AVEC-BF project is a research-for-development project that aims to disseminate improved varieties. The project is developing a new dissemination system for cowpea that combines selection of appropriate varieties for the region, community seed system, and farmer field school activities with the ultimate goal of improving access of farmers to improved varieties and technologies.

The Japanese Ambassador to Burkina Faso, His Excellency Tsutomu Sugiura, called for the scaling up of the project, which has recorded significant milestones in a short time.

“This is the kind of project that should be supported to continue. I hope it will not stop at this stage,” he said.



Women and children celebrate the new cowpea varieties in Burkina Faso while guests, including the Japanese Ambassador, H.E. Tsutomu Sugiura, look on.

Abuja Guest House in Nigeria reopened

IITA's Deputy Director General for Corporate Services, Kwame Akuffo-Akoto, has announced the reopening of

the fully renovated Abuja Guest House effective 23 January 2013.

The 3 airconditioned-bedroom guest



The newly renovated IITA Guest House in the Nigerian capital, Abuja.

house has been upgraded to provide comfortable accommodation to IITA travelers to Abuja at a competitive price.

The guest house is equipped with wifi connectivity, telephones in the rooms, flat TV screens in the lounge and rooms with satellite connectivity, and a conference room with multimedia facility that can accommodate up to 20 participants. It has a fully air-conditioned and beautifully furnished lounge and dining room, a facility to serve continental breakfast, a kitchen with equipment for reheating and serving food, 24-hour attendant and security service, and generator. There are also two drivers' rooms, a room for security personnel, and a common room for drivers and security staff.

Meals at the guest house could be made available on order against payment basis from reliable restaurants/sources around the guest house at the Kubwa area.

Reservation requests should be made to the Travel Office.

The contact phone number of the Abuja Guest House is +234 8039784431.

Welcome, new staff!

Three new staff have recently joined IITA. They are Dr Chrysantus Akem, Project Coordinator of the African Development Bank-funded project, Support to Agricultural Research for Development of Strategic Crops in Africa (SARD-SC); Dr Issaka Amadou, SARD-SC Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist; and Dr John Herbert Ainembabazi, Postdoctoral Fellow – Agricultural Economic and Policy Expert, IITA-Uganda.

Dr Chrysantus Akem is a Cameroonian/Australian citizen. He obtained a BSc degree in Agricultural Sciences from the University of Louisiana, Lafayette, USA in 1983, and an MSc (1985) and a PhD (1989) in Plant Pathology from Oklahoma State University. He then joined IITA in 1989 as a postdoctoral fellow working on soybean pathology/breeding and later on also worked on the diseases of yam and cassava.

From IITA, Dr Akem moved to ICARDA as a Senior Legume Pathologist to lead a GTZ-funded project on the Integrated Management of Pests and Diseases in the Cereal and Legume Farming Systems of North Africa and West Asia (1996 to 2000).

After immigrating to Australia in 2001, Dr Akem worked with the Queensland Government, leading several AusAID-funded projects through the Australian Center for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), on the integrated crop management of tropical and subtropical fruits such as mangoes with national programs of the Philippines and Pakistan. He had also been leading Australian national projects on different vegetable crops grown under tropical



and subtropical environments, funded by Horticultural Australia Limited.

Dr Akem temporarily lives at Apartment 3C on IITA campus. His family, with 3 children, will be joining him in another few months. His temporary office is in Building 500, room 101C. He can be contacted on ext 2713.

Dr Issaka Amadou is from Niger. He received his BSc in Agronomy from the University of Abdou Moumouni Niger in 1988 and his MSc in Agriculture in 1990. He later acquired an Advanced Agronomist Diploma (Environmental & Geology) at the University of Tunis II, El Manar, and a PhD in Agriculture (Soil and Crop Production) from the Institute National Agronomiques, Paris-Grignon, France.

Prior to this appointment, he was a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer with the African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) from May 2010 to December 2011 and Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant with the African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and National Resources Education (ANAFE) from January 2012 to July 2012, both in Nairobi, Kenya.

He was also the Regional Monitoring and Expert with the Niger Basin Authority (NBA) in Niamey, Niger, from February 2005 to May 2010. He had also worked with the Faculty of Agronomy of the University Abdou Moumouni from July 1994 to February 2005 as a Soil Science lecturer.

Dr Amadou is married with three children. He lives in Apartment 1B on IITA-Campus, Ibadan.

Dr John Herbert Ainembabazi is a Ugandan citizen. He received his PhD



in Development Economics from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. His PhD research, largely based on the econometric analysis of household data, investigated how different policy designs affect economic development, poverty reduction, and management of natural resources in Uganda.

Prior to his appointment, he worked as a Graduate Research Fellow at the same university from 2006, and also as a Research Associate for the Collaborative program on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) from July 2011 to 2012, where he was involved in developing predictive models for setting national carbon reference levels.

Dr Ainembabazi also worked as a Research/Teaching Assistant at Makerere University where he was involved in several research projects including those on adoption of agricultural technologies, environment, and rural poverty. His research interests focus on the dynamic nature of landholdings and how this influences the choice of livelihood strategies in rural economies, giving particular attention to how land distribution among rural

farm households shapes and is shaped by land productivity. His current research includes analysis of the impact of returns to (rather than the magnitudes of) household characteristics on adoption of soil conservation technologies and extraction of forest products.

Dr Ainembabazi is married with two children. His e-mail address is J.Ainembabazi@cgiar.org; he can be contacted at telephone number +256 753869102.

