



## IITA welcomes Board Member Ibukun Odusote

IITA warmly welcomed Board of Trustees (BoT) member, Mrs Ibukun Odusote, who visited IITA headquarters this week. Board Member Odusote, a Nigerian and also the country's Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, thumbed up recent efforts at IITA, particularly the upgrade of infrastructure at the headquarters in Ibadan.

"When I look back at the last time I was here and now, there are lots of changes. For instance, the dormitories are now wearing a new look," Odusote said after a campus tour.

Prior to the tour, Board Member Odusote met with IITA Management led by IITA Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga, and the Deputy Director General (Support), Mr Kwame Akuffo-Akoto; and other members of staff of the Institute.

Board Member Odusote visited IITA with nostalgic memories of childhood visits to the campus in Ibadan.

"I remember coming to IITA in those days as a secondary school student and as an undergraduate...Most of us only go to the market and buy food. We don't know the effort that goes into producing those food. I feel excited coming here and I thank you for laboring hard to make sure that we have food on our tables," she said.

While recognizing IITA's research efforts, she also thanked staff for their dedication to the mission and goals of the Institute.

Permanent Secretary Odusote was the former Director of Information Technology at the Ministry of Information and immediate past Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and



*Board Member Ibukun Odusote (second from left) and her party consisting of Muyiwa O. Azeez, National Programme Coordinator, FGN/IFAD Rural Finance Institution Building Programme (RUFIN), try the 40% cassava bread at I-House.*

National Orientation before she was redeployed to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

In welcoming the BoT Member, Dr Sanginga reiterated the Institute's commitment to fighting hunger and poverty, noting that Nigeria is strategic for IITA's work.

"Once we work in Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, then we are sure we have done our work in Africa," Dr Sanginga said.

The Board Member visited the Genetic Resources Center, Bioscience Center, IITA International School, Crop Utilization Unit, Cassava Processing Unit, maize demonstration plot, and I-House where she tasted the 40% cassava bread and other products.

She also witnessed the opening of the 2013 Sports Fest—a biannual sporting event organized for staff.

## FAO and IITA aims to strengthen ties

IITA and the Food and Agriculture Organization are exploring new research areas for collaboration. The two institutions plan to build on past success stories, while at the same time identifying new areas that would boost agricultural productivity and generate more income for farmers.

IITA and FAO aim to draw on strengths and tap complementarities with a view to addressing the constraints in development especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

Dr Joyce MulilaMitti, Crops Officer, FAO office for the Africa Region, who visited IITA Ibadan on 16-19 April, said that there were several opportunities which the two institutions could harness to improve the lives of Africans.

"We could both work on plant health, cassava, cassava processing, and even capacity building for networks in the subregion," she noted.

While commending IITA for quality research outputs, MulilaMitti stressed that strengthening institutional linkages and even building new ones were necessary for addressing the challenges of food security in Africa.

She called for greater communication between IITA and FAO, adding that it would stimulate knowledge sharing and put the two institutions on the same page.

MulilaMitti held meetings with Dr Kenton Dashiell, IITA DDG, Partnerships and Capacity Development; Dr Ylva Hillbur, DDG Research for Development; Dr Robert Asiedu, R4D Director, IITA Western Africa Hub; and several scientists working on different research areas and IITA mandate crops.



*Dr Joyce MulilaMitti of FAO (center) with (L-R) Regional Administrator Sylvia Oyinlola, DDG Ylva Hillbur, Humidtropics Director Kwesi Atta-Krah, Molecular Geneticist Ranjana Bhattacharjee, and DDG Ken Dashiell.*



*IITA staff led by Director General Nteranya Sanginga (6th from right, front row) welcome Board Member Ibukun Odusote (6th from left) to IITA headquarters in Nigeria.*

# Zambia Agric Minister to SARD-SC stakeholders: Let's make a real difference in farmers' lives

"If we are going to make a real difference in farmers' lives, agricultural research must not only be responsive to the needs of the times but more importantly it should be able to find its way into farmers' fields and their families' homes. Research should never stay on the shelves – it should result in concrete outputs that would benefit farmers in Africa wherever they may be. This is my vision and sincere hope for this project."

These were the words of Honorable Robert Sichinga, Zambia's Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives, as he launched the Southern Africa component of the African Development Bank (AfDB)-funded 'Support for Agricultural Research for Development of Strategic Crops (SARD-SC)' project during a ceremony held at the Cresta Golf View Hotel in Lusaka, Zambia on Monday, 16 April.

He also opened the two-day planning workshop for Southern Africa partners and stakeholders of the project.

"At this day and age of modern technologies, it is mind boggling to still see farmers working the land with hoes, which our forefathers have been using since time immemorial. This is unacceptable given the advances in agricultural research that we have all been talking about," added the Minister.

"Apart from increasing crop productivity, I encourage all the experts and scientists gathered here to also make it a priority to find practical ways to ease the burden of physical labor of our farmers in tilling the land. We should strive to free the farmers from carrying a



Zambia Minister of Agriculture, Hon Robert Sichinga, addressing participants and members of the local media during the Southern Africa launch of the SARD-SC project in Lusaka.

heavy hoe over their shoulders when going to their fields," he emphasized.

"I hope that at the end of this project, we would see concrete results in farmers' fields and in farmers' lives," he stressed.

In explaining why the AfDB-funded SARD-SC, Philip Boahen, Principal Country Program Officer based at the Bank's Zambia Country Office, said "we saw the need to go back to the root – back to basic research if we are to effectively address the more upstream problems of rural poverty and food insecurity."

"This is the Bank's first sortie into agricultural research and development, and we are delighted and fortunate to have organizations such as IITA on board to make sure that the objectives of SARD-SC are

successfully met," Boahen added.

Chrysantus Akem, IITA scientist and SARD-SC Project Coordinator, indicated that the planning workshop for the Southern Africa partners of the project aimed to familiarize participants with SARD-SC's activities, implementation arrangement, plan of work, budget, and coordination arrangements. Based on these, the crop working groups developed workplans for the region to be undertaken at the initial stages of the project.

Approved in 2012, the SARD-SC project is a US\$63.24-million funded initiative whose overall goal is to enhance food and nutrition security and contribute to poverty reduction in 20 of AfDB's low-income Regional Member Countries. Specifically, it aims to enhance the productivity and income of four priority value chains – cassava, maize, rice, and wheat – on a sustainable basis.

The project is being co-implemented by three Africa-based CGIAR member centers: IITA, AfricaRice, and ICARDA. IITA is also the project's Executing Agency.



Participants and guests to the Southern Africa launch of the SARD-SC Project pose for a group photograph with Agriculture Minister Sichinga (standing, 8th from right).

## Help conserve electricity!

Before leaving your workplace at the end of the day, make sure that you have:

1. Powered off all unnecessary electrical office/ lab equipment;
2. Turned off air conditioners; and
3. Switched off all lights.

## Board meeting and commissioning of new science building slated next month in Dar

Next month, IITA's Eastern Africa Hub will host the board meeting (9-12 May), which will be followed by the official opening of the IITA Science Building.

The science building is dedicated to IITA and its partners' mission of fighting hunger and poverty in the continent and will help contribute towards boosting agricultural productivity in Tanzania and the region. It is also a symbol of IITA's commitment to strengthen the research and development capacity in the country and the region.

The laying down of the foundation stone of the building was officiated by The Hon. Mizengo Kayanza Peter Pinda on 6 December 2011. The President of the United Republic of Tanzania H.E Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete has been invited to inaugurate the new building.

IITA's Goodwill Ambassador and His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of the Federal Republic of



Nigeria, will lead IITA and its Board of Trustees to this important inaugural event.

The ultra-modern environmentally friendly science building has five

modern laboratories that can host up to 70 researchers. In addition to IITA scientists and partners, the facilities will also be open to research students from national and international universities.

## IITA economist receives Purdue Agricultural economics APEX award

IITA Agricultural Economist Tahirou Abdoulaye has received the Purdue University Agricultural Economics APEX Award. Other awardees were Sam Faggetti and Joe Kelsey.

Tahirou is IITA's project leader for the Purdue Improved Cowpea Storage (PICS) project, and was responsible for Nigeria, Cameroon, Benin, and Togo. According to the citation, "He has been active in technology transfer to ensure the greatest impact of new technologies...In Nigeria, the PICS program had reached farmers in more



than 12,000 villages, providing them with information on how to effectively store cowpea in triple layer plastic bags to protect them from insect damage."

Tahirou received his MSc and PhD in agricultural economics from Purdue University, USA. He has been involved in evaluation and impact assessment of several projects mainly in West Africa, and more recently on innovation systems and how they can help increase technology uptake by small farmers.

The award was given during the 39th Annual James C. Snyder Memorial Lecture held 12 April.

## Sportsfest 2013 kicks off

The 2013 sports festival started this week with a parade of colors dubbed Team Presentation Walk.

The bi-annual activity, organized by the Human Resources Service, aims to foster camaraderie among all IITA staff, and has become a much-awaited event among staff.

Activities include volleyball, table tennis, lawn tennis, ayo olopon, scrabble, chess, walkathon, monopoly, swimming, and football, among others.

This year the grouping of offices/units were changed to enable staff to mix and meet colleagues from other units. Six teams were formed: Blue, Orange, Red, Yellow, Green, and White.

During the Team Presentation Walk, participants sporting their team colors paraded from the front of Building 500 to the Sports Center, where an exhibition football match between Teams Red and Blue took place. Blue won, 1-0.



Sportsfest 2013 kicks off with a parade of colors. The opening program featured an exhibition football match between Teams Red and Blue. Guests included the Permanent Secretary of Nigeria's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and Board Member, Mrs Ibukun Odusote, shown being greeted by DG Nteranya Sanginga (in orange t-shirt, right photo).