

Researchers and partners launch SARD-SC maize component

Researchers and partners working under the Support for Agricultural Research for Development for Strategic Crops (SARD-SC) have launched the maize commodity component in Nigeria. The cassava component was launched in DR Congo last week.

Declaring the event open, Dr Ylva Hillbur, Deputy Director General for Research urged participants to think differently and do things differently to create impact.

Funded by the African Development Bank, the SARD-SC is a 5-year, multi-CGIAR center initiative that aims to enhance the productivity and income derived from cassava, maize, rice, and wheat – four of the six commodities defined as strategic



Participants attending the launch of the SARD-SC maize component at IITA.

crops for Africa.

The project will be co-implemented by IITA, Africa Rice Center, and the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, supported by the International Food Policy Research Institute.

Dr Hillbur said the project was important for Africa, as the continent seeks to become food secure.

“Let me also assure you that IITA will support you to achieve the goals set in this project,” she added.

Dr Chrys Akem (photo at left), Project Coordinator, SARD-SC, said the project would be implemented

in strict compliance with the bank’s rules.

Though the maize commodity component would be implemented in four countries—Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, and Zambia, Dr Akem said other African countries could benefit from these countries.

He called on stakeholders to put in their best to make the project a success.

Participants from Nigeria, Ghana, and Mali welcomed the project, saying that it would help in improving the livelihoods of maize farmers in their countries.



IITA Management promises support to new staff

IITA Management has pledged to provide an enabling environment and support for staff to excel.

Addressing the newly recruited staff in Ibadan, Dr Ylva Hillbur, Deputy Director General for Research, urged them to be innovative, adding that most of them are involved in key projects that require IITA to demonstrate the impact of its R4D.

She reiterated that Management would provide the support needed for them to achieve the goals. The new staff included Oyewole Ajala, Chrysantus Akem, Kwame Akuffo-Akoto, Issaka Amadou, Kwesi Atta-Krah, Oluseyi Fashokun, Eric Koper, Temilade Oke, Oluwaseun Olasupo, and Zulfawu Yahaya.

Atta-Krah, who is the Director for Humidtropics, said he was happy to be back in IITA. He promised to work to improve the lives of the poor.

Akuffo-Akoto, DDG for Corporate Services, said he would offer the needed support to ensure that researchers meet their target outputs.



DDG for Research Ylva Hillbur (right) welcomes new and returning staff to IITA.

DG Sanginga speaks at ICCAE...underscores need for more collaboration

IITA Director General Nteranya Sanginga this week addressed researchers, donors, and students at the International Cooperation Center for Agricultural Education (ICCAE), Nagoya University in Japan.

The director general spoke on the theme: "IITA and Development of Agricultural Research in Africa," underscoring the need for more collaboration between Japanese institutions and IITA.

His talk also touched on IITA's research strategy based on the mid-term plan of 2012-2020, including capacity building of young researchers through collaboration with universities in Japan.

For IITA and Japan to make impact in the future, Dr Sanginga emphasized that there was a need for partnership.



DG Sanginga (third from left) with IITA scientists and Japanese colleagues.

Dr Sanginga talked about IITA's achievements, current efforts, and plans for the future.

According to him, IITA's research efforts in Africa aim to ensure that poor countries and poor people reap the benefits of the "research revolution."

His presentation also touched on Humidtropics—one of the CGIAR Research Programs (CRP) that IITA is leading, adding that the Institute is aligning its research programs with the CRPs for efficient and better service delivery.

He said that the adoption of production system intensification was the path to achieving impact. He explained that the concept of production system intensification involves four pillars: increasing agricultural production / unit land area, reducing environmental

externalities, improving resource use efficiency, and increasing the supply of ecosystem services.

ICCAE is a research institute mandated to function as a leading center for international cooperation in agricultural education. It aims to cooperate with domestic and international organizations, universities, aid agencies, and NGOs to expand networks of human resources for intellectual contributions and strengthen ICCAE's function as a leading center for international cooperation in agricultural education.

While in Japan, DG Sanginga also visited the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, United Nations University, Tokyo Metropolitan University, Kansai University, and ICCAE, and other institutions.



DG Sanginga (right) with Prof Kosaki, a former colleague at IITA.

Cassava Science Day in IITA Cameroon

Partners collaborating under the framework of the IITA/ Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) partnership project on natural resources management met in IITA, Yaounde, Cameroon, on 18 February, during the "Cassava Science Day".

In this one-day meeting, findings of the different research activities under the project were presented and discussed. IITA-Cameroon and Japanese researchers

have been collaborating for the past three years on this project to increase cassava production and productivity in Cameroon.

Partner/participant institutions include IITA, Institute for Agricultural Research for Development (IRAD), PNDRT (a government agency), Ministère de la Recherche Scientifique et de l'innovation (MINRESI), Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER),

Dschang University, Kyoto University, FAO, Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA), Program Nationale de Vulgarisation et de Recherche Agricole (PNVRA), Commission on Human Rights (UNHCR), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), CARE, and World Food Program.

A meeting was also held on 19 February among IITA staff led by Dr Rachid Hanna, Cameroon country representative, and Japanese counterpart scientists to discuss future collaboration on the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)/JST Sustainable Project in the Forest-Savanna of Cameroon (FOSAS). This project was submitted by IITA through the government of Cameroon to the government of Japan but due to its bilateral cooperation nature, IRAD was designated to lead its implementation.



Scientists collaborating on the IITA/JSPS project meet in Yaounde, Cameroon, to discuss cassava research results.

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.

Establishing a yam seed system in Ghana

The Yam Improvement for Income and Food Security in West Africa (YIIFSWA) recently hosted a three-day planning workshop in Kumasi, Ghana, to discuss the intricacies and roles of YIIFSWA partners in establishing a sustainable yam seed system within the yam value chain in Ghana.

Seed is the most important element in ensuring the livelihoods of farming communities and global food security. However, yam farmers are yet to gain from the advantages of using healthy quality seed yam tuber. Therefore a formal yam seed system needs to be set up to meet the needs of yam farmers in Ghana, says YIIFSWA Project Manager Norbert Maroya.

Present at the workshop were the implementing scientists from Crop Research Institute (CRI), University of Greenwich – Natural Resources Institute (NRI/UK), Grain and Legumes Development Board (GLDB), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Farmers Organisation Support Centre in Africa (AGRA/FOSCA), University of Development Studies (UDS), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and

Technology (KNUST), and IITA.

The implementing members agreed to:

- continue project activities in the 5 districts (Ejura, Atebubu, Kintampo, Mion and East Gonja) and any of the 600 communities where the baseline survey was conducted to facilitate impact assessment.
- begin collaborating and piloting activities preferably in two districts (Kintampo and East Gonja).
- produce up to 20,000 breeder seed yam tubers of three improved varieties using existing tissue culture facilities in the country.
- produce 1,300 certified foundation seed yam (GLDB) and over 35,000 quality declared seed yam (partners including CRS, GLDB and CRI).
- develop and implement pilot yam seed production business models with partners identified by the value chain analysis survey.
- begin research on postharvest technologies.

A similar workshop will take place on 12 to 14 March in Ibadan for implementing parties of seed yam production in Nigeria.



Farmer picking his preference from among several yam varieties.

ILRI DDG visits IITA



Dr John McIntire, Deputy Director General of the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) (standing, in black coat), visited IITA recently to meet Institute scientists and discuss areas of joint research and collaboration, including the CGIAR Research Programs and increasing ILRI's presence in West Africa, specifically Nigeria. The DDG for Research, Ylva Hillbur, lead the IITA team that met with Dr McIntire. Photo also shows Dr Peter Kulakow (bending), IITA Cassava Breeder, showing the different varieties of cassava used for processing, and Dr Iheanacho Okike, ILRI Country Program Manager, who accompanied Dr McIntire.

AWARD recipient is IITA partner

A scientist from the national system is one of this year's recipients of African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD). Dr Nessie Luambano, Senior Scientist with the National Research Organisation in Tanzania, is one of the 70 new AWARD Fellows selected from over 1,000 strong applications.

AWARD is a career-development program that equips top women agricultural scientists across sub-Saharan Africa to accelerate agricultural gains by strengthening their research and leadership skills, through tailored fellowships.

As part of the fellowship, awardees are matched with a suitable mentor, who is tasked with guiding and advising the mentee for 12 months. In the second year of her fellowship, the mentee will additionally impart her own experience of AWARD and expertise by taking under her wing a female mentee of her own. Nessie, a nematologist, will work with mentor Dr Danny Coyne of IITA-Tanzania, who said it was an honor and a privilege to be asked and to be involved with AWARD.

IITA has previously been involved with AWARD through mentoring and as a hosting institute for advanced science training of awardees. The AWARD introductory meeting and workshop was held in Nairobi this week, where participants met with AWARD staff, including Director Vicki Wilde, who expressed great interest in having more AWARD mentors and involvement from IITA and other CGIAR centers.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton congratulated the AWARD



Danny Coyne (right) of IITA-Tanzania and one of this year's AWARD recipients, Dr Nessie Luambano, Senior Scientist with the National Research Organisation in Tanzania.

women pioneers in 2009, when she visited some of the participating fellows and mentors in Kenya. 'We need women represented in our laboratories, as well as our fields', she stated. Less than a quarter of research staff is female, with increasingly fewer still at higher levels of management. AWARD is pitched squarely at underpinning change in this area.