



Oyo Governor inaugurates new facilities at IITA

The Governor of Oyo State, in Nigeria, Senator Abiola Ajimobi, on Tuesday commissioned the Clinic, Wellness Center, and Crèche at the headquarters of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Ibadan. He underscored the importance of such facilities in promoting the health and ensuring the well-being of the institute's staff in particular and of Nigerians in general.

Putting the commissioning in a larger perspective, Governor Ajimobi cited striking figures that highlighted the need for and benefits of such facilities for an agricultural research center and the nexus between a healthy lifestyle and productivity. He said that, for example, the incidence of diabetes is increasing in sub-Saharan Africa, with related health costs estimated at US\$ 67.03 billion, or US\$8836 for every diabetic patient.

"I congratulate and commend the IITA Women's Group and the Management of IITA for paying attention to the health and welfare of the staff. The Health and Wellness Center could help us in reducing the costs associated with modern-day illnesses such as diabetes and hypertension. The Crèche, on the other hand, will help ensure that the children of staff receive good care while their parents are working."

"These efforts are indeed heartening as these facilities will promote and enhance the staff's physical, mental, and social quality of life," the Governor emphasized.

Governor Ajimobi also cited how his own administration's work complements that of IITA. "In Oyo State, we are investing in agriculture, health, and other sectors to improve the lives of our people. This year, my administration purchased and distributed tractors to farmers to enhance their productivity. We aim to attract more of the youth to agriculture, and we are energetically



Oyo State Governor and IITA staff in group photo

pursuing this through the provision of inputs and loans with other partner financial institutions."

"There are lots of complementarities between the work of IITA and what my administration is doing. Let us continue to work together," the Governor said.

IITA Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga said the presence of IITA in Oyo State makes the State strategic. He called for greater collaboration between the State and the Institute to work together to improve the fortunes of farmers, especially in the areas of job and wealth creation for the youth.

Asiedu and Dashiell seek closer ties

The Director for IITA Western Africa, Dr Robert Asiedu, has called on the Government of Oyo State to work more closely with IITA to improve the livelihoods of local farmers. In his remarks at the commissioning of the facilities in Ibadan, Dr Asiedu cited studies that prove that investments in agricultural research have high returns.

He commended the State Government for providing the enabling environment for IITA to carry out its research.

In the same vein, Dr Kenton Dashiell, Deputy Director General, Partnerships and Capacity Development, echoed IITA's willingness to work with Oyo State. He said the investments in the Health and Wellness Center, Medical Unit, and the Crèche were all aimed at creating a workforce that is healthy and competent to meet the challenges limiting agriculture in the continent.

The IITA Women's Group, the initiators of the Health and Wellness Center, said they would continue to support and pioneer efforts to make IITA a better place for working, and to create a favorable impact in the community.

Ms Sylvia Oyinlola, who spoke on behalf of the group, enumerated other philanthropic activities of the Group, such as the provision of scholarships and support to orphanages, among others.

"Even the IITA School was an initiative of the Women's Group," she added.



Oyo Governor (in white) with Mrs Charlotte Sanginga at the Crèche



Dr Asiedu makes a speech



Mrs Oyinlola speaks on behalf of IITA Women's Group

DR Congo releases six new cassava varieties ... names one of the varieties after Paul Ilona



The Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research hands the cuttings to the Minister of Agriculture who officially released them

DR Congo has released six improved cassava varieties to help improve yields and incomes of farmers, thanks to collaborative efforts between IITA and the DR Congo National Institute of Agricultural Research (INERA).

Two of the six new varieties were introduced from IITA: MUTIENE (I 92/326) and BOMENGO (M98/115). The other four were selected in the country, LITTOY (2006/114), MUZURI (2006/073), KANSAKAKO (MV2007/102) and ILONA (MV2007/126).

The harvest periods of the varieties vary from 12 to 20 months after planting with root yields of 21 to 47 t/ha. In addition, the varieties are resistant to Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD), with a good level of tolerance to Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD). They are high yielding, early-to-late bulking, and adapted to various environments in DR Congo.

“They are all good for *fufu*, *lituma*, *chikwangue*, and *pondu* (cooked cassava leaves),” says Dr Nzola Mahungu, Cassava Breeder and IITA Country Representative in DR Congo.

The official release ceremony took place on Monday 11, November 2013 at the Research Centre of INERA at Mvuazi (in Bas Congo province, 200

km from Kinshasa). The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (John Chrysostome Vahamwiti) and the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific research (Bonaventure Chelo) were both at the ceremony.

Dr Mahungu explained that the varieties were developed through the IITA-Cassava project funded by USAID since 2001.

The addition of six new cassava varieties brings the total number to 20 since the project’s inception.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr. Augustin Kadima Ngeleka who represented USAID/ Kinshasa, appreciated the efforts made in the development of these new varieties and stressed the importance of cassava as the staple food and source of income of the Congolese population. He lauded IITA for putting to good use the US Government’s assistance to DR Congo, and wished that the new varieties would reach the farmers and other producers to have the desired impact on people’s livelihoods.

“To achieve this, the new varieties must be spread in all ecological zones where they are adapted to meet farmers’ needs,” he said.

Explaining the naming of the new varieties by farmers, the Minister of Agriculture wanted to know the meaning of “Ilona”

as it is not a Congolese word. He was told that farmers in Province Orientale always ask after Paul Ilona and have kept good memories of him. They recall the way he worked with them in participatory variety selection and how he fast-tracked cassava recovery in the province after the CMD invasion. Paul Ilona was instrumental in moving cassava breeding, looking at the bigger picture of value chains, and helped to link farmers to processors. Thus, they named one of their best varieties “Ilona”.

In accepting the naming, Paul Ilona wrote: “I am completely short of words and I do not know how many thank you rhymes I should send to you and the team in DRC. However, the fact remains that you (Dr Nzola) with Dr Alfred Dixon gave me all the support I needed to make progress on cassava development in DRC. It is a collective honor for the cassava breeding team in IITA as it truly was a team work”.

Alfred Dixon, former Head of Cassava Breeding Unit at IITA, wrote: “Paul deserves it. When bullets were flying around, Paul was there to make sure the cassava improvement goal was met in DRC. I wish him many more successes in the cassava world.”

Paul Ilona, a former IITA staff, is now the Country Manager for HarvestPlus in Nigeria.



Ilona (middle) planting with DRC farmers

Joseph Uponi on Radio Nigeria’s “Guest Platform” program



Joseph Uponi, Manager of IITA-Ibadan’s Analytical Services Laboratory, was on Tuesday interviewed on Radio Nigeria’s “Guest Platform” radio program and talked about the role of science and technology in the development of agriculture in Nigeria. More specifically, he discussed issues pertaining to food safety, improving crop storage, weed and pest control, the needs and challenges of agriculture in Nigeria,

Joseph Uponi being interviewed in one of Radio Nigeria’s studios in Ibadan for its “Guest Platform” program.

and the importance of public and private sector partnerships in moving forward the agricultural agenda of the country. He also talked about the technologies being developed at IITA that contribute towards addressing these issues.

“Guest Platform” is broadcast on Mondays at 6:30 PM through Radio Nigeria-Ibadan’s Premier FM 93.5 station and is also streamed online at <http://www.radionigeriaibadan.com/radio/>. The Communication Office will announce when this important 30-minute interview will be broadcast so that staff could tune in.

Finding Practical Solutions for ARTS



Cassava farmers

2011 Borlaug LEAP Fellow Armand Doumtsop wants to find practical solutions to the problem of ARTS (African root and tuber scale). Tropical root and tuber crops are major staples in sub-Saharan Africa. These crops are largely produced by smallholder farmers. Pests, such as African root and tuber scale (ARTS), are a major threat to farmer's livelihoods. The

economic consequences are serious in the Congo Basin where it can cause cassava yield losses of up to 100%. Doumtsop research is looking at the genetics of this scale insect and the implications for the development of host plant resistance.

Armand Doumtsop, a PhD candidate at the University of Yaounde in Cameroon, used his Borlaug LEAP Fellowship to expand his professional network and develop his skills in morphological and molecular techniques. Under the direction of Dr Benjamin Normark, he traveled to the University of Massachusetts–Amherst and, using state of the art equipment, trained in Dr Normark's lab for six months. The fellowship also allowed Doumtsop to survey a wide area of the Congo basin, investigate the pest problem and collect samples. His CGIAR mentor, Dr Rachid Hanna from IITA-Cameroon, supervised the fieldwork.

The research that Armand Doumtsop conducted under the Borlaug LEAP fellowship has shown that, contrary to established knowledge, this insect turns out to be a complex of species. This conclusion is based in part on evidence from Doumtsop's painstaking morphological comparisons and anchored

in the molecular genetics information he generated at the Normark lab.

Understanding ARTS diversity is only the beginning of developing evidence-based knowledge about its biology and ecology that can be used in the development of innovative management options that will limit the pest's impact on crops. These management options (e.g., host plant resistance and biological control) are specific to the insect and how it interacts with its host plant and antagonists.

Doumtsop plans to use his research results to develop sustainable options for pest management by providing decision-support tools, including a pest risk map and keys to develop host plant resistance in cassava and other tuber crops. This will contribute to increased yields and enhance food security and income generation for local communities.

Following completion of his PhD program, Doumtsop hopes to be involved in research projects that will contribute to food security in his native Cameroon. He plans to transfer the knowledge he acquired during his fellowship through collaborative research, teaching of students and training of farmers' groups.

Culled from the Borlaug website

Burkina scales up dissemination of IITA-improved cowpea varieties under WAAP

Burkina Faso has begun the multiplication and dissemination of IITA-improved cowpea varieties that were released/ registered in January in that country.

The two varieties, IT99K-573-2-1 (Yiisyande) and IT98K-205-8 (Niizwe), were developed by IITA, and had undergone participatory varietal selection with farmers in the central and northern region of Burkina Faso, thanks to funds from the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) under the Appropriate Varieties of Early maturing Cowpea for Burkina Faso (AVEC-BF) project.

Burkina Faso is now promoting one of the



Dr Ishikawa talks about new cowpea varieties

varieties, IT99K-573-2-1, under the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAP)/ Programme de Productivite Agricole en Afrique de l'Ouest (PPAAO).

The WAAPP is a World Bank project designed with the main objective of improving agricultural productivity while promoting regional integration as instruments for promoting shared growth and poverty reduction in West Africa.

The approach adopted for the WAAP project is based partly on the integration and harmonization of national agricultural policies and secondly, the establishment of close links between research, extension, producers and private operators.

Dr Haruki Ishikawa, IITA Project Coordinator AVEC-BF project said that he felt honored that part of the project results were quickly taken up by the government and being used for the benefits of small scale farmers.

"The results of the activities of the AVEC BF project were often reported by Burkina Faso's television, radio stations, and newspapers. I expected prompt dissemination of our results. Thanks to Dr Issa Drabo, Cowpea Breeder with INERA, for his cooperation during the project."

To develop large-scale dissemination system, the second phase of the AVEC-BF project has already started.

ICT4Ag – The digital Springboard for inclusive Agriculture Conference

IITA participated in the Information and Communications Technology for Agriculture (ICT4Ag) Conference in Kigali, Rwanda, held from 4 to 8 November, with two presentations, one by Anna Sole from IITA Uganda and the other by Sander Muilerman from IITA Ghana.

The Conference, co-hosted by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources

(MINAGRI), and the Ministry of Youth and ICT (MYICT), brought together specialists in ICT and agriculture from all over the world to discuss and share their experiences on how to improve agriculture and smallholder farmers' livelihoods through ICT.

Anna Sole presented a video-documentary produced specifically to convey a complex and multifaceted message on

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IITA-Ibadan community celebrates Open Day 2013

It was a day of fun and laughter but more than that, it was a day of celebration and appreciation. On Saturday, 16 November, members of IITA staff and their families (about 5000 of them) celebrated IITA Open Day, 2013.

With the theme “It is IITA’s Time”, the fun-filled day began with a tree planting activity at 8 am on the grounds across the Community Resource Center. This was followed by an Open House and exhibitions at the Conference Center where the guests had the opportunity to see, feel, and experience first-hand the institute’s research activities.

The highpoint of the day was the main event held under a gigantic tent at the grounds of the campus’ Sports Center. The festivities were declared open by Dr Kwame Akuffo-Akoto, Deputy Director General for Corporate Services. In his opening speech, the DDG said, “Today is



DG Sanginga (in white) and staff at the 2013 Open Day

not about making long speeches, but it is about you – the staff – and your families enjoying the day.”

“Open Day is about interacting between and among staff and families, of providing a relaxed atmosphere to unwind and get together as one big IITA family,” he added.

The highlights of the Open Day celebrations included the conferring of Long Service Awards on 43 deserving staff members in the 10, 20, and 30-year service categories. Seven staff retirees for 2013 were also given recognition; this was a new award category. All awardees were given plaques of recognition and various gifts.

A song entitled “I am IITA” adapted from a poem written by Mr Soji Akinyemi and sung by the group of Mr Bode Olaoluwa, Ms Oiwoja Odihi, and Mr Opeyemi Oyatomi was presented for adoption as the IITA anthem.



DDG Akuffo-Akoto speaks at 2013 Open Day

Risk Management awareness seminar holds in Ibadan

The Risk Management awareness seminar titled ‘Building a culture of risk management in IITA’, aimed at sensitizing IITA Headquarters staff and stakeholders on the importance and priority placed on risk management, took place on Thursday, 31st October, 2013.

Organised by the Risk Management Committee (RMC) the seminar which was highly educative and inspiring was presented by the duo of Mrs. Sylvia Oyinlola and Mr. Kayode Awobajo closely supported by other committee members to showcase the effort and commitment of the RMC. The seminar was attended by the DDG-Corporate Services, Kwame Akuffo-Akoto, to demonstrate the commitment of Management towards ensuring that risk management becomes an integral part to be considered in our daily research activities in all IITA locations.

The seminar which was well attended by the target audience had two separate sessions. The core of the messages from the seminar was that the task of identifying,



L-R: Modupe Adeoluwa, David Oluwadare, Wole Oladokun, Awobajo and Oyinlola at the seminar

documenting and providing mitigation plans for the risks associated with our research activities and operations is the business of all of us in the Institute. The questions and answers which followed the interactive sessions brought out a number of salient issues.

Members of staff were encouraged to take the opportunity and make constructive contributions, bring up concerns and get involved in their respective units in order to build the risk management culture in IITA.

The occasion was spiced at different times with various cultural dances and displays by groups depicting the culture from Western, Eastern, and Northern Nigeria. Children were not left out as they enjoyed themselves at the lawn tennis courts of the Sports Center which had been transformed into a fun kids’ playground complete with jumping castles. A dance competition was also held that attracted gifts to the winners chosen by the cheering audience.

The day’s activities were ended with a raffle. The grand prize was a complete 3 day/2night package trip consisting of return air tickets to Accra, Ghana, plus hotel accommodation and allowance. The prize was won by Hakeem Opadeyi, Mechanic II with the Fabrication Unit of FMS. The winning ticket was picked by no less a personality than IITA Director General Dr. Nteranya Sanginga.

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the interrelationship of climate change, agriculture, gender, and policy. The participatory process of producing the video demonstrated both the challenge and the value of developing adapted messages.

“The holistic approach used – including getting many stakeholders’ views and testimonies – made the video into a strong tool to generate debate and pass on knowledge; it should help to convince farmers to adopt more resilient farming practices,” she said.

Sander Muilerman presented IITA Ghana’s experience which showcased how CGIAR/IITA researchers today are increasingly collecting their data digitally and in real-time and are often willing to make it available to mobile application developers.

He also displayed the progress made by IITA in getting quality content on to partners’ mobile extension platforms, based on its R4D knowledge products.