

## International researchers honor IITA scientist

Eminent international fruit fly taxonomists of the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium (MRAC) and the Natural History Museum, London, England, have honored Dr Georg Goergen, Head of the Biodiversity Center of IITA in Bénin for his continuing assessment activities on the West African insect fauna. These have led to the discovery and description of a new species of fruit fly (*Dacus*) in Bénin and Togo.

Consequently, these international bodies of taxonomists have named the new species of fruit fly *Dacus goergeni* after Dr Goergen.

*Dacus goergeni* was discovered after examining 10,000 fly specimens collected in about 2000 sampling events in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Bénin, and Nigeria.

Dr Manuele Tamò, Insect Ecologist and Country Representative of IITA- Bénin, said the discovery was unexpected as the genus *Dacus* already had 194 named species and the most recent Africa-wide revision of the group was dated only from 2006 with some amendments made in late 2009.

*Dacus goergeni* belongs to one of the three main African genera of fruit-attacking flies within the family Tephritidae. Several of these are of high economic importance, causing severe damage to fruits and vegetables and



Dr Georg Goergen

constitute a major constraint to commercial and subsistence farming in sub-Saharan Africa.

Fruit infestation on average can reach 20-40% and is considered the main problem that impedes the production and export of quality (sub)tropical fruits throughout the continent.

IITA Director General, Dr Nteranya

Sanginga, commended Dr Goergen, noting that the honor demonstrates the research excellence in IITA.

Dr Goergen joined the biological control program against the cassava mealybug at IITA, Ibadan in 1987, under the framework of a GTZ-sponsored fellowship, and completed his PhD in entomology at the Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany, in 1992.

With financial support by the Austrian government, he was then appointed as a postdoctoral scientist at IITA, Cotonou, Bénin, where he gradually established an institutional taxonomic capacity for arthropods of agricultural importance with a focus on integrated pest management, habitat management, and the biological control of various important agricultural pests in tropical Africa.

As a senior entomologist, he provided biosystematics support to IITA and its collaborating scientific community and developed, over a 20-year timeframe, one of the largest insect reference collections in West Africa. Currently, he is in charge of an SDC-funded biological control project to control the newly introduced papaya mealybug in close collaboration with national partners from six countries in West and Central Africa.

## IITA and IFPRI to support DRC's efforts to boost agriculture

IITA and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), at the request of and in collaboration with the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), have developed a platform for a competitive grant system for agriculture research in the country. This is part of efforts to strengthen the country's agriculture sector through science.



Some of the participants at the launching of the DRC innovative research in Kinshasa (28 June 2013), front line (N. Sanginga, IITA DG; Jean Chrysostome Vahamiti, Minister of Agriculture and Emmanuel Libendele, Agricultural Principal Adviser to the President).

The innovative project is Reviving Agricultural Research for Development in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Proposal for implementing a competitive small grants program. The project has been allocated a total of \$3,000,000 to finance innovative projects through competitive grants to help agricultural research institutions to regain their leadership role in agricultural R4D.

The Prime Minister opted for the project funds to be managed by an independent international center, such as IITA, because of its strong presence and achievements in the country.

Dr Mahungu Nzola, IITA's Country Representative in DRC Congo, said the research project was a move in the right direction as the country struggles to transform its agriculture sector and implement CAADP processes. It was an honor for IITA to be selected to look after the funds and to support the country to develop its R4D. He also cited the efforts of DG Sanginga and Dr Bernard Vanlauwe, IITA's R4D Director for Central Africa, who saw this initiative through from a successful beginning.

The project will set up a forum for agricultural research institutions in each of the 11 provinces in the country to interact with major stakeholders to identify priority

interventions in the crop, fisheries, and livestock sectors. These R4D interventions will be implemented in cooperation with national universities, national agricultural research institutes, INERA, CGIAR Research Programs, farmers' associations, and other stakeholders, using state-of-the-art approaches. A stakeholders' forum will translate national priorities to provincial ones.

The members of the forum will be provincial policymakers, representatives from Congolese universities and CAADP, scientists involved in the CGIAR Research Programs, and other relevant stakeholder groups. IITA will facilitate the operation of the provincial forums. Annually in the provinces, small grants of US\$10,000, \$20,000, and \$30,000 will be awarded to DRC nationals, young scientists or farmers, with innovative research proposals.

The 3-year project also provides an opportunity to build research capacity of local scientists through the integration of specific degree-related training activities in the research projects, with co-supervision from Congolese universities and CGIAR centers. These will be based on needs assessment at national universities, INERA, and other research centers. Senior scientists will serve on the supervisory committees.

## Environmental activist Desmond Majekodunmi praises IITA in “live” radio show

During the nigeriainfo radio show “The Green Hour”, broadcasted last Thursday morning, Nigeria’s most popular environmental activist Desmond Majekodunmi, praised IITA for using approaches that lead to benefits for future generations.

“IITA’s sustainable intensification programs represent a paradigm shift,” he said “You are coming from actual needs of food security today and look into matters that preserve the environment for tomorrow. That is so great,” he said. He also gave IITA credit for work done in the past, in particular the successful research to protect cassava in Nigeria.

If IITA had not developed resistant varieties, Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD) could probably have wiped off cassava from Africa, according to Majekodunmi.

“I wonder what Africans would have been doing without cassava. We love cassava...” he said. The live program hosted Dr Kenton Dashiell, Deputy Director General (Partnerships & Capacity Development); and Mr Godwin Atser, Communication Officer (West and Central Africa).

The pandemic had ravaged farms across the continent until a resistant line of cassava was developed by IITA in the 1970s.

Majekodunmi said he remained grateful to IITA for saving the crop and making Africa a cassava-producing continent, in addition to developing improved varieties.



From left to right: Dr Kenton Dashiell (center) with a top official of nigeriainfo. 99.3FM (left) and Desmond Majekodunmi, in Lagos

When Majekodunmi wanted to go into farming, he sought and obtained technical support from IITA. He commended the sustainable approach which allows agriculture to thrive with little or no negative impact on the environment and called on others to emulate and adopt the technologies.

He was very impressed with IITA’s conservation efforts and gave kudos to Deni Bown and her team for ensuring that

the forest resource in the IITA campus is preserved.

The program provided the opportunity for IITA to showcase its research outputs and outcomes in the context of sustainable agricultural development.

Callers on the program cited IITA for its good work done over the years. They wanted national governments to scale out some of these innovations to alleviate hunger and poverty in the continent.

## IITA Women’s Group and the Office of the First Lady of Oyo to join efforts to help vulnerable groups

The IITA Women’s Group and the Office of the First Lady of Oyo State have agreed to join hands to improve the livelihoods of people in the community, especially women and children.

The resolution to collaborate came on Tuesday after the IITA women’s delegation, led by Mrs Charlotte Sanginga, met Mrs Florence Ajimobi, the wife of the Governor of Oyo State. Other members were Mrs Juliana Asiedu, Mrs Gloria Dashiell, Mrs

Safi Yade, and Mrs Toyin Oke.

The women expressed their deep concern over the rate of poverty and the need to scale up interventions that would bring relief to the lives of people.

Mrs Sanginga said the need to create maximum impact demanded collaboration among different stakeholders.

She explained that the IITA Women’s Group was established in the 1980s as a social group. It had been transformed into

a service organization, complementing the efforts of IITA towards poverty eradication. Over the years, the Group had provided scholarships to children of junior staff working at IITA, and in addition had adopted a home for motherless babies in the State

Dr Ranjana Bhattacharjee of IITA’s Bioscience Center, secretary of the group, explained that the Group raised funds through contributions from individual members and the organization of fund-raising events.

Mrs Ajimobi lauded the efforts of the Group towards putting smiles on the faces of the less privileged, noting that a partnership would bring several benefits to the people.

Oyo State, in southwest Nigeria, hosts the headquarters of IITA. Last year, at the request of the DG, Dr Nteranya Sanginga, the State government quickly rehabilitated road networks linking IITA with other parts of the State, giving staff and visitors easy access to the campus. Farmers around the campus are also benefiting from this good road network, since getting agricultural produce to the market is now easier.



IITA women with the First Lady of Oyo State (center).

## YIIFSWA holds outreach program in FCT Abuja, Nigeria

YIIFSWA implemented its first Nigeria cross-objective outreach program 4–16 August at the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. The workshop aimed to bring together objective representatives, farmers, traders, key country partners, and other players in the Abuja yam value chain to share and discuss major findings of YIIFSWA studies and to begin the process of forming a yam development forum to improve the yam value chain in Abuja. The community visits served as a vehicle to create awareness about YIIFSWA and for capacity building on seed production.

The team was composed of Dr David Philips (NRI); Dr Raoul Klutse (AGRA); Drs Norbert Maroya, Beatrice Aighewi, Djana Mignouna, and Oiwaja Odihi (IITA); Drs Marcel Ogbonna, Louise Abayomi, and Hussein Etudaiye (NRCRI), and Dr Adamu Shuaibu (MDGs/MSHR).

The outreach, a 2-phase program, began with a 2-day validation workshop followed by community visits. Representatives of farmers, traders, and transporters from 37 communities in Abuja and Niger, the neighboring state, attended the workshop. They confirmed the findings of the baseline

and profiling studies on yam production systems, value chain analysis, farmers' organizations and their service providers.

Apart from the validation exercise, presentations were made on IITA and its activities, YIIFSWA, the benefits of collective marketing, marketing information, and business planning. Farmers were encouraged to interact, keep records, and form organizations which, among other benefits, will serve as a forum for capacity development.

Increasing quantity and improving quality of seed yam was another topic that drew much attention as the unavailability of good quality seed yam was acknowledged to be a major problem for farmers in Abuja. Participants were informed of studies currently going on to reduce postharvest losses of tubers, especially in storage and during marketing.

In the communities, farmers were taught how to rapidly propagate micro tubers through vine cuttings for seed propagation. Women were particularly encouraged to take up seed propagation for commercial purposes since it is not as laborious as producing ware yam.



One of the participants in the validation workshop.

“The response has been great; the outreach is indeed a success story. Communities are buying into the idea and are already forming and selecting delegates to represent them at the Abuja yam development forum. They have already done so in Gwagwalada Council Area,” said Dr Aighewi, Objective 3 leader on seed systems.

## IITA Headquarters to host 6th reunion of alumni

The sixth reunion of IITA alumni will be held in IITA Ibadan, in March, next year, announced the local organizing committee composed of IITA staff and alumni.

The event will provide an opportunity for former and current staff, training participants, and students to come together, share experiences, and revisit IITA and get reacquainted with its programs and

activities. Several activities have been scheduled for the week-long event including meetings with staff, social events, sports and recreation, lab and field trips, and visits to interesting sites in Ibadan to allow greater interaction.

Field trips are being arranged to places in Oyo, Ibadan City, University of Ibadan, farms and cassava processing

centers outside IITA-Ibadan campus with provision for security and transport. The reunion will also highlight IITA's scientific breakthroughs in the last 46 years. For more information, please contact: Dr Kenton Dashiell, [k.dashiell@cgiar.org](mailto:k.dashiell@cgiar.org) or Elizabeth Jegede, [e.jegede@cgiar.org](mailto:e.jegede@cgiar.org).

To register and see the program, visit the alumni page on: <http://www.iita.org/alumni>



IITA Alumni reunion in Bali, 2011.