



Study on consumer preference of processed cassava products planned for five African countries

International researchers met in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to develop a strategy and agree on a joint methodology to conduct surveys on consumers' preferences for various processed cassava products in Benin, Cameroon, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania. The meeting, hosted by IITA, was held on 21-24 January 2014.

The study aims to get a better understanding of the variety of processed cassava products in the five countries, their quality, and consumer preferences. The study will look at the food chain, the economic viability of the products, and the gender roles in the processing of these products.

The project is funded under the Roots, Tubers and Banana (RTB) CGIAR Research Program (CRP). It is one of three



Genevieve Fliedel giving an overview of the RTB postharvest projects for cassava processing.



Anna Temu, a cassava processor in Dar es Salaam, showing the RTB team her packed cassava flour during the field tour after the meeting.

case studies to be conducted to find ways to support postharvest management of roots, tubers and banana under the CRP.

Victor Manyong, IITA R4D Director for East Africa, said the study is very relevant to the institute as cassava is a very important crop for smallholder farmers in the continent and, therefore, in its efforts toward lifting 11 million farmers out of poverty as outlined in its refreshed strategy.

Genevieve Fliedel, a food scientist from 'Le Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement' (CIRAD) and one of the workshop conveners, said the case study would give researchers a clearer picture of the diversity of processed cassava products in the five countries, quality characteristics, and consumer preferences.

"We will select in each country processed cassava products to analyze for gender-based sensory profile and consumer acceptability. This, in turn, will help the

post-harvest work to ensure the products developed meet consumer preferences and are acceptable," she said.

Adebayo Abass, IITA's value chain specialist, says the product to be pretested in Tanzania would be cassava flour to support the government's efforts in promoting the use of composite flour in making 'ugali', an important meal in many parts of East Africa.

"We have wanted to conduct this kind of study for a long time to get data to support the government's desire to promote the blending of maize flour to create demand for cassava flour. This, in turn, will drive the production of cassava, create jobs through processing, and contribute to food security and reduce unemployment and poverty especially in the rural areas," Abass said.

Organizations involved in the case studies are IITA, CIAT, CIRAD, Natural Resource Institute (NRI), and the national research partners in the five countries.

Got a story to share? Please email it with photos and captions to Andrea Gros (a.gros@cgiar.org), Katherine Lopez (k.lopez@cgiar.org), Jeffrey T. Oliver (j.oliver@cgiar.org), Godwin Atser (g.atser@cgiar.org), or Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org).

MIRACLE success story: A push in the right direction (and some seeds) can make all the difference

Working hard, staying motivated, and being resourceful are cardinal in improving one's life. Such are the qualities of Lufeyo Ndekela Zinde, a farmer-beneficiary of the SIDA-funded MIRACLE project in Mansa District of Luapula Province, northern Zambia.

Lufeyo is 48, married, and a father of 9 children. He acquired a piece of land where he settled in 2002 after relocating from the suburbs of Mansa town. Between then and 2011 (when MIRACLE started), he was relying mostly on growing cassava and groundnuts as a source of livelihood for the family.

His first contact with IITA, through MIRACLE, was in June 2012 when he attended a farmers' training on vegetable production. As part of the project's efforts to promote vegetable production and consumption under its nutrition component, the project supported him with 25 g of cabbage, tomato, and *mpwa* (a traditional eggplant) seeds, which he planted in July 2012.

Applying the knowledge and skills he learned, Lufeyo harvested a total 900 kg of the vegetables. While his family consumed some of the produce, Lufeyo sold the rest, earning some K350 (around US\$65). From the sales, he bought more vegetable seeds in September 2012 and had a bumper harvest. From the sales of his second crop, he was also able to buy 2 bags of fertilizer and maize seeds, which he planted in July the following year on 0.25 ha of land intercropped with groundnuts. He harvested again in December.

Traditionally, many farmers plant in November and harvest in April. Lufeyo, though, thought that if he plants vegetables in July and gets a good harvest, then he might as well plant maize and groundnut in July and harvest in December too.

"My farm is right beside a lake and I can irrigate my crops just like what I did with my vegetables. This ensures that I have crops to sell the whole year and my family have food to eat throughout the year," he says.

While he harvested in December last year, other farmers were just starting to plant. With an instinct for business, Lafuyo bartered his tomato harvest with 32 50-kg bags of dry cassava chips, which he sold to fisherfolks at the Bangweulu swamps at K130.00. This netted him K4160



Lufeyo (in white shirt) with his family alongside the dilapidated house he intends to rebuild from the extra farm income that he now enjoys, thanks to the help of the IITA/ MIRACLE Project.

(US\$785). With this money, he plans to buy more farm inputs, keep some to send one of his children to college next year, and refurbish their house, which, he said, is "falling apart".

Previously, the household only ate one meal a day. Now, Lafuyo's family eats three square meals of nutritious food daily. He was also able to send back his eldest child to college and continues to pay for the school fees of his other children. They now have a diversified source of income and an improved ability to make decisions on how to use it for the benefit of the household.

"I am very grateful to MIRACLE for showing me how to cope with life's challenges. For many farmers like me, most of the time we just focus on what we see others are doing and imitate them, and sometimes we forget that we have our own God-given abilities that we could use to improve our lives."

"We just need a little push in the right direction, and this is what MIRACLE did for me," Lufeyo concluded.

Help conserve electricity!

Before leaving the workplace at the day's end, 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.

IITA hosts project management course for researchers from Ethiopia and South Sudan

IITA hosted the second and final session of training on project management for researchers from universities in Ethiopia and South Sudan who are involved in an initiative seeking to build the capacity of agriculture researchers to support efforts to improve food security and livelihoods of smallholder farmers in the two countries. The training was held at IITA-Tanzania's new science building on 20-24 January 2014.

The project, *Controlling Diseases in Sweet Potato and Enset in Ethiopia and South Sudan to Improve Productivity and Livelihoods Under Changing Climatic Condition*, is working with three universities: University of Hawassa and University of Mekelle in Ethiopia, and University of Juba in South Sudan.

Trine Hvoslef-Eide, from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences and the project coordinator and also an IITA Board member, says the project seeks to contribute to food security in the two countries through research on viruses and nematodes in sweet potato and enset – important food security crops in the two countries – by building the capacity of researchers. Ethiopia, she noted, had put in a lot of effort in improving its higher education system; while South Sudan, as a young country, is starting to build its own.

“We want to create a strong partnership between researchers from the two countries, and from IITA, CIP (International Potato Center), and the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) so they can support and learn from each other,” she said. “I am also happy that IITA is involved as it has a lot of expertise in the areas we are interested in and the training is also in line with the eastern Africa hub's strategy of expanding its activities in Ethiopia and South Sudan.”

This was reiterated by Victor Manyong, IITA Regional Director for Eastern Africa. He said that, “Capacity building is very important in our efforts to lift 11 million people out of hunger and poverty as indicated in our refreshed strategy. And in our eastern Africa hub strategy, we want to spread into more countries in the region including South Sudan and Ethiopia”.

The project will support five PhD students from the three countries and improvement of the research facilities in



Group photo of the researchers from Ethiopia and South Sudan, IITA counterparts and Trine Hvoslef-Eide, the project's coordinator and an IITA board member.

the three universities. IITA researchers based in its Eastern Hub will be supporting the project through the supervision of the students.

One of the participants, Phillip Wani Marchelo, an associate professor at the University of Juba, highlighted the importance of the initiative to South Sudan. “We lost many of our sweet potato varieties due to the war in South Sudan. We need improved varieties that are resistant to disease and high yielding to boost food security in the area,” he said.

“The University of Juba was formerly

in Khartoum during the war. When we gained independence, we lost over half of our teaching staff when we relocated to Juba. Currently, we only have 75 faculty members. We need support to train PhD and MSc students,” he said.

The project is funded by the Norwegian Programme for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development (NORHED) which seeks to support collaboration between Norwegian universities and those from low and middle income countries. Another project partner is Biodorsk.

IITA-Malawi staff cited for dedication, hard work

Makaiko Khonje, Research Associate in IITA-Malawi, was conferred a Management Award recognizing his dedication, hard work, and personal sacrifice towards attaining the mission and vision of the institute in the course of 2013.

In an official letter to Makaiko citing the award, Nteranya Sanginga, IITA Director General, congratulated the Research Associate on this special recognition and urged him to continue to maintain high levels of energy, resilience, and willingness to invest more efforts in his work. He added that IITA needs more people like him if the institute is to realize its goal of lifting 7 million people out of hunger and poverty by the year 2020.

Makaiko, who joined IITA in March 2012, sees this as a challenge and



Makaiko at work in the field.

motivation not only to him, but the entire IITA-Malawi and the impact assessment team of which he is a member.

“Nobody knows everything and learning is a continuous process. It will be a mistake to simply sit down and be contented. It is never enough until we achieve what we have set out to do,” he said.

“I thank Dr Alene Arega, the IITA Country Representative, for his direct support to my performance,” added Makaiko, who holds an MSc degree in Agricultural Economics from Makerere University.

Along with the congratulatory letter, Makaiko also received a commemorative plaque and a merit increase.

Upcoming events

Central Africa Hub

- Commissioning of IITA Science Building, 5 June 2014, Bukavu, DR Congo

Eastern Africa Hub

- RTB Postharvest project meeting on “Driving livelihoods improvement through demand-driven interventions for competitive production and processing of RTBs”, 21–22 January, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- CGIAR Consortium Board Meeting, 19 - 20 March 2014, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Southern Africa Hub

- Cassava World Africa. Theme: “*Transforming Cassava in Africa - Enhancing Food Security through Agro-industrial Products*”. 20 - 21 March 2014, Radisson Blu Hotel, Lusaka, Zambia. <http://www.cmtevents.com/eventschedule.aspx?ev=140312&>.

West Africa Hub

- Sixth Reunion of IITA Alumni 12 - 15 March 2014, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria
- IITA Board meeting, IITA-Benin, 6 - 9 May 2014, Cotonou, Benin

Announcement: IITA Gymnasium schedule & fees

The IITA Gymnasium announces that effective 1 February 2014 its membership fees will be as follows:

- Singles: 3000 Naira per month
- Couples: 5000 Naira per month
- Families with 4 members: 7500 Naira per month
- Day Pass: 500 Naira per day

Discounts will be given to gym users who will pay 3 months in advance. Discounted fees are as follows:

- Singles: 2700 Naira per month x 3 = 8100 Naira
- Couples: 4500 Naira per month x 3 = 13 500 Naira
- Families with 4 members: 7000 Naira per month x 3 = 21 000 Naira

Payments could be made either by cash at the IITA Cashier or charged to the staff’s personal account.

The IITA-Gymnasium is located at the Wellness Center (between the Medical Unit and the Security Office). It is open to IITA community members and all IITA staff and their immediate families. The gym is open from 6:00 AM to 8:00 PM daily. A gym instructor is available Monday through Friday, from 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM, and the first and the third Saturdays of each month from 8:00 AM to 12:00 noon.