



## Researchers and stakeholders meet to harmonize BXW control strategies in Central Africa

IITA and partners met on 17 May at the Food for the Hungry office in Bukavu to harmonize Banana Xanthomonas Wilt (BXW) control strategies.

Chris Okafor, IITA Humidtropics Coordinator for East and Central Africa noted that the impact of BXW on livelihoods is huge, and urged for a concerted and collective action from stakeholders to combat the disease.

Banana Xanthomonas Wilt (BXW) has been a great concern and a threat to food security in several countries including DR Congo.

The multidisciplinary approach to participatory disease control requires partnerships for technology development, adaptation and adoption, and a platform for participatory planning, experience sharing and exchange. Because of poor government policy, the financial commitment from the government to banana research is negligible and NARS also lack both the financial and human resources to overcome BXW. The initiation and reinforcement of the stakeholders' platform will enable actors to identify and prioritize constraints



*Researchers and stakeholders meet in Bukavu*

for collective action and participatory planning will also ensure that partners hold ownership.

The meeting had 44 participants representing 22 organizations from the private and public sectors including local and international NGOs, NARS/ universities, extension workers, and farmer associations.

Assumani Bernard, South Kivu Provincial Inspector for Agriculture and Livestock (IPAPEL) gave the opening remarks and highlighted the efforts made by the government, research institutions, and NGOs in managing BXW.

There were also presentations

on specific case studies from CRS, World Vision, Action Contre la Faim (ACF), Université Evangélique d'Afrique Centrale (UEA), IPAPEL/Louvain Développement, Centre de Promotion Rurale (CPR), Earth and Life Institute of Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL), INERA, and Food for the Hungry (FH) DRC. FAO and Bioversity International also made presentations.

The meeting allowed time for interaction and discussion and Mr Sylvain Mapatano of DIOBASS gave an update on upcoming Humidtropics Action Site workshop for the Kivus in DR Congo.

### ... Eye witness: BXW devastation on the field

Elena Mwajimbi, a farmer in Katana village, whose farm is devastated by BXW called for urgent assistance from research institutes and partners to remedy her situation as her children no longer go to school because of BXW.

The call prompted action with participants paying a visit to Katana village to witness the devastating effect of BXW and the on-going experiment on single diseased stem removal. The meeting was facilitated by Emmanuel Njukwe of IITA Burundi and moderated by Jonathan Byakombe, the coordinator of national seed service (SENASA).



*Participants visit a banana field devastated by BXW*

## Rwanda joins fight to combat mycotoxins



Participants at the inception workshop organized by RAB in Kigali

Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) successfully organized an inception meeting on 7 and 8 May in Kigali for a project funded by USAID Rwanda: "Mycotoxin contamination in Rwanda: Quantifying the problem in maize and cassava in households and markets, and sensitization of targeted stakeholders based on a cost/benefit analysis." IITA is leading the implementation of the project in 2013 through collaboration with RAB, Rwanda Bureau of Standards (RBS), and Geographic Information Systems and Remote Sensing Regional Outreach Center (CGIS) at the National University of Rwanda (NUR). The purpose of the workshop was to raise awareness of mycotoxins to

Rwandese stakeholders from agricultural, public health, and trade sectors and to provide them with the opportunity to give insights and guidance to help with project implementation. One output from the meeting was to reach consensus on where and when samples should be collected that are representative of the maize and cassava value chains in Rwanda. These geo-referenced samples will be analyzed for 150 mycotoxins by the Center for Analytical Chemistry; IFA/Tulln, Austria to determine prevalence levels. Mycotoxins are poisons produced by fungi that, depending on the level of contamination, cause extreme illness to humans and animals. As a consequence

of these negative health effects, international trade is strictly regulated to ensure that agricultural products are not contaminated beyond threshold levels. Globally, about \$1.2 billion is lost in commerce annually, with African economies losing \$450 million each year due to unacceptable mycotoxin levels. This project fits with the Strategic Plan for Transformation of Agriculture in Rwanda (PSTA II) which makes it a priority to promote commodity chains and agribusiness development with easy access to regional and international markets. Developing risk analysis and monitoring systems for mycotoxin contamination is a key action to make the maize and cassava value chains safe and profitable. Fen Beed, IITA pathologist stated that "it is particularly encouraging to see Rwanda's RBS and RAB of MINAGRI actively joining forces to quantify the scale of mycotoxin contamination for two important staple crops, and that results will help to justify future mitigation strategies in a cost efficient manner."

## YIIFSWA holds annual progress review and monitoring in Kumasi

YIIFSWA held its annual progress review and monitoring meeting from 28 April to 4 May in Kumasi Ghana. The event was an exhibition of achievements on the seven objectives and cross cutting activities attained within the 18 months of project implementation. In his opening speech Hans Adu-Dapaah, Director, CSIR-Crops Research Institute, Ghana, stated that YIIFSWA had made a lot of successes. He commended YIIFSWA for its commitment and hard work



Stakeholders at the annual planning and monitoring meeting in Kumasi

and he admonished the team not to be complacent but focus on the goals to achieve set targets.

Professor Felix Nweke of Michigan State University celebrated IITA's breakthrough in white yam seed production through aeroponic.

He said, "Seven months ago it was an idea that people had doubts about but today it is a reality and I am extremely

excited about the achievement and what is to come of it." "This success alone has paid off the investment in YIIFSWA," he added. The team also visited project sites in Ejura and the renowned Techiman Yam market. Farmers and marketers expressed their challenges in producing and marketing yam.

### Seminars

#### Title 1: Food consumption trends in West Africa

Presenter: Dr Mbaye Yade  
Date: Wednesday 05 June 2013  
Time: 10:00 -11:00 am  
Venue: Vigna Room

#### Title 2: Yam: Tools for accelerated breeding and propagation.

Presenter: Dr Yukiko Kashihara  
Venue: Vigna Room  
Time: 9:00 – 10:00 am  
Date: Wednesday, 19 June 2013

## IITA Goodwill Ambassador Obasanjo wants more ambassadors

To effectively tackle the challenge of hunger and poverty across the continent, IITA will need more Goodwill Ambassadors, says the former President Olusegun Obasanjo. At a dinner organized by the IITA Board of Trustees in honor of Obasanjo on 12 May in Dar es Salaam; the former president, who is also the only Goodwill Ambassador for the Institute, noted that the challenge before IITA is enormous, and that advocacy was critical for the Institute to attract the necessary support and goodwill for the task ahead.

Underpinning the need for agricultural transformation as the vehicle for socioeconomic transformation in the tropics,



*IITA Ambassador Obasanjo addressing stakeholders in Dar*

IITA Ambassador Obasanjo reiterated that IITA needed a critical mass of Goodwill Ambassadors that would raise awareness on the innovations available at the Institute, and also mobilize resources for scientific research.

Vice Chair of the BoT, John Griffith commended IITA Ambassador Obasanjo for accepting to serve as a Goodwill Ambassador for the Institute. The dinner was a prelude to the launch of the Science Building that took place on 13 May 2013.

## Reactivating partnerships: AE&RD discusses with IITA



*Members of the Department of Agricultural Extension & Rural Development, University of Ibadan pay a courtesy visit to IITA and were received by Dashiell*

Members of the Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development from the University of Ibadan paid a courtesy visit to the Deputy Director General, Partnerships and Capacity Building, Kenton Dashiell, on Friday, 26 May 2013.

The leader of the delegation, Prof Ademola Ladele explained that the aim of the visit was to reactivate the partnership between IITA and the

Department of Agricultural Extension & Rural Development. The meeting also sought to appreciate IITA for her contribution towards the successful hosting of the 2012 conference of the Nigerian Rural Sociological Association.

Both IITA and the Department reviewed the past and present, and planned for the future.

Prof Ladele explained that the coming of Dr Nteranya

Sanginga as the DG of IITA had dramatically brought IITA close to the host community [Nigeria] than at any other time in the past. According to him, Dr Sanginga initiated a broad stretch of hands of fellowship at the national level and at the local level by his visit to the Vice-Chancellor of UI.

"Of course the VC, who is also an ardent preacher of possibility and transformation, had made a return visit," he added.

Prof Ladele highlighted areas of common interest between the two organizations. These include: building partnerships and enhancing capacities to generate impact at the farm level, transforming the lives of farmers, enhancing wealth and guaranteeing food security, and eradicating hunger and poverty

Welcoming the delegation, Dashiell reiterated IITA's commitment to working with partners to save Africa from the pangs of hunger and poverty.

## Fascination of Plants Day 2013 celebration in IITA-Tanzania



*Coyne with Grade 3 pupils*

As part of the celebrations for the second global Fascination of Plants Day, which was held on 18 May 2013, a presentation was made to Grade 3 pupils of the International School of Tanganyika in Tanzania. The pupils in recent times have been studying the world of plants. The presentation/demonstration was done by Danny Coyne, who recruited "future IITA scientists," and with the opportunity presenting itself also introduced the pupils to the wonderful world of nematology. The children were enthusiastic learners of the world of plants. They were intrigued by tissue culture banana, and fascinated that this could help provide healthy, disease-free plants for farmers.

## Okafor is now Action Area Coordinator with Humidtropics

Christopher Okafor has rejoined the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) on 15 May 2013 as Action Area Coordinator for the East and Central African Action Area of the Humidtropics in Bukavu, DR Congo. Okafor, popularly known as Chris worked with TechnoServe Tanzania as an International Cocoa Adviser from September 2011 to April 2013. Before joining TechnoServe, he worked as Country Manager, Nigeria (2006–Sept 2011) and Pilot Project Manager (2003–2005) of the IITA/Sustainable Tree Crops Program (STCP) funded by USAID and the World Cocoa Foundation.



Prior to joining STCP-Nigeria, he was a key player in the implementation of the IITA's human capacity

development initiatives, rising from Administrative Officer position in 1988 to a managerial position in 1991 and exiting as the Coordinator of IITA Training Program in 2003. He holds a PhD (Educational/ Program Evaluation) in 2000 from the University of Ibadan; a Master of Business Administration in 1983 from the University of Delhi, Delhi (India); a Bachelor of Commerce (Honors) in 1981 from the University of Delhi, Delhi (India); and a Diploma (Agriculture) in 1976 from the Federal School of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria.

Okafor, a Nigerian, is married to Chika and they have three children. He can be contacted on his e-mail address [C.Okafor@cgiar.org](mailto:C.Okafor@cgiar.org) or his telephone number +243999788278.

## Akello joins IITA team in Zambia



Juliet Akello has joined the IITA team in Lusaka (Zambia) as Postdoctoral Fellow – Plant Pathology (Aflatoxin Biocontrol). An alumnus of the University of Bonn (Germany), Akello received a Doctorate of Plant Pathology/Entomology in 2012.

She obtained an MSc (Crop Science) in 2008 and a BSc (Biomedical Laboratory Technology) in 2005 from Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda. She received a Diploma in Science Technology (Biological Techniques) from Uganda Polytechnic Kyambogo, Uganda in 2000.

Before this appointment, Akello was a Senior Lecturer at the University of Umutara Polytechnic (UP), Nyagatare, Rwanda. She worked as a Junior Researcher at the Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn, from August 2008

to March 2012, as QA/QC Coordinator at the Makerere University Walter Reed Project (MUWRP), Uganda from September 2007 to July 2008, a part-time Lecturer at Makerere University from August 2006 to July 2008, a Consultant at Agrotechnologies Limited (AGT), Kampala, Uganda from September 2007 to July 2008, and Research Assistant from October 2001 to October 2005 with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA).

Akello is a Ugandan and can be contacted via her e-mail: [J.Akello@cgiar.org](mailto:J.Akello@cgiar.org).

## Welcome on board Leke

Walter Leke has joined the Virology and Molecular Diagnostics Unit at IITA-Ibadan, Nigeria as Visiting Scientist (Molecular Diagnosis of Viruses) and will be conducting research on viruses infecting yams. He studied Biochemistry (BSc level) at the University of Buea, Cameroon from 1993 to 1996 and obtained his MSc in Biochemistry at the same University in 1998. He received his PhD in Biology with specialization in Virology at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Uppsala, Sweden in 2010. He completed his PhD studies working on begomoviruses (family Geminiviridae) that infect vegetable crops



in south-western Cameroon. He has been working in the Root and Tuber program of the Institute of Agricultural Research for Development (IRAD)

in Cameroon since 2002 as the lone plant virologist and therefore participated in the IFAD/TAG 704 yam project for West and Central Africa funded by IITA. He is the current National Scientific Coordinator of Annual Crops Research (roots, tubers, banana and plantains; cereals; legumes; and industrial annual crops: cotton and tobacco) in IRAD, thus coordinating all research activities in Cameroon that fall within the annual crops. His research interest are in Molecular Plant virus epidemiology/ecology with special interest in small circular DNA Viruses (geminiviruses and nanoviruses)/vector-virus plant interactions, Bioinformatics, and next generation sequencing.

His office is located in building 401 (room 27) with telephone extension 2961. He can also be contacted by e-mail at [W.Leke@cgiar.org](mailto:W.Leke@cgiar.org) and telephone number 08144551346.