



IITA and DFID discuss how to ensure agricultural innovations and food security

Scientists and development specialists met on World Food Day to discuss policies that will enable the growth of food, agriculture, food security and livelihoods in the South Western region of Nigeria, and address the obstacles behind it.

Participants to the one-day focus group discussion in IITA headquarters in Ibadan came from IITA and UKAid Department for International Development (DFID).

In his welcome address, Deputy Director General for Partnerships and Capacity Development Kenton Dashiell said that IITA has developed new modalities and technologies to address these development issues and get these innovations to the end users.

Responding on behalf of DFID, the regional coordinator of the South West Region, Dr Adesina Fagbenro Byron thanked IITA for providing knowledge on agricultural research but also noted that more needs to be done on disseminating the results of this research.

Referring to agriculture as an existing “diamond”, he said, “I hope this meeting will start the process of ‘washing’ the diamond and to also solve the information use gap and deficiency in agriculture as well as food security in the south west of Nigeria.”

He added that DFID’s economic growth policy promotes support for

non-oil growth and will further push for agricultural growth in the region.

Commenting at the meeting, the facilitator, Dr O.A.K. Adeshinwa of the Institute of Agricultural Research & Training (IAR&T), thanked IITA for championing the cause of agricultural research and food security in Africa and Nigeria in particular. He said the meeting was “ordained” because “today is World Food Day and considering all that IITA has achieved in research, there is no other place to host the meeting but in IITA”.

He also cited the institute for actively engaging the youth in agriculture by changing their orientation towards the vast business opportunities in agriculture.

He said that if government in the south west can adopt the model of the IITA Youth Agripreneur (IYA), agriculture would move to the next level as less focus will be on oil and gas, which have been the major sources of income for the government in the last few decades.

The meeting was attended by several IITA scientists who presented on the innovations on food value chain on crops such as soybean, yam, maize, and cassava. IITA scientists included Drs Antonio Lopez and Ranjana Bhattacharjee who presented on yam; Mr Remi Adeleke on soybean; Engr Lawrence Kaptoge and Dr Silvestro Meseka on aflasafe and maize;

Dr Richardson Okechukwu on cassava value chain; and Dr Alfred Dixon, head of the Partnership Coordination Office.

IYA representative Ayodeji Idowu, in his presentation, advocated for youth support and involvement in agriculture. He reported that the IYA model is being replicated in DRC and Tanzania and in the northeastern part of Nigeria with the just-concluded training of youths in Borno State.

The interactive sessions revealed gaps in knowledge on the value chain benefits in some crops especially yam.

A representative of the Osun state government, Mr Aikulola, said the state government is looking forward to partnering with IYA on how to effectively engage the youth in agriculture.

Speaking on effective agricultural policy and poverty reduction, Dr Fagbenro spoke about the important mechanisms needed for any policy to work effectively, including some policy tools.

At the end of the meeting, comments and recommendations were also discussed. A key consensus was that government should be encouraged to engage the youth in agriculture and also be committed towards food security and agriculture.

The participants agreed that if even 1% of the oil subsidy is earmarked for agriculture, there will be a huge difference in the sector.



A group photo of the IITA-DFID meeting participants.

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

Africa RISING West Africa Project undergoes external review

The West Africa component of the Africa RISING program underwent an IITA-commissioned external review of project activities in Mali and Ghana. The review, which started in early September and ended last week, aimed to assess conformity of the implemented work with the research framework developed for the program level. The review team was composed of three independent external reviewers.

The team of reviewers is currently working on a final report, having completed 3 weeks of field visits, face-to-face meetings with project partners and leaders, as well as discussions with IITA senior management. It is expected that the review will provide recommendations on management of the project, staffing, as well as the partnerships for achieving the project objectives.

A debriefing among the reviewers, IITA senior management, and project staff where preliminary outcomes of the review were discussed was held on 17 October at IITA headquarters in Ibadan. The reviewers commended most of the ongoing work within the project in their preliminary report.

“There is a lot of great work going on in the project! We enjoyed the technology parks in Ghana which are great sites for



Two members of a women farmer's group in Mali showcase a trial site on intercropping nutritious trees and vegetables.

research, training, and demonstration. We were also quite impressed by the interaction between the researchers and the farmers,” said the lead reviewer, Jim Ellis-Jones at the end of the debriefing.

Also speaking during the debriefing session, Dr Kenton Dashiell, IITA’s Deputy Director General for Partnerships and Capacity Development, thanked the review team for their dedication and effort. He also congratulated the Africa RISING project staff for a well organized review as well as for making the review process transparent.

The final report of the review is expected

to be ready in mid-November. The Project Coordinator, Dr Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon, said that the outcome from the review will be useful for the project leadership to improve Africa RISING West Africa.

“We are looking forward to getting the report which will help us rectify some shortcomings to ensure that Africa RISING West Africa continues to deliver on its objectives. The implementation of the recommendations will also be useful to our project as we prepare for a donor-commissioned program review sometime next year.”

Nontraditional partnership: IITA-Kalambo partners with Catholic Archdiocese for agricultural development in South Kivu, DRC

IITA has signed a memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Catholic Archdiocese of Bukavu in the South Kivu Province of the DR Congo. The MoU defines the framework for the cooperation between the Catholic Church and IITA.

The agreement, which is a marked departure from the usual partnership with nongovernment organizations and government agencies, enables the two parties to pursue agricultural research for development to improve livelihoods of the populace while sustaining the integrity of the natural resource base. The specific areas of cooperation identified include: food crops research and production; livestock and fishery research and production; vegetable production; agro-processing and marketing; training of farmers; youth leadership and entrepreneurship in agriculture; and collaboration in sponsoring business incubation programs.

Under the agreement, the Church has released over 3 hectares of farmland to IITA that will be used as a research farm

as well as several hectares for the IITA-Kalambo Youth Agripreneur (IKYA) for crop and vegetable production at its Agricultural Center in Murhesa. The Center has been renovated to create rooms for offices and guest rooms for IKYA members who will be engaged in agro-processing activities using underutilized machines and equipment that are at the Center.

The Catholic Church following in South Kivu represents about 51% of the

population. Through this initiative, IITA hopes to reach thousands of farmers in South Kivu Province.

Commenting on this development, the Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese, Monsignor Francois-Xavier Maroy Rusengo, lauded DG Nteranya Sanginga for reaching out to the Church. He said that he would ensure that Catholic faithfuls in the province take advantage of this unique opportunity.



The Archbishop, Monsignor Francois - Xavier Maroy Rusengo with Dr B. Vanluuwe and other IITA scientists, IITA-Kalambo.

IITA Cassava Weed Project team calls on Vice Chancellor, University Agriculture Makurdi

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Agriculture Makurdi (UAM), Prof Emmanuel Kucha has reiterated the university's commitment to work with IITA to address the challenges to cassava production especially weeds.

The Vice Chancellor made the commitment during a courtesy visit to his office by members of the IITA Cassava Weed Management Project who were at the University to draw a communication plan for the project.

Prof Kucha noted that for Nigeria to maximize research gains from cassava, all efforts must be on deck to address the thorny issue of weeds. Citing IITA for initiating the project, Prof Kucha said the university was ready to work with IITA on weeds and several other areas of agriculture to reduce hunger and alleviate poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. He also thanked IITA for providing equipment to facilitate cassava weed research and lauded the transparent manner in which the project was being implemented.

Earlier, the Communication & Knowledge Exchange Expert for the Cassava Weed Management Project,



Godwin Atser of the Cassava Weeds Management Project talks about the project.

Godwin Atser talked about the Cassava Weed Management Project, with its goal of increasing cassava productivity for about 125,000 farm families.

He assured the University of IITA's commitment to research, partnership, and capacity development.

After the courtesy visit, the communication focal persons from IITA, National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI) Umudike, UAM and Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta (FUNAAB) proceeded to a separate

meeting to develop a communication plan that will guide the implementation of the project in line with the project's Results Framework, and also to review communication and knowledge sharing products including the web portal, project brief, and newsletter, and share lessons/experiences.

Communication focal persons in attendance were Katherine Lopez and Godwin Atser (IITA), Moses Okwusi (NRCRI), Grace Sokoya (FUNAAB), and Mary Agada (UAM).

C4D and community media for family farming



CGIAR and IITA present farmers' organization We RATE as an example of inclusive research to the FAO 'Forum on Communication for Development & Community Media for Family Farming'. Full story in next week's bulletin.

Update on Ebola Virus Disease

The good news is Nigeria and Senegal have been declared free of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak. The bad news is new cases are cropping up elsewhere! The US now has a fourth case--a physician who worked with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) International and recently returned from Guinea (asymptomatic) but developed symptoms after his arrival in the US--and Mali reported its first case--a 2-year-old girl who tested positive today.

A sustained effort on surveillance and prevention is still imperative at a global level and particularly in West Africa, advised Dr Samson Adeleke. Everyone is therefore asked to sustain the adoption of relevant preventive measures that had been earlier put in place.

Safety Week in IITA!

IITA marked Safety Week 2014, 20-24 October, with the theme "Be Aware, Be Safe". The activity aimed to raise awareness among staff about occupational risks and the simple

measures they can take to reduce those risks for safer and healthier lives. Safety Week shows IITA's commitment to ensure safety of all staff at work in all IITA locations across Africa.

ARCN visits Agripreneurs in IITA

The Director of Gender and Youth of the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARC�), Mrs D.I. Ogbede, recently visited the office of the IITA Youth Agripreneurs in Ibadan.

In a short talk, she identified land and capital as the major constraints hindering youths from going into agriculture.

She said, "Most youths who had shown interest in agriculture in the past were frustrated due to lack of funds and adequate land for farming."

Mrs Ogbede added that if government can come to the aid of the youths by providing soft loans from microfinance banks, agriculture will be easier and more

fascinating to the youth.

"Government needs to help the youth to get lands and loans from microfinance banks for them to go into proper farming. In Nigeria, when someone acquires land and clears the place, somebody will just come up from nowhere to claim the land. Not only that, many youths are faced with the difficulty of getting funds to start their own farm, so if the government can provide soft loans too, many of them will be more involved in agriculture," she said.

Mrs Ogbede expressed amazement on the success recorded so far by the group and said that she had wanted to revisit the group after the workshop on youth in

agribusiness in IITA held in May 2014. She added that the workshop served as an eye opener on the various opportunities of engaging youths in agriculture.

While giving a rundown on the activities of the group, the coordinator of the group, Mr Akinyele Bankole, said that the two arms of the group, comprised of the production and the partnership and marketing arms, work tirelessly to ensure that they keep the flag of youth-in-agribusiness flying. He added that the group is ensuring that the "gospel" of agribusiness spreads to the nooks and crannies of Africa.

Some IYA members gave presentation on the various components of their operations: Quadri Muritala on cereals and legumes; Avo Ugheoke on roots and tubers; Tomiwa Adesanya on fishery and livestock; Akinsiku Damilola on marketing and processing; Adenmosun Adetola on capacity and development; Michael Nathaniel on monitoring and evaluation; and Adewale Toyin on ICT and communication.

After the presentations, Mrs Ogbede encouraged the youths to continue to work in and promote agriculture. She also commended the youths for the gender equality in the group composition.

Afterwards, IYA members took her on a tour of the fields, pond, and pig pen.



ARC� Director of Gender and Youth., Mrs D.I. Ogbede (left, with glasses), visited the IITA Youth Agripreneurs in IITA recently.

Durante Fish Industries, Ltd to strengthen links with IITA and IITA Youth Agripreneurs



An IYA member explains about the agribusiness activities of the group.

Durante Fish Industries Ltd, one of the major players in the fish industry in West Africa, plans to strengthen ties with the IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA), as the fish firm sees a lot of prospects in the young "agripreneur" program.

This follows a visit on Wednesday, 22 October, by the management of the Durante Fish Industries Ltd. and other distinguished guests to IITA headquarters.

IITA has been linked with Durante Industries which was responsible for the training of the IITA Youth Agripreneurs (IYA) – that led to the formation of the group's fishery unit – and the resultant backstopping. The group is now exploring the possibility of furthering its partnership with the aquaculture giants.

After a warm reception at the Conference Center, the visiting team toured some of

the institute's facilities starting with the IYA fish ponds. They expressed delight on the progress made by the Agripreneurs in fisheries over the past couple of months. "If we have achieved this much in such a short time, then we are prepared to continue and expand this relationship," said Chief Ogie Alakija, Chairman of Durante Fish Industries, Ltd.

From the pond, a stop was made at the field where improved varieties of various crops were showcased and their postharvest products displayed. The tour culminated in a visit to the institute's Business Incubation Platform (BIP) – a model approach in boosting delivery of research results for enhanced impact across Africa.

IITA, with its mandate of providing agricultural solutions for hunger and poverty in the tropics, continues to forge alliances with the private sector in scaling out technologies and stimulating greater demand for products of its interventions.