



## BXW alert in Walungu Territory, DR Congo

An IITA partner is helping raise awareness about banana Xanthomonas wilt (BXW), the most devastating disease of banana in the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

The Food for the Hungry (FH) Agriculture Department in South Kivu, eastern province of DR Congo, recently organized a field visit in Luciga village in Walungu territory to wage an awareness campaign involving local authorities. FH staff also contacted the territorial inspector for agriculture to plan strategies to stop the spread of the disease throughout the territory.

Activities carried out include a field visit to BXW-infected areas with recommendations for urgent actions to be taken.

In March, FH staff visited two villages, Ntundu and Cijocho ler in Luciga health district of Ibula, where BXW was observed. They visited a banana plantation belonging to Mr Vincent Kamamale whose field was about 90% infected. The farmer confirmed that he observed

the presence of BXW in his banana plantation last year but was ignorant of the disease, its origin, and control measures because he had had no major outbreaks in the last 10 years. He reported receiving suckers from Mr Ngangu Abel's field in Ibula region, which was actually attacked by BXW in 2011. None of the farmers in the region were aware of the disease, its origin of infection, and control measures.

FH staff learned that the village representative was aware of the presence of the disease in the region, but took no action. The agronomist and the extension workers of the territorial inspection for agriculture were not informed. They thought that it was a common disease like many others that attack banana.

As a result, FH staff "sensitized" farmers and the village representative about BXW. They explained the disease symptoms, means of contamination, and control measures.

The village representative promised

to disseminate information on the disease through community radio.

FH staff next visited Cijocho ler where they repeated the same awareness campaign. Urgent actions were recommended to prevent disease spread in the village.

The FH delegation visited Walungu center to contact the Inspector of Agriculture. The delegation assessed the actual situation and proposed urgent actions for BXW control. FH, IPAPEL, NGOs and local leaders came together to assess disease incidence and severity and to initiate control strategies involving all stakeholders in the affected area.

At the end of the field visit, the delegation met with community leaders and local chiefs of Ntundu and Cijocho ler to "sensitize" them and raise awareness on strategies to eradicate the disease before it spreads further.

The territorial inspector for agriculture promised wide dissemination about the disease via available media in the region.

## IITA and NextGen Cassava train researchers on new breeding tools

IITA and the Next Generation Cassava Breeding (NextGen Cassava) project jointly organized and trained 35 participants including researchers and graduate students on genomics and bioinformatics at IITA headquarters in Ibadan.

The three-day training workshop was facilitated by three scientists—Lukas Mueller, a biochemist and bioinformatician from Boyce Thompson Institute of Plant Science; Jessen Bredeson, a bioinformatics programmer from the University of California, Berkeley; and Simon Prochnik, a Computational Scientist working on cassava genomics in NextGen Cassava.

The training sought to bridge the knowledge gap between researchers in the developing world and their colleagues across the world in the face of the rapidly changing nature of breeding approaches, according to Drs Melaku Gedil, Ismail Rabbi, and Peter Kulakow, IITA scientists, who coordinated the workshop.

More than 100 young researchers applied for the training, reflecting Africa's willingness to adopt new skills to disentangle the continent from the chains of hunger and poverty.

Participant Olayemi Oluwasoga lauded the training program and commended IITA and NextGen Cassava for organizing the workshop.

"The training gave me a better understanding about bioinformatics ... and with this kind of training, we won't be left out in the world of technology," says Oluwasoga.

To tackle the increasing and complex challenges to food security, genomic resources and bioinformatics tools are increasingly being applied to crop breeding, but lack of expertise in these rapidly evolving research areas limits their use in agricultural

research in Africa, says Dr Rabbi.

This training which was jointly sponsored by IITA's Capacity Development Office and NextGen Cassava, provided a platform for researchers especially breeders to upgrade their skills and knowledge.

Mueller commended the enthusiasm of participants during the training and hoped that it would improve the quality of data being generated by researchers, and would be applied in breeding.

Participants were exposed to both theoretical and practical training on the use of these novel tools.



Participants, organizers, and resource persons, Genomics and Bioinformatics Training Workshop, IITA, Ibadan.

## IITA organized partners meeting 2013 in Bujumbura and in Kigali

IITA partners in Burundi met on 18 April in ISABU, Bujumbura, while partners in Rwanda met on 26 April in Hotel Beausejour in Kigali.

The IITA partners' meeting is an annual event that aims to provide both the old and new partners with updates on activities, share experiences, achievements, constraints, and needs to guide interventions and approaches.

The meeting also provides an opportunity for the various stakeholders to interact with one another. This helps to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of development efforts, strengthen team spirit among partners, and renew confidence. This forum was also used to inform and update partners on developments on the CGIAR Research Program on Integrated Systems for the Humid Tropics (Humidtropics) prior to the launch workshop of East and Central Africa (ECA) Action Area on 20 to 22 May in Bukavu, DR Congo. The Burundi meeting had 39 participants representing 30 organizations of which 10 are new, whereas the Rwanda meeting had 27 participants representing 16 organizations; 4 are new partners.

The Burundi meeting was chaired by Mr Mwikomo Boniface, the first assistant to the minister of agriculture. In Rwanda Dr Gahakwa Daphrose, deputy director for research, Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) led the meeting. Farmers and NGOs who benefited from IITA technologies shared their experiences, achievements, constraints, and needs. Mr Serge Sayokubara, a farmer in Musinga, adopted macropropagation

technology and has established over 5 hectares of improved banana, sold 10,000 plantlets and bunches worth 6,500,000 BIF. A farmer received 125 suckers of FHIA-17 through the NGO FLORESTA on agreement to return 250 suckers after one season for sanitation and further distribution. The NGO FLORESTA farmer met his commitment and in addition,

sold suckers and bunches worth 3,500,000BIF.

Farmers' needs are diverse but centered on land acquisition, improved planting materials, marketing, and postharvest processing. The partners' meeting was facilitated by Emmanuel Njukwe, IITA associate scientist in Burundi.



Participants in the partners meetings: Burundi, above, and Rwanda, below



### Welcome!

Delvaux Baly' Ahamwabo, a Congolese, has joined IITA-DRC in March 2013 as Station Administrator for Kalambo Station of Bukavu.

Mr Baly' Ahamwabo graduated in management of high school of business, Bukavu, DRC. He has 15 years of practical experience in management, finance, and internal audit. He is married. His e-mail address is [d.baly@iitadrc.org](mailto:d.baly@iitadrc.org)



### Announcements

#### Meet the DG

The DG will meet Ibadan-based staff on Tuesday, 30 April, at these times: general staff, 8 am; and senior and management staff and scientists, 10 am, Conference Center. The meeting will be aired live. Staff in the stations can participate by registering at <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8729599306955377920> (first meeting) and <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6338316547682128640> (second meeting). For questions, contact Jim Scott at [j.scott@cgiar.org](mailto:j.scott@cgiar.org).

#### Board Meeting

The spring meeting of the IITA Board of Trustees will be held on 9-12 May at IITA Tanzania.

#### Commissioning

The new, state-of-the art Science Building will be launched in IITA, Dar es Salaam, on 13 May. Key guests include former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo and President of the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar, Dr Ali Mohamed Shein.

## IITA gets Best IDO Award from climate change program

IITA received the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture, and Food Security (CCAFS) Outstanding IDO (Intermediate Development Output) for 2012.

The award was given 'in recognition of the outcome that IITA had achieved on climate-smart banana-coffee systems.' IITA is one of the centers in the only program that includes all the 15 centers of CGIAR. The 'award' was given by CCAFS management at a side event of the University of California (UC) Davis conference on Climate-Smart Agriculture that took place in California in March. Dr Manu Tamo, Insect Ecologist and Country Representative, Benin, received the

award on behalf of IITA at the CCAFS contact point meeting of this event.

According to Dr Piet van Asten, who coordinates this program for IITA, "This is an extra encouragement for IITA to continue investing in the hugely important topic of climate change."

Bruce Campbell, CCAFS Program Director, said "IITA has done an excellent job in achieving this outcome. I would also like to



acknowledge Piet's great work in stimulating a cross-center, cross-program group interest in developing tools for analyzing trade-offs and synergies among goals (e.g., poverty and environmental goals). We look forward to this productive relationship with IITA in general and Piet in his role as the contact point for CCAFS."

To see some of the work done on climate change, watch these videos (parts 1 and 2) developed by Piet with some funding from Oxfam:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bwTQ0LiZG8>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEAOdDSSVN8>

## Snapshots of Sportsfest 2013 opening, IITA IBadan, 19 April

