



Management announces general increases in remuneration and merit

Despite the many challenges in 2012, including on the financial front, Management has made sure that staff welfare and motivation are given the highest priority. Last week, HR announced that IITA Management has approved a 12% increase in annual gross salary/remuneration across all staff categories (PGs 1-15) in recognition of staff commitment to achieving the Institute's goals. In addition, Management has equally approved the following 2012 PAR increases: Exceptional – 6%, Outstanding – 5%, Very Good – 4%, Satisfactory – 2%.

For IRS, the general increase is 3% whereas the merit increases are as follows: Exceptional – 5.5%,

Outstanding – 4.5%, Very good – 3.5%, Good – 2.5%, Satisfactory – 1.5%.

IITA management also took the opportunity to appreciate the hard work and dedication of all staff



IITA banana research staff

throughout 2012. All increases shall be effective 1 January 2013 and will be paid along with the January 2013 payroll.

Management wishes to encourage all staff to reciprocate its commitment to staff welfare by contributing their very best in ensuring that IITA meets and exceeds its objectives and goals at all times. "Everyone must contribute his/her share through individual and collective resolve to improve on our performance and commitment to excellence at all levels." According to DG Nteranya Sanginga, "We should be strong and committed during both good and difficult times".

Management wishes all staff a more result-oriented year.

Year-end message to staff

First, let me start by thanking all staff for their support this past year – to IITA in general and to Management in particular.

I appreciate and commend staff for their hard work, commitment to excellence, and dedication to meeting IITA's goals whatever the difficulties. This past year had been fraught with trials and challenges for IITA, yet each time, staff had risen to the occasion and made sure that the Institute met its objectives and commitments. This shows the resiliency of staff and the organizational culture of excellence in IITA.

We started by repositioning IITA for the task ahead, making sure that our vision of success is aligned with that of the new CGIAR. The focus had been on:

- developing a stronger organizational structure with a redefined focus on research, partnership, and capacity building;
- strengthening the hubs and stations;
- aligning our research programs with the CGIAR research programs (or CRPs) and working more collaboratively with other centers and partners in the system;
- mobilizing resources by tapping nontraditional funding sources to ensure that the Institute is prepared to take on more challenges;

- building a stronger IITA team and raising staff morale;
- rejuvenating IITA to ensure that staff all over have the best tools and infrastructure that would help drive the Institute's priorities in the coming years; and
- building new relationships and forging and strengthening partnerships.

All these have resulted in a stronger organization with a more relevant and focused science platform, responsive staff and more effective institutional mechanisms to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in operations, proactive and more strategic relationships and networks, and an increase in resources that would facilitate the success of its research-for-development programs, i.e., a 37.8% increase in budget this year and the recruitment of more staff

for new and emerging programs and projects.

The path ahead will continue to be littered with even more challenges, but together, we – you and Management – will be able to overcome these difficulties. Let us celebrate our successes but at the same time continue to work together towards achieving our goals. I envision more productive years ahead and an even stronger IITA in the future.

Thus, I would like to encourage all to work even harder to make sure that IITA succeeds in its goal of being the leading partner in Africa in finding solutions to hunger and poverty.

The Management team and I wish everyone health, wealth, happiness, and another successful year. All the best for 2013!



IITA Management in a meeting with staff: L-R: DG N Sanginga, and DDGs K. Dashiell and Y Hillbur..

IITA participates in \$25.2M Next Generation Cassava Breeding project

IITA is participating in a multi-partner initiative that aims to improve cassava's productivity and build human and technical capacity for plant breeding in sub-Saharan Africa.

The 5-year project, called Next Generation Cassava Breeding, is led by Cornell University with partners that include the National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI, Uganda), National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI, in Nigeria), IITA, Boyce Thompson Institute (BTI) for Plant Research in New York, and US Department of Energy Joint Genome Institute of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, in California.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom (DFID) are investing \$25.2 million on the project.

Cassava breeding is a lengthy process, and multiplying and releasing a new variety takes almost a decade. Using novel approaches such as genomic selection can shorten breeding cycles, provide more accurate evaluation at the



Elizabeth Agbamuche carries out controlled pollination on a cassava flower at IITA

seedling stage, and give plant breeders the ability to evaluate a much larger number of clones without the need to plant them in the target environment. Using genomic selection, new releases of cassava could be ready in as little as six years.

"Next Generation Cassava will give breeders in Africa access to the most advanced plant breeding technologies to deliver improved varieties to farmers more rapidly," said Peter Kulakow, IITA cassava breeder and geneticist. "This project will ensure

that cassava genetic research is on a par with other top food crops such as wheat, rice, maize, and potato."

Africa's small farmers produce more than half of the world's cassava, or about 86 million tons from over 10 million hectares. This cash and subsistence crop is predicted to be one of the few crops that will benefit from climate change. It requires few inputs and can withstand drought, marginal soils, and long-term underground storage. No other continent depends on cassava to feed as many people as does Africa, where 500 million people consume it daily.

In addition to using the latest genomic information from cassava sequencing to improve productivity and yield, project partners will incorporate cassava germplasm diversity from South America into African breeding programs, train the next generation of plant breeders, and improve infrastructure at African institutions. They will also hold awareness-building workshops for farmers, scholars, researchers, and policy makers.

IITA and FIIRO explore stronger collaboration

IITA and the Federal Institute of Industrial Research, Oshodi (FIIRO) in Nigeria are forging stronger ties and will work together on postharvest and cassava research, capacity building, and youth development. This was highlighted during a recent visit by IITA to FIIRO.

FIIRO is one of the pioneering R4D centers for cassava in Nigeria. The institute has made significant contributions to the understanding of cassava fermentation and the development of mechanized technologies for processing *gari* and *fufu* flour, among other cassava products.

Recently, collaboration between IITA and FIIRO has been strengthened, especially in the production of cassava bread and training of bread bakers.

In addition, IITA and FIIRO have been collaborating on the development of many research proposals on cassava and postharvest technology in general. One of the proposals is the BiomassWeb project to be funded in the GlobE program of the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF).

The project, led by the Center for Development Research (ZEF) of the University of Bonn, has many African partner institutions, including *icipe* and IITA. The overall goal of the project is to raise food security in Africa by harnessing productivity and efficiency

gains in the whole biomass-producing, processing and trading system by increased integration of all value web components and the cascading use of biomass.

The project will be implemented in Nigeria, Ghana, and Ethiopia. FIIRO, in collaboration with IITA, is one of the participating institutions in Nigeria.

To foster collaboration in this project and other projects, IITA recently visited FIIRO for discussions on partnership strengthening with collaborating scientists and the Director General, Dr Gloria Elemo. IITA was represented

by Dr Adebayo Abass, Coordinator, Cassava Value Chain, based in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania.

During the meeting with Dr Elemo, Abass highlighted the importance of IITA and FIIRO's collaboration, and additional areas of potential collaboration between the two institutions such as capacity building for staff, youth employment programs, and the promotion of cassava bread in Nigeria. Dr Elemo was pleased to receive the IITA scientist and promised to come and visit IITA and meet with DG Nteranya Sanginga.



Dr Adebayo Abass (second from left), representing IITA, visits with FIIRO Director General, Dr Gloria Elemo (second from right). Others in photo are Drs Agnes Asagbra (extreme left) and Bolanle Asiru (extreme right) of FIIRO