

## Senators laud IITA's efforts in improving crop productivity

Nigeria's senators have commended the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) for excellent scientific research, which has resulted in increase in agricultural productivity and improved livelihoods for farmers.

Also the National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI), Umudike wants stronger ties with IITA to help serve Nigeria, in particular, and Africa in general.

Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture who paid a courtesy visit to IITA were unanimous that research and development efforts by IITA were major factors that have made Nigeria a global leader in cassava, cowpea and yam production.

"I must commend the work that you are doing to improve agriculture... We are impressed and glad with the role you are playing — not just in Nigeria but also in Africa," the Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture, Senator Emmanuel Bwacha said.

Senator Bwacha, who was received by the Deputy Director General (Partnerships and Capacity Development), Dr Kenton Dashiell on Tuesday, called for more support and attention to international agricultural research, adding that such efforts were needed to further advance the dissemination of technological innovations at the research centre to



IITA DDG, Partnerships & Capacity Development, Dr Dashiell (fifth from right) and senators of the Federal Republic of Nigeria during a courtesy visit to IITA headquarters in Ibadan

farmers.

Dr Dashiell thanked the senate delegation for the visit to IITA. He pledged that IITA would continue to play the role of improving food security in tropical nations with the aim of increasing agricultural productivity, creating wealth and, more importantly, reducing poverty.

In another related development, the Executive Director of NRCRI, Dr Julius Okonkwo has said that a stronger partnership between IITA and NRCRI is necessary to boost agriculture.

Dr Okonkwo said that past experiences underscored the necessity for more

collaboration between the two institutions, citing that joint efforts between IITA and NRCRI led to the release of 41 improved cassava varieties.

"These varieties have contributed in making Nigeria the world's largest producer of cassava," Dr Okonkwo said during a courtesy visit to IITA in Ibadan.

"Besides cassava, another milestone the two institutes have achieved over the years is the development of and release of 17 improved yam varieties," he added.

Collaboration between IITA and NRCRI began as far back as the 1970's.

Dr Okonkwo who met with the Director General of IITA, Dr Nteranya Sanginga; and Dr Dashiell said NRCRI was proud to be associated with IITA.

He noted that scientists from NRCRI had benefited a lot from IITA's capacity building programs.

As a global leader in crop improvement, IITA devotes its resources to crop research, natural resource management, partnerships and capacity building. Traditionally, IITA's work was concentrated on cassava, yam, cowpea, soybean, banana and plantain, maize and cocoa. However, the refined strategy of the Institute offers the opportunity to expand to other crops with the ultimate aim of reducing poverty in tropical nations.



IITA DG, Dr Nteranya Sanginga (4th from left) and the Executive Director of NRCRI, Dr Julius Okonkwo (3rd from left) during a courtesy visit to IITA in Ibadan

### 'How IITA helped my company'

Thai Farms International (TFI) Limited, one of Nigeria's leading producers of High Quality Cassava Flour (HQCF), has testified before an international conference on roots and tubers that IITA supported its operation in Nigeria.

Mr. Louw Burger, Managing Director of TFI told the conference of over 200 scientists (ISTRC) that the operation of

his company almost got strangulated in the early years — in 2006. The story turned around when he got technological intervention from the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan.

The story of Mr. Burger further underscored the importance of international agricultural research to

agricultural transformation.

In his paper titled - Building a strong partnership for cassava development, Burger said the average Nigerian farmer faced daunting challenges in cassava production and would never overcome them if tackled alone as they had little or no wherewithal for large scale individual production.

## Provitamin A cassava: An excellent example partnership

The Deputy Director General (Research), Dr Ylva Hillbur has described the collaboration among partners that led to the successful breeding provitamin A cassava varieties as 'an excellent example of successful partnership.'

Addressing participants at this year's Annual Crop Meeting organised by HarvestPlus, Dr Hillbur commended HarvestPlus and other partners that were involved in the work for a job well done.

She said that IITA would continue to identify and work with excellent partners across the world to deliver innovations and technologies that would bring about improved livelihoods. She specifically thanked HarvestPlus for funding the breeding of the provitamin A cassava varieties.

HarvestPlus Deputy Director (Operations), Dr Wolfgang H. Pfeiffer praised IITA for the commitment to biofortification. He also expressed optimism that the dissemination of the



L-R: Dr Peter Kulakow (IITA), Dr. Wolfgang Pfeiffer (HarvestPlus), and IITA DDG (Research), Dr Ylva Hillbur in IITA-Ibadan

varieties to farmers would bring several benefits—more incomes and better nutrition.

The development of the provitamin A cassava is a major breakthrough in cassava breeding with the research

spanning over a decade. Breeding of the varieties were led by IITA, but in partnership with the National Root Crops Research Institute, Umudike; CIAT, *Embrapa* of Brazil, NGOs, and farmers.

HarvestPlus Annual Crop Meeting is a yearly event that brings together research centres, policymakers, nongovernmental organisations, possessors, farmers and other

partners. The event offers the opportunity to review the past, the present and plan for the future.

HarvestPlus Country Manager, Paul Ilona emphasised "the need for a common vision for yellow cassava's success."

## Burundi's new climate change research team on a learning visit to IITA-Uganda

IITA-Uganda hosted a climate change research team from the Burundian National Agricultural Research Organization (ISABU) from 20-24 August 2012.

The visiting team was led by Mrs Claudette Nkurunziza, who is heading the newly created climate change program.

The team has adopted a new research structure in which climate change has taken a prominent place as it is expected to strongly impact on Burundi's smallholder farmers in the decades ahead.

Mrs Nkurunziza, based on her collaborative experiences with CIALCA, requested for the visit to Uganda to learn from IITA and its partners on how they are tackling climate change challenge. She was accompanied by her colleagues Cyrille Mbonihankuye and Jean Pierre Twagirayezu.

The IITA-Uganda team led by Piet Van Asten, a systems agronomist based in Uganda, provided insights into the research activities and approaches being used by IITA and its partners.

The team also visited the National Agricultural Research Organization's (NARO) research stations, and the Climate Action Network in Uganda (CAN-U).

The team appreciated the visit. According to them, the trip offered them the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out climate change research. They also noted the importance of having a network of climate change research, and were keen to setting up one in Burundi which would link up with other existing networks in the region and continent.

They also valued the knowledge gained on the systems-wide approach to research as opposed to single crop interventions.

Dr Van Asten hoped that the two institutes could take lessons from the visit and develop joint activities and projects for the benefit of the country and the small-holder farmers.

"We had a very fruitful exchange visit and enjoyed their interest, enthusiasm and eagerness to build a serious research program at ISABU that could achieve impact. IITA is very keen to support and collaborate with them," he said.



Climate change research team in Uganda

## IITA wins award at the 16th ISTRC symposium

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) has received an award for its 'great role and contribution to the development of roots and tuber crops in Africa.'

The award was given to the Institute by the International Society for Tropical Root Crops (ISTRC) during the Society's 16th triennial symposium in Abeokuta.

The outgoing President of ISTRC, Prof Andrew Westby also expressed appreciation to IITA for its big role as a major sponsor of the symposium; and the Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta (FUNAAB) for being an excellent host.

Westby urged agricultural scientists at the occasion and members of the Society to always set adequate time aside for continuous research in their areas of specialization.

The Vice – Chancellor of FUNAAB, Prof. Olusola Oyewole stated that the future of African countries depended on root and tuber crops.

Olusola, who closed the five - day symposium, urged African countries to make good use of their knowledge in these crops.

Speaking on Nigeria, he said, "The future of this country does not depend on our oil.

"The future of this country depends on what we do with our knowledge. We are in a knowledge economy where your strength depends on what you know and what you do is what you know.

"And it is high time that those of us in Africa recognize that one special thing that we have in Africa are the root and tuber crops.

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- (1) Powered off all unnecessary electrical office/lab equipment;
- (2) Turned off air conditioners; and
- (3) Switched off all lights.