



SARD-SC holds Project Steering Committee meeting in Ibadan

The Project Steering Committee (PSC) of the Support for Agricultural Research for Development of Strategic Crops (SARD-SC) held their first meeting in IITA-Ibadan, Nigeria.

Acting Director General for IITA, Dr Kenton Dashiell welcomed members of the PSC on behalf of the Director General, Dr Nteranya Sanginga.

During the meeting, members discussed annual work plans, procurement plan and the overall management and implementation of the project. They expressed great satisfaction at the progress made so far in project implementation considering the short period the project has been fully operational. The annual work plan and budget for 2013 were reviewed and approved by the committee.

PSC members who attended the meeting included Dr Mahmoud Solh, Director General, ICARDA; Dr Gloria Elemo, Director General, Federal Institute of Industrial Research, Oshodi, Lagos; Dr Ramadjita Tabo, Deputy Executive Director, FARA; Dr Oliver Samson, Director, Partnerships and Capacity Building, Africa Rice Center;



The Project Steering Committee met for the first time at IITA Headquarters in Ibadan, Nigeria. In photo, L-R: Dr Sam Bruce Oliver (AfricaRice), Dr Thomas Dubois (AfricaRice), Dr Marie Yomeni (IITA), Dr Gloria Elemo (FIRO), Dr Kenton Dashiell (IITA), Dr Mahmoud Solh (ICARDA), Dr Ramadjita Tabo (FARA), Dr Chrys Akem (IITA), Dr Catherine Mungoma (Zambia), Dr Mohammad El-Mourid (ICARDA), and Dr Bolanle Asiru (FIRO).

Dr Catherine Mungoma, Director of Crops Research Zambia; and Dr Chrys Akem, Project Coordinator, SARD SC.

Dr Akem said that the meeting was fruitful and that it provided strong support to the task ahead.

The PSC was set up to provide policy guidance, review project progress, approve annual work plans and budgets, resolve inter-center issues, and undertake overall supervision of the project.

Twenty African countries to benefit from maize, cassava, wheat, and maize intervention

Last week, the SARD-SC project was launched in Abuja, the Nigerian capital. It was attended by more than a hundred participants from project implementing institutions and other stakeholder groups.

"SARD-SC is a huge opportunity for Nigeria to bridge the yield gap through increased local production," says the Executive Secretary, Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN), Prof Baba Yusuf Abubakar, who hosted the forum.

Nigeria's Minister of Agriculture, Dr Akin Adesina, who was represented by Dr Martins Fregene, also welcomed the project, noting that it would complement ongoing efforts to transform agriculture.

Prof Abubakar said that the project would provide leverage for ongoing reforms, especially the Agricultural Transformation Agenda of the country.

Maize, cassava, rice, and wheat are considered crops of strategic importance for Africa.

Nigeria and 19 other African countries will directly benefit from the African Development Bank-funded initiative. "But the project will have a positive spin-off effect in the other regional

member countries," according to the Project Coordinator, Dr Chrys Akem at the launch in Abuja, Nigeria.

Direct beneficiaries include Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Scientists and policy makers say the initiative will help narrow the yield gap

facing Africa's strategic crops even as most countries on the continent embark on agricultural reforms.

The Country Representative (Nigeria), African Development Bank (AfDB), Dr Ousmane Dore, said the project would contribute towards addressing the current shortfall in food supply in the continent by working across the full value chain of each crop and addressing both food costs and employment creation.



Participants to the SARD-SC project country launch held in Abuja, Nigeria.

DDG-R4D impressed with IITA activities in Malawi

On 12-13 March, IITA-Malawi hosted Dr Ylva Hillbur, IITA DDG-R4D, who came on a familiarization visit. The monitoring visit was the second leg of a three-country sortie to Southern Africa, which also included Zambia and Mozambique.

To kick off the visit, the DDG paid a courtesy call on Dr Jeffrey Luhanga, Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MOAFS). Afterwards, she met with Prof Peter Mwanza, Minister of MOAFS. During her meetings with the two officials, she discussed, among other issues, further avenues for increased collaboration in agricultural research and development between IITA and Malawi.

Dr Hillbur thanked the Minister for the support that the Government of Malawi has been giving IITA in carrying out its mandate and activities in the country. She also expressed hope that this collaboration will be further enhanced in the future. The DDG was accompanied on the courtesy call by Dr David Chikoye, Regional Director for Southern Africa, and Dr Steve Boahen, Country Representative for Mozambique.

Dr Hillbur and the IITA delegation also met and dialogued with the Director of the Department of Agriculture Research Services (DARS) and several other local partners.

The DDG visited project sites in Lilongwe, Linthipe, and Chigodi, particularly MIRACLE, N2Africa, Tropical Legumes II, and CFC-Vitagoat, and breeding trials for cassava, cowpea, and soybean. She also met with several project beneficiaries in these areas, particularly farmers engaged in seed multiplication and on-farm variety selection trials.

At the Vitagoat project site, the DDG was briefed on the status of the

construction of the processing facility there, which when finished will process soybean to soya milk. The construction is being supervised by IITA and DARS. Upon completion, the Vitagoat facility will be run by farmers in the area.

"I encourage you to continue supporting us with this construction since it will help everyone in this community," the DDG addressed the farmers and partners at the Vitagoat construction site. The DDG also saw the newly constructed IITA screenhouse for crossing soybean varieties at the Chitedze Research Station in Lilongwe.

Dr Hillbur also toured IITA-Malawi's office and met with staff there. At the station, scientists and project leaders also presented their respective activities on cassava, soybean, and cowpea breeding, the MIRACLE Project, N2Africa, and impact assessment.

On addressing IITA-Malawi staff, she said, "I am very impressed with what I have seen here in Malawi. I must admit that my visit here has been one

of the most engaging. I would like to congratulate everyone here for doing such a great job in carrying out IITA's mission and vision. Keep up the good work!" she emphasized.

Dr Arega Alene, IITA-Malawi Country Representative, assured the DDG of the station's commitment to IITA's R4D work, highlighting the impressive growth and successes achieved by IITA-Malawi through the years.

At the conclusion of her visit to the "warm heart of Africa", Dr Hillbur and the delegation were treated to a dinner by IITA-Malawi, with MOAFS Principal Secretary Dr Luhanga.

Dr Luhanga said "We have always enjoyed the relationship with IITA. I would also like to say that we need IITA now more than ever especially that the Malawi government is about to embark on a massive national irrigation program. Your expertise will be vital to the success of this program. Thank you, Dr Hillbur, for visiting us and we look forward to seeing you again soon."



Dr Hastings Kazembe, site engineer, briefing Dr Hillbur and the visiting delegation about progress of the construction of the Vitagoat processing facility in Nkhoma, Lilongwe.

Changes in HRS and Partnerships and Capacity Development Directorate

The Human Resources Service (HRS) is now poised to offer improved services to the IITA community.

Recently, the entire HRS, covering the management of both internationally and nationally recruited staff physically moved offices to the same location in Bldg 500 to serve staff better.

DDG-Corporate Services Kwame Akuffo-Akoto also announced that the position of Human Resources Manager has been re-designated Head, Human Resources Service. Mrs Lilian Mendoza should therefore be so addressed henceforth.

Likewise, after a recent recruitment exercise, Mrs Temilade Oke, currently the Organizational Development Manager, has been appointed as HR Manager – NRS (previously named HR Administrative Manager). Reporting to the Head of HRS, she takes over the oversight of the NRS section in IITA HQ and also provides advisory

services and backstopping to IITA Stations outside on NRS HR matters. The appointment takes effect from 1 April 2013. Mrs Oke can be reached by email on T.Oke2@cgiar.org and through extension 2337.

Meanwhile, the Partnerships and Capacity Development (PCD) Directorate has completed its restructuring with the move of staff to their respective offices, announced DDG-PCD Kenton Dashiell. The offices under PCD are Proposal Development Office (PDO), Project Administration Office (PAO), Communication Office (CO), Capacity Development Office (CDO), and the Partnerships Coordination Office (PCO).

The PDO is located in the General Directorate wing in Building 500.

The PAO, formerly Contracts & Grants Office, has moved to the former Supply Chain offices. The office includes Contracts Administration,

Grants Administration, Legal and IP (intellectual property) Service, Reporting Service, and PROMIS (Project Management Information Services) Database Management Service.

All the offices of CO--Media Relations and Multimedia Publishing--are now under one roof in the Knowledge Center (formerly Library). CO shares the building with the Knowledge Center, which has now moved under CDO. CDO consists of the Knowledge Center, Conference Center, and Learning Center (formerly Training Unit).

The newest office under the directorate is PCO, which now occupies the former Publishing Building (beside Training). This office consists of the SARD-SC (AfDB) project, Cassava Transformation Project, Africa RISING project, and the WASCO project.

AGRA and IITA build capacity of partners in Ghana and Nigeria on soil and plant analysis

The Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and IITA organized a two-week capacity development workshop for laboratory technologists from the national agricultural research systems of Ghana and Nigeria.

The training aims to improve the professional skills of laboratory technicians in soil and plant analytical laboratories in Ghana and Nigeria, and improve the capacity of those countries' laboratories in soil and plant testing to enhance the quality of fertilizer recommendations to farmers.

The 2-week training covered areas such as quality control in soil analysis, data analysis and fertilizer recommendation, plant analysis and soil fertility management, modern trends in plant and soil analysis, safety in the laboratory and management of commercial laboratory, among others. Participants also developed country action plans.

During the closing program, Dr Kenton Dashiell, DDG-PCD reiterated IITA's commitment to capacity development across Africa. He said that

the Institute would redouble its efforts towards building the critical human capacity that would fight hunger and poverty in Africa.

Earlier, Prof. G.O Adeoye of the Department of Agronomy, University of Ibadan, called for greater attention to laboratory science. He commended IITA and AGRA for organizing the training, adding that it would build the necessary capacity to address the natural resource degradation facing Africa.

In his presentation, "Equipment Selection and Environment", Prof Adeoye gave a series of parameters to be considered when selecting equipment for laboratories. These include cost, speed of delivery from the manufacturers, quality, availability of installation and maintenance manuals, areas of installation, human resource to operate the equipment, etc.

Mr Joseph Uponi, Project Manager with IITA, said that the training workshop was timely and it would contribute to food security. He said that with the right knowledge and skills in soil and plant analysis, participants would be able to tackle the challenges facing their individual countries.

The training course, which began on 18 March, had 10 participants from Ghana and 13 participants from Nigeria.



Group photo, Soil and Plant Analysis Workshop, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria.

New COMPRO-II web site now live!

The Commercial Products (COMPRO-II) project or "Institutionalization of quality assurance mechanism and dissemination of top quality commercial products to increase crop yields and improve food security of smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa", funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has a new web site (<http://www.compro2.org/>).

COMPRO-II aims to improve crop yields, improve food security, and minimize the negative impacts of bad or inadequate agricultural practices on the environment. The project is built on public-private partnerships to develop

effective laws and regulations for biofertilizers and other agro-inputs in sub-Saharan Africa.

Through public-private partnerships, COMPRO II seeks to ensure that at least 400,000 households test an effective product and that half of these actually adopt the new technologies. The project is expected to result in a significant reduction in the use of inefficient agro-inputs in the marketplace, resulting in improved crop yields. For more information about the project, please contact the Project Manager, Dr Cargele Masso at c.masso@cgiar.org.



COMPRO-II web site banner.

Welcome!

Dr Tumwegamire Silver, a Ugandan citizen, has joined IITA-Tanzania as a postdoctoral fellow for the Cassava Varieties and Clean Seed to Combat CBSD and CMD project (5CP).

Tumwegamire holds a PhD in Crop Science - Breeding, a master's degree in Crop Science - Breeding, and a bachelor's degree in Agriculture (crop science option), all completed at Makerere University in Uganda.



He joins IITA from a sister CGIAR center, CIP (International Potato Center) where he worked for 11 years on sweetpotato breeding programs for sub-Saharan Africa. Previously, he also worked, for 4 years, with CARE International in Uganda under a project to protect one of the few remaining world natural habitats (Bwindi Impenetrable Forest) for mountain gorillas through community-based agricultural interventions. He also had a short-term engagement with Uganda's national bean breeding program.

1st Secretary, British High Commission and New Police Commissioner visit IITA

The First Secretary for Science, Innovation and Climate Change, British High Commission, Mr David Woolf, was in IITA recently to facilitate cooperation and build stronger links between the UK science community and science institutions in Nigeria, including IITA.

"We want to see how we can influence policy on science in Nigeria, and bring together local and UK science by finding partners and opportunities where linkages do not exist and help connect them," he said.

DDG for Corporate Services, Kwame Akuffo-Akoto, led the welcome team

that met with Mr Woolf, who was treated to a dinner and a tour of the campus and research facilities. He visited the Pathology Lab, Genetic Resources Center, BioScience Center, Cassava improvement/yam barn, and the aflasafe™ factory.

Meanwhile, it was a day of enlightenment for the new Commissioner of Police for Oyo state, CP Mohammed A. Indabawa, who exhibited keen interest in the agricultural activities of IITA. He was received by Dr Kenton Dashiell, DDG for Partnerships and Capacity

Development, Mr Kwame Akuffo-Akoto, and David Oluwadare, IITA's Security Manager.

Dr Dashiell welcomed him and his entourage of officers and thanked them for the support and services rendered to IITA. In his introductory remarks, Dr Dashiell stated that in the 45 years of IITA's existence, the organization had enjoyed good partnership with the police force. He also said that in his 19 years at IITA he had never heard a complaint about the police, and hopes that with the continued partnership better services would be achieved.



IITA played host to the First Secretary for Science, Innovation and Climate Change, British High Commission, Mr David Woolf (center in coat in photo). Others in photo are (from left): Michael Abberton, Sylvia Oyinlola, Hilde Koper, Kwame Akuffo-Akoto, Toyin Oke (partly hidden), Katherine Lopez, and Gbenga Olaniyan.



The Commissioner of Police of Oyo State, CP Mohammed A. Indabawa (second from left), listens intently as Dr Badara Gueye explains the process of clonal germplasm conservation at the Genetic Resources Center in IITA headquarters, Ibadan.

IITA International School tops spelling bee competition

Pupils of the IITA International School emerged first and fifth in the Spelling Bee competition held at Grace School, Lagos on 16 March. The competition attracted 24 schools across Nigeria with two representatives from each school. Oluwatomisin Akeredolu, Grade 5,

came first and Foluke Babatunde-Lawal, Grade 4, took fifth position. IITA School Head, Ms Carole Inniss-Palmer commended the pupils for their brilliant performance and dedicated the victory to Mrs Okwuosa, Grade 2 class teacher, who trained the students for the competition.

Dr Kenton Dashiell, DDG-PCD, congratulated the pupils and the school management for making IITA proud.

"Their performance is a clear testimony that our efforts towards developing capacities are yielding results," he said.

Tomisin, who came first in the competition, extended her gratitude to her parents, class teacher, and Mrs Okwuosa for their support. On her experience at the competition, she said, "Initially I was afraid but immediately I answered the first question, the boldness came." She encouraged her colleagues to be serious with their studies and be confident. Mrs Okwuosa

thanked the management of the school for the opportunity given to her to prepare the children for the competition.

Narrating her experience before and during the competition, Mrs Okwuosa said, "I believed so much in those children despite the fact that it was their first experience... Initially it was not easy training the children to spell big words... Sometimes we had to consult the dictionary for the meaning and the pronunciation of some words. Some words are pronounced differently from the way they are written... Mastering those words was another challenge. I had to expose the children to Word Play Club. In Word Play Club, you play and you sing to make the spelling sink and be part of the children."

According to her, the culture of reading being promoted by the school was what really helped the children. She advised the children to cultivate the habit of reading. "Reading does not kill, it only makes one strong academically," she said. Mrs Okwuosa advised parents to expose their children to reading. "Put a dictionary before them and let them check the meaning of words," she said.



Spelling bee winners from IITA International School, Oluwatomisin Akeredolu (no. 39), 1st prize, and Foluke Babatunde-Lawal (no. 40), Grade 4, 5th place, with Mrs Okwuosa (center in pink and white blouse) and other members of the school party.