



IITA-MIRACLE inaugurates processing centers, the 'nucleus of development'

The "Making Agricultural Innovations Work for Smallholder Farmers Affected by HIV/AIDS" – or MIRACLE – a project funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and implemented by IITA has commissioned four small-scale cassava processing centers in Luapula Province in the northern part of Zambia. The symbolic commissioning of the centers was held on 21 February at the Sencil General Suppliers in Mibenge Agricultural Camp, one of the four established under the project. The other three processing centers are located at the Kale Agricultural Camp, Mansa Resettlement Scheme, and Mabumba Agricultural Camp.

According to Melba Davis-Mussagy, MIRACLE Project Manager, the processing centers service farmers within a 7-km radius. The project also supplied farmers with planting materials of improved cassava varieties to ensure steady flow of raw materials to the centers.

"In these communities, farmers usually walk an average of 15 to 20 km to bring their cassava roots to existing hammer mills. We have strategically located these processing centers so that our project beneficiaries will not traverse long distances to have their cassava roots processed," Mussagy said.

The centers are equipped with a hammer mill, grating machine, chipping machine, and hydraulic press. They will be producing cassava chips, high-quality cassava flour (HQCF), and cassava meal.



Mr Abraham Lwando, owner/operator of the cassava processing center at Mibenge Agricultural Camp, demonstrates how to grate cassava roots. Looking on are Ms Miriam Kauseni (2nd from right), Permanent Secretary of Luapula Province, and other members of the local government and the community.

At full production capacity, each center can produce 3 tons of cassava flour or 4 tons of cassava chips per day. In the meantime, however, the centers are expected to produce about 200 kg of flour daily. HQCF will initially go to bakeries, restaurants, and hotels in Mansa – the biggest town in Luapula Province where there is a high demand for the product, while cassava meal will go to the general public and the chips to industries.

"We want our farmer-beneficiaries to earn more by increasing their production surplus and diversifying their income options," Mussagy said. "But also importantly, we want to reduce the drudgery of labor associated with producing cassava chips and flour through traditional methods," Mussagy

added.

The centers will be operated by MIRACLE-supported entrepreneurs themselves, with technical and business backstopping for at least one year. The operators have been trained by MIRACLE on cassava flour and chips production.

The commissioning was graced by Ms Miriam Kauseni, Permanent Secretary of Luapula Province, who represented the Provincial Minister. In her speech, she highlighted the importance of these processing centers to farmers and the local industry.

"The processing centers that you have now are the nucleus of development in your community. Operate them for the benefit of your fellow small farmers," she said.

IITA hosts cassava weed management convening workshop in Ibadan



The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation-organized and sponsored Cassava Weed Management Convening Workshop co-hosted by IITA was held in Ibadan this week.

The workshop reviewed what is known about conventional weed control in cassava to identify solutions to develop practical solutions, and to outline plans to

Photo: Eric Kueneman, Consultant, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and meeting convener, leads the discussion during the 2-day meeting.

scale up technology transfer for weed control.

Participants included representatives from farmers' groups, the national agricultural system, local universities, research institutions, youth organizations, the private sector such as Syngenta, HarvestFields, to name a few, international organizations and overseas institutions including CIAT, HarvestPlus, FAO, CIRAD, Purdue University, Bayer, CropLife, and IITA.

Partnership and Capacity Development Directorate holds teambuilding

The Partnership and Capacity Development Directorate held a pre-team building meeting and teambuilding workshop this month. The meeting provided staff in the different units under the directorate the opportunity to understand the operations of the different units, whereas the team building activity ensured the development of camaraderie and rapport among the various units and staff.

In his welcome remarks, Deputy Director General Kenton Dashiell urged staff to work in teams. He also spoke on the need for staff to accept change, noting that the world, CGIAR, and IITA were changing.

For staff to remain relevant, Dr Dashiell said they must accept change and do things differently to achieve better results.

During the teambuilding session conducted by HR and held a week later, almost a hundred staff comprising the directorate participated in a whole day of fun team building activities and exercises that enabled



About a hundred staff from the Partnerships and Capacity Development Directorate went through a teambuilding exercise conducted by the Human Resources Service.

staff to learn about personality profiling, the different styles of leadership, team player characteristics, cultural orientation, and working in teams.

PCD consists of Capacity Development Office, Communication Office, Project Administration Office, Partnerships Coordination Office, and Proposal Development Office.

IITA hosts German Ambassador to Nigeria

IITA hosted the visit of the German Ambassador to Nigeria, Her Excellency Mrs Dorothee Janetzke-Wenzel.

Her Excellency Mrs Janetzke-Wenzel was received by the Deputy Directors General for Corporate Services, Kwame Akuffo-Akoto, and Partnerships and Capacity Development, Dr Ken Dashiell.

The visit provided an opportunity for the ambassador to have a feel of IITA's research-for-development efforts in Africa.

Mr Akuffo-Akoto and Dr Dashiell commended the German government for their support to IITA over the years, adding that there was the need for IITA and Germany to step up efforts to help Africa.

"We are very grateful for the support from Germany," Mr Akuffo-Akoto and Dr Dashiell said.

Her Excellency Mrs Janetzke-Wenzel gave kudos to IITA's efforts towards sustainable food security.

She said, "What you have been doing has been impressive."

Her Excellency Mrs Janetzke-Wenzel, who was accompanied by Prof Heinz-Dieter Wenzel, and the Attaché for Press and Culture, Dr Burkard Weth, also tried the 40% cassava bread and other baked products. After tasting the products, Her Excellency Mrs Janetzke-Wenzel wrote: "Excellent and impressive result... spread the knowledge."

Other staff who welcomed the ambassador and her party were Dr Robert Asiedu, R4D Director for Western Africa; Hilde Koper, Head of Project Administration Office; Toyin Oke, Head of Resource Mobilization, Protocol, and External Liaison; Mr Samiran Mazumdar, Head of HOT CAT; and Godwin Atser, Communication Officer, West and Central Africa.

The ambassador also did a tour of the IITA campus in Ibadan.

Sami Mazumdar (extreme left), HOTCAT Manager, and DDG Kwame Akuffo-Akoto (second from left) explain about IITA's research on 40% cassava bread to Her Excellency Mrs Dorothee Janetzke-Wenzel (second from right) and party. Photo on extreme right shows the Ambassador during a tour of the cassava utilization unit and processing machines with (from left) DDG Ken Dashiell, Prof Heinz-Dieter Wenzel, Engr Thierno Diallo, and Dr Peter Kulakow..



Passages

IITA has lost a staff member recently. G. Zargba Gaye, a beloved and humble colleague, died after a brief illness. Mr Gaye was serving as Farm Liaison Specialist with the N2 Africa Project in IITA-Liberia at the time of his death.

Before joining the N2Africa and IITA family Mr Gaye worked at the Ministry of Agriculture where he served as Monitoring & Evaluation Officer as well as Director of Training. He acquired a BA in Agricultural Economics from the University of Nigeria - Nsukka, and was also trained by AfricaRice in postharvest Technology. Mr Gaye is survived by his wife and four children.

