



IITA improved cowpea, maize and cassava trials show promising results

Collaborative trials between IITA and Jigawa state officials on three improved crops—cassava, cowpea and maize—have shown promising results, according to officials who participated in the trials during a side meeting that took place at the Jigawa State Economic Summit.

The trials, which were conducted last year, were part of the Institute's efforts to improve the livelihoods of farmers in that state, after its governor sought assistance from IITA.

"We are very impressed with the results of the trials. The crops actually performed very well and better than current farmers' varieties," said Alhaji Rabiu Isah Taura, Jigawa State Commissioner for Agriculture.

With the results coming in from last year's trials, researchers hope to select the best of the varieties for possible multiplication this year.

Dr Kenton Dashiell, IITA Deputy Director General (Partnerships & Capacity Development), who represented the DG, Dr Nteranya Sanginga, at the economic summit and at the side meeting, said he was happy with the outcome of the trials.

"With these results, it is easier for us to move forward," he added.

Earlier at the summit, which had in attendance the IITA Ambassador, former President Olusegun Obasanjo, and other stakeholders including members of the donor community, the Jigawa state government acknowledged IITA's



Drs Alpha Kamara, Gbassey Tarawali, and Ken Dashiell at the Jigawa Economic Summit.

role in its agricultural development agenda.

Dr Dashiell reiterated the Institute's willingness to offer the necessary support that would make agriculture more productive, sustainable, and impact oriented.

"We are ready to work with you and to help you to improve the livelihoods of farmers in Jigawa," he said.

Located in the northwestern part of Nigeria, Jigawa shares a boundary with the Republic of Niger and is defined by three agroecological zones—the Sudan, Northern Guinea, and Sahel savanna. Majority of people in the state are farmers, and

experts estimate that agriculture probably employs more than 80 percent of the population.

"Having a crop such as cassava doing well in these regions makes these results interesting," according to Drs Gbassey Tarawali and Alpha Kamara.

Participants at this year's economic summit say tackling the constraints to agricultural development would help unleash the agricultural potential of the state and create jobs for youths. To do this, they emphasized the need for greater attention to agricultural research across the commodity value chains.

BMGF conducts project financial management training for IITA



Marco Baissas from the Finance Department of Gates Foundation

Impact is crucial and important to Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and we aim at making systems and procedures friendly to users to achieve this, said Dr Valerie Bemo, Senior Regional Adviser for West Africa during the opening of the financial management training conducted by the Foundation in IITA.

Facilitated by Marco Baissas, the training aimed to equip staff with skills in budgeting and reporting for Foundation-funded projects. The training also included open forum discussion sessions where staff asked questions and sought clarification on issues at work. It

was attended by staff from Supply Chain, Finance Directorate, Internal Audit, Project Administration Office, and Station Administration.

The Director of Finance, Sholola Shalewa, noted that it was a rare opportunity for a donor to find time to conduct such a resourceful training for implementing partners. Sholola urged staff to apply the knowledge acquired to effectively support implementation of Foundation-funded projects. He further thanked the Foundation for conducting the training which shows their commitment to the partnership with IITA.

Crop pest prevention is better than cure

Due to climate change, increased regional, international trade and movement of people, pests are spreading to new areas and countries leading to epidemics with devastating effects on food security and livelihoods.

However, investing in preventing and controlling their introduction, establishment and spread is more cost effective and sustainable than managing fully blown epidemics.

Ways to do this was the focus of a webinar titled 'Crop Pest Prevention: Better than Cure' where a panel of experts discussed practical ways to recognize and respond to emerging crop pest threats, to mitigate current and future epidemics, with particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa where resources are limited and capacity is weak.

Julian Smith from the Food and Environment Research Agency -UK (Fera) said that the webinar was prompted by the current disease epidemics affecting crops in Africa including cassava mosaic, cassava brown streak, banana Xanthomonas wilt, Banana Bunchy Top, and maize lethal necrosis disease that have been devastating food security and opportunities for farmers to generate and realize income.

He provided convincing evidence that the continent was lagging behind in detection and prevention of diseases due to weak involvement of community, private sector, and governments and called for a shift in philosophy.

IITA's Plant Pathologist, Fen Beed, stressed the need to invest in a plant healthcare system that is able to respond to diseases of all crops, akin to public health, that encompasses national responsibility, regional cooperation, and harnessing global knowledge.

He said components of the plant healthcare system would include assessment of pest risk, refinement of appropriate surveillance strategies, diagnostic methods and control recommendations, creation of enabling policy environments, and for research interventions and



Disease epidemics in Africa that affect major food crops include cassava diseases (left) and banana Xanthomonas wilt (right).

capacity building initiatives to fill knowledge gaps.

Steve Ashby, Chair of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures, International Plant Protection Convention, from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs - UK (DEFRA) explained the role of National and Regional Plant Protection organizations and the International Convention on Plant Protection in strengthening national and global plant pest surveillance.

Phil Abrahams, Strategic Business Development Director, CABI, described surveillance and intervention via innovative advisory services. The complementary facets to CABI's Plantwise initiative were highlighted including effective extension through mobile plant clinics and the interactive knowledge bank.

The webinar was held on 21 May and was organized by The Forum for Agricultural Risk Management

in Development (FARMD), a network of practitioners seeking to enhance the sharing of experience and knowledge in agricultural risk management.

The FARMD host, Anna Greene from the World Bank, said the event was "absolutely fantastic, without technical hitches and with well-presented information that captured the attention of 75 people who attended the full 105 minutes and included high profile donors and respected scientists from across the world. Some 167 participants who registered for the webinar will receive materials; they were not previously involved with FARMD."

You can listen to the event and download presentations at <https://www.agriskmanagementforum.org/content/webinar-getting-ahead-crop-pest-epidemic-curve> and questions posted at <https://www.agriskmanagementforum.org/group/pest-disease-risk-management>.

Help conserve electricity!

Before leaving your workplace at the end of the day, make sure that you have:

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

Announcements

Annual Review and Planning Meeting, Achieving Sustainable Striga control for poor farmers in Africa through the Integrated Striga Management in Africa Project (ISMA)

Imperial Hotel, Kisumu, Kenya
4-7 June 2013

West Africa Hub Monthly Seminar Series: "Food Consumption Trends in West Africa"
by Mbaye Yade

Vigna Room
5 June 2013, 10:00 – 11:00 am

CGIAR Research Program on Integrated Systems for the Humid Tropics - Action Area Workshop Nigeria

IITA Headquarters, Ibadan, Nigeria
10-14 June 2013

West Africa Hub Monthly Seminar Series: "Yam: Tools for accelerated breeding and propagation"

by Yukiko Kashiwara

Vigna Room
19 June 2013, 9:00 – 10:00 am