

## Africa RISING researchers in learning visit to Malawi



Learning about climbing beans in Linthipe, Dedza.

A multidisciplinary team of about 20 researchers under the Africa RISING East and Southern Africa project were in

Malawi 5–7 March for a learning exchange visit to project sites and trials. Members of the team came from Kenya, Tanzania,

Zambia, and Ethiopia. They represented the CGIAR centers implementing the project (IITA, IFPRI, CIMMYT, ILRI, and ICRISAT) and partner organizations [AVRDC, Zambia Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI), Total Land Care (TLC), Zambia Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL), and the Sokoine University of Agriculture based in Morogoro, Tanzania].

The team visited trial sites in Dedza and Ntcheu districts in Malawi. These represented the three agroecological zones where the project works: the dry and hot lowlands, the mid-altitude zone with a moderate temperature, and the comparatively cooler high-altitude zone. The researchers visited some of the mother-baby trials that the project is conducting in these two districts.

The visit was coordinated by Dr Regis Chikowo, Senior Research Associate with

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### Passage

## Former DG Ermond Hartmans passes away

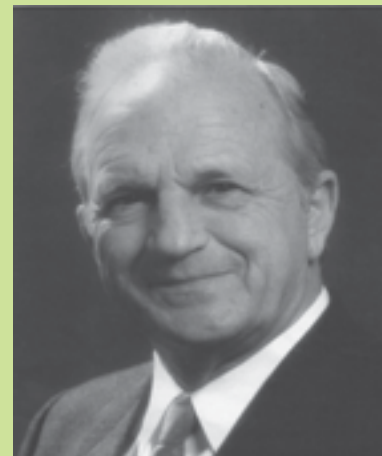
It is with great regret and sadness that we inform our readers that IITA's former Director General Ermond H. Hartmans passed away on Wednesday, 2 April, in a hospital in Rome. This was communicated to IITA by his nephew, Armand Evers. Dr Hartmans had served as the third DG of IITA, from 1980 to 1985.

Dr Hartmans was an inspirational leader at IITA and very passionate about building the capacity of the national agriculture research systems in Africa. "Gains in agricultural research cannot be done without the full cooperation of scientists in various national institutes", he said. "This type of cooperation is crucial to the formulation of research methods and to the planning and implementing of joint efforts with IITA acting as a catalyst."

Those IITA staff who were students and post docs when he was the Director General remember his great talents in motivating people to give their best to the Institute and to agricultural research. He always directed his attention to the IITA scientists, imploring them to be dedicated to their work and to major research discoveries that would be delivered to the farmers of Africa.

Dr Hartmans was known as an excellent trainer and teacher. "He would always organize a cocktail on the last day of group training courses," remembers the IITA DDG of Partnerships and Capacity Development, Dr Ken Dashiell. "He would then give a passionate speech explaining that the students should use what they learned to strengthen their research institutes and conduct quality research that would lead to benefits for the farmers of their country. After his speech the cocktail would end around 8:00 pm and most of the IITA scientists, post docs, and students would be so inspired by his words that they would return to their offices and labs to continue working until late into the night."

It was during his tenure that the "maize revolution" started with work on developing disease-resistant improved maize varieties, including high-yielding streak-resistant cultivars and hybrids. The success of this IITA research was recognized by the 1986 CGIAR King Baudouin Award for International Research. It was also during his time that IITA moved its soybean improvement research forward with its work on designing soybean for Africa, expanding soybean growing areas, and



Hartmans

promoting soybean utilization by women and children. Dr Hartmans had built upon the work of his predecessors on cassava, yam, sweetpotato, cocoyams, maize, rice, cowpea, soybean, lima bean, pigeon pea, winged bean, African yam bean, and velvet bean.

Dr Hartmans is survived by his second wife, Mrs Lundborg and three daughters. Preparations for his burial are currently taking place. His remains will be interred next to his first wife Thera Hartmans in Houthem-St. Gerlach, in the southern part of the Netherlands, near Maastricht.

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Michigan State University and the focal point person for IITA/Africa-RISING in Malawi. He also served as the technical resource person during the visit.

At the sites, the team saw the various technologies that Africa RISING is introducing, particularly those that promote sustainable intensification and soil nutrient optimization. The researchers also had the opportunity to interact with the farmers running the mother-baby trials.

“These trials are a blend of researcher-farmer design and co-management,” said Regis. “What we want our farmer-partners to achieve is learning from experiences so that they may be able to decide for themselves which among these technologies are best suited to their conditions. Then there is better targeting of technologies and increased system efficiency.”

The Golomoti Extension Planning Area (EPA) is a lowland site in the lakeshore zone within Dedza district about 500 m above sea level and characterized by alluvial soils. Here the farmers’ group managing one of the mother trials explained to the visiting scientists about the technologies that they had. These included maize–legume rotation, the doubled-up legume cropping system, residue integration in soils for nutrient augmentation, soybean inoculation, maize comparison (with and

without fertilizer), and cowpea variety selection trials.

The team also visited one of the baby trials in the area being managed by Mrs Agnes Stephen Phiri, a member of the farmers’ group managing the mother trials. When asked why she had adopted some of the technologies introduced by the project, she replied, “I want to achieve the same production improvements that our group has achieved in the mother trial.”

Kasese village, Kandeu EPA in Ntcheu District is a site in the mid-altitude zone located about 950 m above sea level and characterized by moderate temperatures and mostly sandy soil. Here the group visited another mother trial being managed by a farmers’ group led by Mr Glyn Tchale.

“We are in our second year of cropping under the Africa RISING project,” Mr Tchale said. “The more notable technologies that we have here include ratooning, which could serve as a possible substitute for seed, as well as legume–maize rotation for soil nutrient augmentation, doubled-up legume cropping, and the targeting of crops suited to the unique conditions of each farmer’s field. Apart from soil fertility, we are also trying to address issues of food security and nutrition, particularly by planting soybean and processing this crop

into various food products. This year, we are planning to hold farmers’ field days to showcase the benefits of the various Africa RISING technologies that we have in our trials.”

In Linthipe EPA, Dedza District, about 1250 m above sea level, the team visited another mother trial representing the high-altitude agroecological zone. Here, the farmers highlighted the planting of legumes to enhance soil fertility and the use of pigeon pea for food and animal feed.

When asked whether they would still continue to plant some of the introduced crops even after the exit of Africa RISING, the farmers resoundingly said, “Yes! We’ll continue with these crops, especially pigeon pea, as long as we can protect them from the goats that eat them.” Apparently, goats consider pigeon pea a delicacy. “The goats really like to eat them so they damage a lot of our pigeon pea plants.”

The Linthipe farmers also said that they had been approached by farmers from other villages to learn about the technologies in the trials as well as to request seed of the crops planted there, especially cowpea. “They also have come to ask if they can be part of the project because they are very impressed by what they see,” the lead farmer concluded.

## Humidtropics launches activities in Osun–Oyo–Ondo States



Project stakeholders come together in a workshop in Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria.

On 6 and 7 February, the coordinator of the Humidtropics West Africa Humid Lowlands Action Area, Dr Latifou Idrissou and a team of IITA scientists, conducted a Stakeholder Workshop in Oshogbo, Osun State, to formally launch the Humidtropics activities for the Osun–Oyo–Ondo States Action Site. The workshop gathered stakeholders from different development sectors, such as state secretariats, research institutes, universities, agricultural development projects, NGOs, farmers’ organizations, input dealers, agro-food

processors and dealers, etc., from Osun and Oyo.

The workshop aimed to identify entry themes of relevance for the entire Action Site and delineate zones of high versus low poverty, natural resource degradation, and market access to identify future field research sites. The workshop was opened by the King of Oshogbo, His Royal Highness Ataoja of Osogbo.

Dr Stefan Hauser, IITA Humidtropics lead, introduced the Humidtropics program, its objectives, operational

framework, action zones, and targets. Dr William Bowser of the Socioeconomics Unit, meanwhile, elucidated the approach and important steps in defining the research for development agenda. Humidtropics relies strongly on the active participation of stakeholders and thus most of the work was conducted in groups, drawing on the participants’ expertise. Discussions were enthusiastic and lively, resulting in very high quality information on the situation in the Action Site. The main entry points and challenges identified were as follows: inconsistency in government policies, low productivity due to a decline in soil fertility, lack of an integrated production and pest management system, improper processing of farm produce, low access to inputs services and agricultural machinery, poor agricultural extension services, shortage of unskilled labor, lack of irrigation facilities, climate change and inadequate warning systems, and conflicts between pastoralists (Fulani Bororo) and crop farmers.

Finally the concept of R4D platforms and innovation platforms was introduced and participants discussed where and how these platforms would be used to further the agricultural development agenda of Osun–Oyo–Ondo States for the benefit of farmers and consumers.

# IITA and WAAPP train CARI researchers on plant breeding and data management



*A group photo of the participants of the plant breeding and data management training.*

One of the core goals of the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP-1C) is to strengthen the capacity of staff in Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI), Liberia. This capacity building is particularly needed in the field of cassava breeding and data management.

The training was jointly organized by IITA and the WAAPP project; it was officially opened by the Director General of CARI, Mr Aaron Marshall. In his opening remarks, Mr Marshall thanked IITA for its good relationship and encouraged CARI researchers to fully participate in the program. Addressing participants, Dr Ayoni Ogunbayo, IITA project manager, reechoed the importance of the training

for their research work. “After the course, participants will be able to adopt good principles of breeding methodologies and data management to improve the quality of their research,” he said.

Eighteen researchers including five women were trained at CARI in Suakoko, Bong County, Liberia. The workshop was sponsored by the WAAPP in Liberia.

The 4-day training workshop was facilitated by Dr Ogunbayo, cassava breeder and project manager, Mr Peter Iluebbey, international trials manager, and Mr Afolabi Agbona, database manager. Drs Ogunbayo, Kenton Dashiell, Robert Asiedu, and Peter Kulakow, IITA scientists who coordinated the workshop, explained

that the training sought to bridge the knowledge gap between researchers at CARI and their colleagues across the world in the face of the rapidly changing nature of breeding approaches and data management.

“This workshop enabled the participants to identify appropriate breeding methodologies to be adopted at each stage of a crop improvement program and to identify appropriate experimental designs to be adopted at each step of the varietal selection process. It also exposed them to new techniques in cassava cultivation and equipped them with knowledge with a view to enhancing production,” says Dr Ogunbayo.

Participant Abibatu T. Kromah lauded the training program and commended IITA, WAAPP, and CARI for organizing the workshop, saying “The training gave me a better understanding about breeding and data management.” The Head of Roots and Tubers at CARI, Dans Johnson, also thanked IITA for “teaching them not only to eat fish but how to fish and for providing a solid net that would never be broken.” “With this kind of training, we should be able to develop our own materials with good traits and suitable to our environments.” The participants were impressed with what they saw and heard and especially with the team spirit shown between IITA and CARI. “Liberia will rise again,” says Ogunbayo.

## Southern Africa Hub staff receive training in supply chain

From 17 to 28 March, staff of the Southern Africa Hub underwent training on supply chain and procurement procedures. This was conducted by Mr Frederick Akinkusote, Purchasing Officer of the Supply Chain Unit, based in IITA-Ibadan. Administrative staff from IITA stations in Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique participated in the workshop which was held at Mika Lodge and at the Hub office in Lusaka, Zambia.

The training workshop covered a wide area of supply chain-related topics. These ranged from a general overview of IITA’s supply chain management, CGIAR Procurement Guidelines, IITA guidelines to pre-contract supplier appraisal to procurement planning, processing, and audit. Strategic sourcing, bidding procedures and requirements, procurement competency assessment, shipping, receiving, inspection and contract monitoring, and using the online Oracle system were also covered.

Although the training was meant for administrative and procurement staff of the Hub, other R4D and R4D support staff, including IRS, also participated in the exercise, particularly in the general overview of the supply chain process.

“It is important that staff, apart from those

really engaged in the day-to-day operations of procurement and supply chain, know about these basics of IITA’s processes and procedures,” said Frederick. “This will enable all of us to understand how supply chain and procurement work from IITA’s perspective. Knowing how things move can help us to minimize problems in the future.”

As the Southern Africa Hub is slated to soon start construction of its permanent research facilities in Lusaka, staff involved

in the exercise said that the training came at a very opportune time. “This training has been very useful in that it helps us, for example, to facilitate bids and tenders more efficiently for the construction of SARA facilities,” said Ms Suzan Katebalirwe, Regional Administrator for Southern Africa. “Of course, knowing more about IITA’s procedures will also help us to decentralize related HQ-based operations better and replicate these in the Hub and in the stations.”



*Frederick Akinkusote of Supply Chain, IITA Ibadan, visits hubs to build capacity of staff.*

## Year of Family Farming: Women pledge to support IITA goals



*It's all about family: Mrs Charlotte Sanginga holds a child while listening to one of the spouses.*

As the world marks this year as the Year of Family Farming, the spouses of IITA General Staff met Mrs Charlotte Sanginga, the wife of the Director General, to restate their commitment to support their husbands in the fight against hunger and poverty.

The IITA spouses commended the transformation in IITA and declared that the reforms in the Institute were creating a

positive impact, not just on the fields but also in their homes.

Addressing the women, Mrs Sanginga said the fight against hunger and poverty by IITA could not be won in isolation but must include the members of the family, describing women as the bones of the home which can never be neglected.

She noted that IITA was concerned not only with transforming Africa's agriculture

but also with the wellbeing of its staff at all levels.

The meeting, the second of its kind, provided a platform for the spouses to reflect on the progress made by the Institute and also to proffer suggestions on the way forward.

The women cited IITA Management for the recent staff promotions and the scholarships offered by the IITA Women's Group to children of staff. They said that IITA now had top priority in their homes and they would continue to engage and support their husbands in giving the Institute the attention that it deserved.

They however urged Management to institute an education allowance that would cover all staff children and said that a bonus should be given to staff in addition to the annual Open Day event. Furthermore, they called for programs for women's empowerment that would build the capacities of spouses and the extension of the promotion exercise to cover those members of staff who were yet to benefit.

Mrs Jonathan, a spouse, could not hide her feelings as she said, "You can see us shining only because IITA has fulfilled its promise of making our families better."

Mrs Sanginga said she would present the concerns raised to IITA Management.

## Sustainable Weed Management in Cassava Systems project holds the first workshop with partners on Next Generation Agronomy

Innovative approaches to combat weeds in cassava systems were the subject of the first workshop within the framework of the project Sustainable Weed Management in Cassava Systems, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The 22 participants from the University of Agriculture Makurdi (UAM), the Federal University Abeokuta (FUNAAB), and the National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI) Umudike, discussed with staff of IITA on how to combat weeds in cassava fields with improved agronomic practices and the research approaches to identify

the most efficient and effective control methods.

The topics covered ranged from the factors affecting weed infestation and yield loss to practical details of setting up research trials. Here new ways of conducting field research were elaborated; new trial designs have been developed which will be smaller than the conventional plot set-up and yet accommodate more treatments than could be handled by traditional methods.

Partners had practical sessions in the field on how to set up the new agronomy trials in their various locations. Weed control can

consume up to 50% of the labor required by a small-holder household to raise a cassava crop. Weeds are estimated to cause yield losses of between 30 and 40% in cassava across Africa. By combining the efforts of agronomy, represented by Dr Stefan Hauser, and weed science, represented by Dr Friday Ekeleme, this project has the target of reducing drudgery in cassava cropping, increasing crop yields, and developing environmentally sound weed control practices through optimized agronomy combined with the use of mechanical and chemical methods.



*Participants of the Next Generation Agronomy workshop organized by the Cassava Weed Management Project.*

## Welcome, new staff

**Belayneh Admassu** has joined the IITA-Kenya team as a Postdoctoral Fellow, Enset Transformation. He is an Ethiopian national. He holds a PhD in Agriculture (2010) from the University of Giessen, Germany, an MSc in Phytopathology (2002) from Hanover University, and a BSc in Agriculture (1994) from Alemaya University of Agriculture, Ethiopia.



Before coming to IITA, he worked at the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) as a researcher (Plant Biotechnologist) and national coordinator for the Agricultural Biotechnology Research Programme. He was a visiting researcher at the Center for Mountain Agriculture, University of Innsbruck, Austria (2004–2005), assistant researcher (Plant Pathology) (2002–2004) and junior researcher (Plant Pathology) (February 1997–December 1999) at EIAR Plant Protection Research Centre, crop production and protection expert at Dangla Woreda Agricultural Office, Ethiopia (May 1995–January 1997), and agronomist with the Gondar Fuelwood Plantation and Integrated Rural Development Project (funded by DANIDA) (1994–1995).

He can be contacted via [b.admassu@cgiar.org](mailto:b.admassu@cgiar.org). His office address is IITA-Nairobi, c/o ILRI-Kenya, PO Box 30709, Nairobi 00100, Kenya and his telephone number is +254 724019865.

**Alfred Gilbert Dixon** has rejoined the IITA-Ibadan team as Project Leader, Sustainable Weed Management Technologies for Cassava Systems in Nigeria. Alfred



served as the Director General of the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI), Freetown, Sierra Leone, after leaving IITA in 2008. He worked at the Crop Science Department, Njala University College, University of

Sierra Leone as a Research and Teaching Assistant (1981–1982), Graduate Research Assistant (1985–1988), and a Postdoctoral Research Associate (1988–1989) with the Sorghum Breeding Project of the Department of Agronomy, Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas, USA.

His career with IITA-Ibadan started as a Postdoctoral Fellow (1989–1999), an Associate Scientist (1991–1994), and a Scientist (1994–2000) in Cassava Breeding/Genetics. He holds a PhD in Agronomy (1988), an MSc in Genetics (1985) from Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, USA, and a BSc in Agriculture (1981) from Njala University College, University of Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone.

Alfred, from Sierra Leone, is married to Bussie Maziya-Dixon who is a Crop Utilization Specialist with IITA. He can be contacted on [a.dixon@cgiar.org](mailto:a.dixon@cgiar.org). His office is located in Building 401, Room 20C with extension number 2956.

**Peter Ebanyat**, from Uganda, has joined the IITA-Uganda station in Kampala, as N2Africa Country Coordinator for Uganda. He obtained his PhD at Wageningen University in the Netherlands in 2009, and his MSc in Soil Science and BSc in Agriculture at the Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda.



He started his career as a research associate with the IDRC-funded Francolite Research Project (1995 to 1998). He was a collaborator with an EU-funded project on Low External Inputs Sustainable Agriculture (LEINUTS), EU-funded project on Nutrient Networks and Stakeholders Participation (NUTNET) (1999–2000), and EU-funded project on Integrated Nutrient Management to Attain Sustainable Soil Productivity Increases in East African Farming Systems Africa (INMASP) using a farmer field school approach. He was also a coordinator with the Rockefeller-funded Integrated soil productivity initiative through research and education (INSPIRE) project and

collaborated in the project Improving Fertilizer Recommendations and Extension Packages in Uganda led by the National Agriculture Research Laboratories, Kawanda (2009–2012).

Before this appointment at IITA, he worked as the Country Coordinator on the Institutionalization of quality assurance mechanism and dissemination of top quality commercial products to increase crop yields and improve food security of small-holder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa—COMPRO II (2012–2014).

His e-mail address is [p.ebanyat@cgiar.org](mailto:p.ebanyat@cgiar.org) and he can be contacted on (+256) 772595440. His office address is IITA-Uganda, Plot 15B, Naguru East Road, PO Box 7878, Kampala-Uganda, Tel. +256 (0) 414 285 060/4.

**Kokou Kintche** from Togo has joined IITA-DR Congo at Kinshasa as SARD-SC Cassava Agronomist (Field Fellow). He obtained his



PhD at the Universities of Burgundy (France) and Lomé (Togo) (2009 to 2011) with collaboration from CIRAD (France) and the Togolese Institute of Agricultural Research (ITRA). He specialized in soil fertility management and modeling. He obtained the “Diplôme d’Ingénieur Agronome” and “Diplôme des Etudes Approfondies (DEA)” from the University of Lomé in 2004 and 2008, respectively.

Before this appointment, Kokou worked as a Cassava Agronomist at IITA-Kinshasa. He was a Researcher at ITRA (October 2007–October 2013), research leader on the agronomy of cotton (January 2012–October 2013), and activity leader of an NGO based in Togo (2005–2007). His main areas of interest are farmer organizations and rice cropping.

He can be reached on [k.kintche@cgiar.org](mailto:k.kintche@cgiar.org) and his office address is IITA-Kinshasa, Gombe, Av. Haut Congo, 4163, Kinshasa, DRC. His mobile telephone number is (+243) 976 950 567.