

Board announces recipients of first Annual Excellence Awards

The IITA Board has announced the recipients of the first Annual Awards for Excellence for 2010. They are Ranajit Bandyopadhyay, Outstanding Scientist; Katherine Lopez, Outstanding Support Staff; HOTCAT Team, Outstanding Team; and the journal article by Leena Tripathi, Henry Mwaka, Jaindra Nath Tripathi, and Wilburforce Kateera Tushemereirwe, titled *Expression of sweet pepper hrap gene in banana enhances resistance to X. campestris pv. musacearum*, Outstanding Publication.

The awards were initiated by IITA's Board of Trustees and first announced in February as a means to recognize and reward the outstanding achievements of staff. Independent committees consisting R4D and Support staff, and members of the Board reviewed nominations and made the recommendations prior to the Board meeting held last week in Wageningen University, the Netherlands.

"The awards recognize and affirm the hard work, dedication, commitment, and collaboration of our staff in helping IITA realize its goals," says Lakshmi Menon, DDG-Support.

The Outstanding Scientist for 2010 award seeks to recognize outstanding scientific impact of an IITA scientist. Ranajit is a Plant Pathologist who has been with IITA since 2002. He is a highly respected scientist whose work has a broad impact within and outside the Institute, who works well with colleagues in a highly collaborative manner, is keen to mentor staff, and has an effective network with partners and collaborators. His research and advocacy work on aflasafe™, a biocontrol technology for fighting aflatoxin contamination, has led to improved knowledge and awareness, more effective partnerships, increased advocacy, and greater impact for IITA.

The Outstanding Support Staff for 2010 award recognizes outstanding service by a member of the support group in achieving IITA's goals. Katherine Lopez, Head of Communication since 2009, is being recognized for her innovative leadership of Team CO, her ability to motivate and



Members of the IITA Board during the signing of the award letters at the recent meeting in Wageningen University, the Netherlands.

mentor colleagues, her good rapport with staff especially scientists, and the many milestones in the Institute's communication work in recent years, which have resulted in greater awareness and more visibility for IITA, increased networking with media and partners, use of new tools and approaches, and more communication products and outputs.



The Outstanding Team Award recognizes contributions of an outstanding IITA team that would result in impact or potential impact on IITA's target audience.

The Hotel and Catering team, led by Sami Mazumdar, has been a model for operational efficiency, cost efficiency, and team work. As a service unit, HOTCAT's mottoes are "Work is fun", and "Lead the initiative for excellence."

These have helped make the service fully self-sufficient and attain full cost recovery since 2008.

The Tripathi et al publication, published in *Molecular Plant Pathology*, reports a major

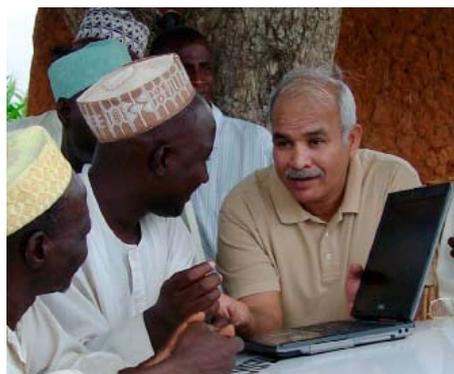
breakthrough--constitutive expression of the sweet pepper *hrap* gene in banana, that confers resistance to the most devastating disease of banana in the Great Lakes region of Africa: Banana Xanthomonas Wilt. The article has been published in a publication with a strong impact factor. It has been referenced in more than 40 national and international media outlets including Discovery News, Nature, and Guardian-UK.



Tripathi examines a diseased banana plant

It is a joint effort with a national partner, National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO), Uganda.

The awards will be given by the Board at an event to be announced later.



Ranjit Bandyopadhyay with farmers



Team HOTCAT, led by Sam Mazumdar

Stakeholders laud DTMA project

Stakeholders in the maize sector have praised the implementation of the project Drought Tolerant Maize for Africa for its success in uplifting the lives of the poor and improving the fortunes of maize farmers in Africa.

The maize project, which will wind down later this year, sought to support the development and dissemination of drought tolerant maize in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

Chief Olasunkanmi Shobowale, Executive Director, National Seed Council of Nigeria, described the implementation of the project as 'excellent.'

"Going by the achievements recorded by this project, it has become a reference point to other projects," he said at the annual planning meeting of the DTMA project in Ibadan.

Shobowale commended the multidisciplinary approach adopted by the project in tackling the constraints in the maize value chain.

"Virtually everybody was brought on board which was a step in the right direction," he added.

Among the achievements made by the project were the development, dissemination, and targeting of new



Participants at the DTMA annual meeting, 2-5 May, in IITA headquarters, Ibadan

drought-tolerant varieties and building the capacity of project collaborators. For example, the DTMA Project established large-scale drought screening sites in Kiboko, Kenya and Ikene, Nigeria, in which the first crop of maize under managed stress has been grown. Such activities are envisioned to help increase the availability of drought-tolerant maize varieties in SSA.

"More than this is the uptake of the DTMA varieties by farmers," said Tahirou Abdoulaye, IITA Agricultural Economist.

"Again, the project has been able to release several varieties to farmers, giving them options," he emphasized.

He said the varieties were a solution to

the drought-prone regions of Africa.

"The secret behind the drought-tolerant varieties is that they do well under ideal conditions. When there is drought, they still perform, so the farmer loses nothing in the end," he said.

Commenting on the activities of the project, Wilfred Mwangi, Project Leader from CIMMYT, said the project had made progress across Africa.

"We have realized the objectives of the project and we are happy we succeeded," he said.

Key stakeholders led by representatives from IITA and CIMMYT, reviewed progress made in 2010, shared insights, and drew up work plans for the remaining part of the year.

Welcome to the MIRACLE Team

A new project, Making Agricultural Innovations Work for Smallholder Farmers Affected by HIV and AIDS in Southern Africa (MIRACLE), is now off the ground in Lusaka, Zambia. The project aims to assist People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHIV) in Southern Africa to have sustainable livelihoods and to improve their health and nutritional status, food security, and income through the production, consumption and marketing of nutritionally-enhanced crop and livestock products, to mention a few.

The team members are:

Melba Davis-Mussagy - Project Manager

Melba, a Filipino, relocated to Lusaka to take up the responsibilities associated with her new position. Prior to joining the MIRACLE team, she was an Agro-enterprise Specialist at IITA-Headquarters. She obtained a BSc in Agribusiness Management in 1993 from Benguet State University, Philippines and a master's degree in Management with specialization in Business Management from Isabela State University, Philippines in 2001. She has a wealth of experience in the areas of agribusiness-oriented community development, particularly in the fields of rural livelihoods, value chain development/strengthening, project development and management, and organizational development, among many others.



Isabel Madzorera - Nutritionist

Isabel, a Zimbabwean, was with FEWSNET, Lusaka, Zambia, where she was the Deputy Chief of Party before this new appointment. She graduated with a BSc degree in Nutrition from the University of Zimbabwe, Harare, in 2000. She has a certificate in Humanitarian Assistance from the Harvard School of Public Health, MIT and Tufts University, Boston, USA in 2006 and obtained an MSc in International Nutrition from Tufts University, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Boston in 2006. Isabel is a highly qualified international nutrition professional and has several years of experience working on nutrition, food security, and public health issues in Africa.



Therese Gondwe - Technology Dissemination Specialist

Therese, a Malawian, is an active member of the information systems and humanitarian response technical working group. She worked with Feed the Children Inc. in Lilongwe, Malawi as the Program Manager prior to this appointment. She has a Bachelor's degree in Agriculture from Bunda College of Agriculture, University of Malawi in 1995; a postgraduate Diploma in Management of Food Security and Nutrition Programs from the International Agriculture Centre, Wageningen, Netherlands in 1997, and an MSc Degree in Agriculture Extension from Reading University, Berkshire, UK in 2001. She completed her PhD in Human and Environmental Sciences at the same University in 2008. She has several years of experience in designing, implementing, and promoting adoption of integrated food security and nutrition project activities.



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