



IITA delivered 70% of total CGIAR impact in Africa

About 70% of the impact by the CGIAR in Africa came from research outputs by IITA, according to the latest Impact Assessment of the CGIAR's Science Council.

The 2007 assessment, which is still the latest from the archives, notes that the value of the impact/benefit was greater than the total CGIAR investment in African since 1971.

"That is something to be really proud of," says IITA Director-General Hartmann at a reunion forum with former IITA staff in Bali, Indonesia.

According to him, 60% of the maize grown in West and Central Africa today comes from IITA varieties.

The director general also noted that IITA had remained a very stable institute.

"It goes for nothing sexy and does not play the latest fashion game. It does the basic, steadily and consistently. That is its force. This works," he said.

Hartmann was quick to mention that the success being recorded by the institute was a result of the commitment and foundation laid by the former staff.

He emphasized that the present management never reinvented the wheel.

"We did not have to undo anything. We just had to build on what you all had built. So it was enjoyable," he added.

On the CGIAR reforms and the future of IITA, Hartmann said the institute was working towards diversifying its support base, but maintaining the CGIAR as one of the supporters.



Hartmann (front row, seventh from left) with former staff of IITA and their spouses in Bali

To help the Institute in this direction, IITA has been doing a few things, the director general told the alumni group. Last year, Innovation Africa™ (Research Park for Africa) was created to help capture more scientific synergy.

"The physical facilities should be ready by June 2012. Please help us get the word out, especially to the private sector," he urged alumni. "We are building a coalition of three centers to serve Africa's crop needs made up of AfricaRice, ICARDA, and IITA."

"We are working on a Pan-African wide instrument to help nations tackle biological threats (pests and diseases).

"We are producing more commercial products. We have just released AflaSafe™ against Aflatoxins. The Gates Foundation is helping us seek firms to produce it commercially. We are clustering IITA scientists in fewer

locations (hubs), so we can support them better. In short, we are investing in IITA's future," he explained.

Hartmann commended the former staff for keeping the association running, stressing that such a commitment is remarkable.

He also praised present IITA staff, stressing that they have remained faithful to the ideals of the Institute.

"Every year we give long service awards, and every year we have some that have been with us for over 30 years! It is just incredible," he said.

Members of the alumni group expressed gratitude to Hartmann's presence and efforts in keeping the flag flying at IITA.

Nangju Dimiyati, chair of the 5th Reunion, said the alumni "is very grateful."

The 5th reunion for IITA alumni and their families was held on 11-14 March and was attended by participants from 11 countries, including United States, Canada, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, Republic of Korea, Republic of China, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Australia. Previous reunions had been held in the USA, Italy, and the UK.

The reunions provide a great opportunity for former and current staff to get together to talk about IITA and its future. The next reunion will be held after 2-3 years, possibly in Africa.

The alumni group of IITA consists of about 400+ former staff, some of who now occupy or have held important positions in other global, international, and national institutions.



Former staff of IITA and family during the reunion meeting in Bali.

Farmers' group overcomes poverty through cassava processing

From a mud hut to a 3-ton truck. From children staying at home due to lack of school fees to children riding bicycles to school. That is how far cassava processing has brought a group of farmers in Tanzania.

The Sululu Farmers Group from Bungu village in Rufiji district of Pwani region was introduced to cassava processing in 2002 by the Southern Africa Roots Crops Research Network (SARRNET) of IITA. They were given a single cassava chipper and started processing cassava chips from a mud and grass thatched hut.

In 2002, a project of IITA and the Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre (TFNC) with funds from the Common Funds for Commodities (CFC), helped the group to acquire more processing machines, such as a grater, a press, and a mill. The members were also trained to produce high quality cassava flour.

Today, the group has a permanent processing center made of concrete blocks and corrugated iron sheets for roofing. In 2006, they also purchased a 3-ton truck to collect cassava from the fields of farmers and to transport their processed products to the market.

The seven-member group has been a source of inspiration to many people in their village and beyond, and had made a positive impact in the community. In addition to being a ready and steady market for over 1,500 surrounding cassava farmers, it also gives them small



Farmers weigh cassava for sale

loans when they are in need, which they then pay back when they supply roots to the group.

The center acts as a farmers' field school where local governments and NGOs bring farmers together to learn about cassava processing. Researchers from the agriculture university in Tanzania and other institutions also come to them to test cassava-related technologies. It has gained such fame as an excellent model for rural development that the *uhuru* torch or freedom torch of Tanzania lit every year to commemorate its independence has passed through the center twice in the past eight years.

The group members have seen their lives change for the better rapidly

because of the project. One Mzee Omari Musa was able to upgrade his family home, which, like most in his village was made of mud and grass thatched roof to a concrete and iron sheet roof in 2004. He is not only able to meet the basic needs of his family such as clothing and shelter, and pay school fees, but can also afford little luxuries for them. His children ride bicycles to school.

An inspired member of the processing group, Juma Mteta, has established a new processing center in the same village with a net value US\$12,038.51. The group is a clear testimony that agro-processing is a way out of rural poverty and with a little support, farmers can transform their lives.

IITA cassava staff in team building exercise

IITA staff working on improving cassava held a 4-day team building exercise.

The exercise was aimed at building the competencies of staff, evaluating their strengths and weakness, and understanding their needs.

"Basically, the objective was to bring everyone on the team on the same page,"

says Peter Kulakow, IITA Cassava Breeder.

Over the years, the IITA cassava team has worked on improving the productivity of cassava and successfully raised its profile.

The team plans to keep the quality of research soaring and consistent with

international best practices.

"We are a team but working sometimes in many different areas. What this training hopes to achieve is to equip staff so that no matter where they are working, our research will be consistent," Kulakow added.

He lauded the quality of staff in the team, adding that staff occupying new positions would use the team building exercise to equip themselves for the task ahead.

Apart from focusing on the core issues in cassava production, the team building exercise touched on cross-cutting issues, such as leadership training and safety procedures at work.

There were also field trips that offered practical hands-on sessions.

Kulakow emphasized that the exercise provided a good opportunity for scientists and staff members to interact and communicate with each other. Team members were happy over the exercise.



The cassava team on the field for a practical team building exercise.