

# IITA's research in southern Africa offers hope to farmers



Dr David Chikoye during his R4D seminar presentation entitled "Strengthening R4D activities and partnerships in southern Africa" held at the Conference Center, IITA-Ibadan, on 10 February. He expounded on the importance of IITA's presence in the region especially on the lives of resource-poor farmers.

Researchers are recording impressive results in southern Africa with the deployment of improved crop varieties tolerant to drought (climate change) and resistant to pest and diseases in that region.

One such crop is cowpea which is helping farmers in mitigating the impact of more severe droughts brought about by climatic changes," says David Chikoye, IITA Director based in Zambia.

"Another is soybean resistant to (pest and) diseases," he adds.

In the last two decades, the southern Africa's savannah has been faced with widespread drought. This led to massive crop failures, especially cereals, with smallholder farmers worst hit.

Chikoye says several varieties of improved cowpea are being offered to farmers to cushion the effect of drought.

Besides cowpea's resistance to drought, the crop provides farmers a cheap source of plant protein,

replenishes the soil through Nitrogen fixation and also creates wealth. The crop is a feed for livestock.

Like cowpea, the introduction of soybean in that region is also helping farmers in the improvement of their nutrition. Farmers are also making more money.

Chikoye, who is leading the Cereals and Legumes team at IITA, says the team is tapping the successes recorded in West Africa.

For instance, the team is promoting the consumption and processing of the crops to spur adoption.

"This strategy was once used in Nigeria and it drove the adoption of soybean, making the country the number one producer of soybean in Africa. "If the approach worked here (in Nigeria), it can also work in countries in southern Africa," he says.

For maize, Chikoye says new improved lines have been developed to tackle the challenges faced by

farmers in the cultivation of the crop.

Another area that the team has recorded progress is in the area of capacity building which has seen the training of postgraduate students, farmers, scientists, processors and fabricators. For instance, four MSc students from Mozambique benefitted from IITA with researchers from the institute and Bunda College of Agriculture in Malawi supervising their theses.

As the CG reforms come into force, Chikoye is confident that the institute would be stronger and would record more milestones as it strives to eradicate poverty in Africa.

The IITA Bulletin is produced by the Communication Office. For comments and/or contributions, please email: Jeffrey T. Oliver ([o.jeffrey@cgiar.org](mailto:o.jeffrey@cgiar.org)), Godwin Atser ([g.atser@cgiar.org](mailto:g.atser@cgiar.org)), or Catherine Njuguna ([c.njuguna@cgiar.org](mailto:c.njuguna@cgiar.org)).

# GCP, IITA hold Data Management workshop for breeders



*The participants, organizers, and resource persons of the GCP-IITA "West Africa Use Cases Data Management Workshop"*

The Generation Challenge Program, through its Integrated Breeding Platform (IBP), and IITA are holding a "West Africa Use Cases Data Management Workshop" at the institute's headquarters in Ibadan, Nigeria. The workshop runs from 7 to 11 February.

During the workshop, participants were updated on the progress of data management of projects involving sorghum, cassava, rice, and cowpea; evaluated the use of the fieldbook tool and handheld/mobile machine for data curation; curated current pedigree information; generated fieldbook templates; introduced to the new configurable workflow-

based fieldbook; and established a community of practice for breeders and data managers in West Africa. The workshop attracted about 30 participants from various countries in the region.

The activity is part of one of IPB's objectives of delivering support services to guide and train developing-country breeders in accessing and using marker technologies critical for the adoption of modern breeding technologies in developing countries. It will also be supporting communities of practice on molecular breeding for the most important food security crops, developing local infrastructure to

improve plant phenotyping, and appropriate and targeted capacity building.

Initiated in September 2009, the IBP was conceived as a public web-based one-stop shop for information, analytical tools and related services to design and efficiently conduct molecular-assisted breeding experiments. It also offers facilities to access these tools and services. The initiative is mainly funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with additional financial support from the UK Department for International Development and the European Commission.

## Announcements

### Former IITA staff and families to hold grand alumni reunion in 2011

Former staff of IITA and their families will be holding a grand reunion this year. The IITA Alumni Association is planning to hold the reunion on 11-14 March 2011 at the Sanur Beach Hotel in Sanur, Bali, Indonesia. The association says that current IITA staff and their families are most welcome to attend the reunion as well.

For further details about the IITA Alumni Reunion, interested parties should contact the following persons:

- **Dimy Nanju** - dimynangju@yahoo.com
- **David Sewell** - davidsewellibadan@hotmail.com or davidsewell177@hotmail.com
- **Rob Dumsday** - dca.economics@gmail.com

### Changes in names

The Personnel Unit of IITA would like to inform all concerned of the following name changes of staff:

- Ms. Akpan Mercy James of International House has married and wishes to be addressed as Mrs. Asuquo Ewang Mercy henceforth;
- Former Ms. Akinnu, Abosede Rashidat of Computer Services has married and wishes to be addressed as Mrs. Pelemo, Abosede Esther henceforth; and
- Former Miss Ibukun, Oluwatoyin Favour of R4D has married and wishes to be addressed as Mrs. Olu-Olusegun, Oluwatoyin Favour henceforth.

Kindly take note of these changes and incorporate in future official communications to the staff above.

### Its time for Africa: IITA to host 2013 global plant virus confab

IITA will host the 12th International Plant Virus Epidemiology (IPVE) symposium in 2013 in Arusha, Tanzania, said Lava Kumar, IITA Virologist, the organizer and Executive Committee member in the IPVE Committee of the International Society of Plant Pathology (ISPP). IPVE Committee has conducted 11 international symposia in different parts of the world.

The 12th symposium, first ever in Africa, focuses on 'emergence, epidemiology and control of native and new encounter virus diseases' to reflect on prevailing situation of virus diseases in the Africa and around the world (banana bunchy top, cassava mosaic, cassava brown streak, maize streak, cocoa swollen shoot, rice yellow mottle and many more) that are not only ravaging the crop production, but also affecting the international exchange of germplasm and commerce.