

Stakeholders discuss roadmap to effectively manage *Striga*

IITA and its program partners, including relevant stakeholders working under the Integrated *Striga* Management in Africa (ISMA) project held a landmark two-day National Review & Planning Meeting in IITA-Kano station on 11 and 12 April.

The meeting, which was attended by over 60 participants, discussed ways to develop a sustainable road map for the eradication of *Striga* in farmers' fields in Nigeria.

The ISMA project is being implemented in Kenya and Nigeria. The four-year project is being executed by IITA in partnership with CIMMYT, icipe, and other private and public institutions.

In Nigeria, partners include the national agricultural research and extension systems and other stakeholders representing universities, the Ministries of Agriculture and Local Government, Agriculture Development Programs (ADPs), seed companies, agro-chemical companies, and national regulatory authorities.

The event familiarized participants about the project and the progress being made to ensure that the project goals are accomplished. The participants helped in planning for 2012 activities. To ensure that *Striga* technologies are disseminated to farmers in Northern Nigeria, and to improve awareness on the available *Striga* technologies, the project has engaged private sector partners to



Stakeholders at the National Review & Planning meeting in IITA-Kano

improve the delivery of varieties developed. A national stakeholder platform and forum for development and dissemination of *Striga* technologies was also launched to help guide implementation of the project in Nigeria.

The national stakeholder platform is part of efforts to maximize synergy among partners in implementing the project and aims to improve interaction and efficiency in project operations, says Dr Mel Oluoch, the Project Manager.

According to him, the project aims to achieve sustainable *Striga* control to improve the livelihoods of over 25 million small-holder farmers in Nigeria by developing and implementing integrated *Striga* threat reduction strategy

that promotes scientifically proven technologies that have direct effects on stopping *Striga* emergence, reducing the *Striga* seed bank in the fields, improving soil fertility, and increasing crop yields. The project is implementing a suite of integrated *Striga* control approaches which include *Striga*-resistant maize and cowpea varieties; "push-pull" technology that involves intercropping with specific forage legumes that suppresses *Striga* germination; using imazapyr herbicide-coated seeds; using maize-legume intercropping and rotations; and deploying biocontrol strategy that has the potential of sustainable control of *Striga*.

Welcome, Dr Joao Augusto, new Plant Pathologist

Dr Joao Augusto, a Mozambican, has joined IITA-Ibadan as a Plant Pathologist. Augusto obtained his B.S. degree in Agronomy and Plant Protection from the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Maputo, in 1996. He received his M.S. and Ph.D. in Plant Pathology from the University of Georgia (UGA), Department of Plant Pathology, USA, in 2004 and 2009, respectively.

Prior to this appointment, he was a Postdoctoral Research Associate at UGA, where he also served as a Graduate Research Assistant (Ph.D. and M.S.) from June 2002 to May 2009. He lives at Tropical 16 on the IITA campus, tel. 2518. His family will be joining him in a few months. His office is in Building 400, Room 8, tel. 2298.



IGH shut for renovation

The Ikeja Guest House (IGH) will undergo renovation and will be closed from 15 May till 20 June. During this period, arrangements have been made with the following hotels to accommodate IITA staff and guests who require this service: Excellence Hotel, Isheri Road, Ogba, Ikeja, Tel: 08037165025; Villa Sofia Hotel, Omole Phase I, Ogba, Ikeja; Tel: 07030961419.

Guests do not need to make any special arrangements for accommodation as the Travel Services will take care of transfers to the designated hotels.

Building regional capacity to detect key plant pests and pathogens

Research and regulatory staff from national agricultural research systems of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda were recently trained on how to detect key pests and disease pathogens of important crops in the region as part of efforts to promote standard operating procedures (SOPs) developed by the International Plant Diagnostic Network (IPDN). These are aimed at helping curbing their spread and damage, which cause huge economic losses to farmers.

The training, held on 1-4 May, was hosted by the Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), Morogoro, Tanzania and organized by the East African arm of IPDN.

The workshop was supported by USAID through the Integrated Pest Management Collaborative Research Support Program (IPM-CRSP) Regional Program in East Africa, IPDN, and Plant Virus Global Theme Program in collaboration with the Innovative Agricultural Research Initiative (the capacity building program of Feed-the-Future in Tanzania).

Fen Beed of IITA who has been involved with the IPDN for 7 years now, first by establishing the network in West Africa and currently providing technical and logistical support to the East African network, was among the resource persons at the training. He noted that “the first step towards



Participants at the training workshop pose for a group photo

managing any plant disease is to identify the causal agent and this program (IPDN) fills a critical niche by creating lasting regional networks to develop and implement SOPs”.

The global IPDN network coordinator, Professor Sally Miller of Ohio State University, also at the training, stated that “the impact of each training exercise is immediate but the real benefit has been realized through a series of repeated training workshops to consolidate knowledge leading to its implementation”.

Zachary Kinyua of the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) and who is also the coordinator of the network in East Africa, commended the training, saying, “Such unique initiatives contribute directly towards

preemptive action by creating regional capacity to rapidly and precisely diagnose pathogens to prevent disease establishment and spread, and to obviate the current scenario of fighting full-blown epidemics”.

The pests and pathogens covered included tomato bacterial wilt (*Ralstonia solanacearum*), Banana xanthomonas wilt (*Xanthomonas campestris* pv. *musacearum*), Tomato viruses (focus on Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl Virus -TYLCV), Passion fruit viruses (focus on woodiness virus), Plant parasitic nematodes (focus on *Meloidogyne* spp.), Fruit fly (focus on *Ceratitidis & Bactrocera*), Purple blotch (*Alternaria porri*), and Onion thrips (*Thrips tabaci*).

Sportsfest 2012 kicks off, rekindles morale of staff

The Sportsfest 2012 kicked off last week in Ibadan with fun and pomp. Staff held a parade of colors from



Staff in procession



IITA DG, Sanginga kicks the ceremonial ball

the Conference Center to the Sports Center, chanting songs with jubilation.

The event displayed the energy of staff and also sparked off their morale.

In the midst of the jubilation, staff sang songs pledging loyalty and renewed commitment to the vision and goals of IITA.

Declaring the event open, IITA DG Nteranya Sanginga urged the staff to channel most of the energy displayed into rejuvenating IITA. He challenged staff to see IITA as their own institution, and to work with a sincerity of heart. IITA DDG (Partnerships and Capacity Building) Kenton Dashiell re-echoed the appeal and said that the task of building a strong institution was a task for all.

A call to clean the campus was made and staff, including Management, went about picking litter around the sports complex. This year's Sportsfest stood out as a unity platform with the various staff cadres mingling, fraternizing, and associating freely. The kick-off football matches for the day involved Red and Yellow teams

for females, and Green and Red teams for males.



IITA DDG, Dashiell making a speech



Yellow and Red team battle for supremacy