

Experts mull strategies to check advance of Cassava Brown Streak into West Africa

Scientists and policy makers held a one-day meeting in Owerri, Nigeria, to brainstorm on strategies to prevent the spread of Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD).

The meeting was called by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

Currently ravaging Eastern African nations, CBSD has since spread to Central Africa and has been reported in the DRC.

Researchers have expressed worry that if preventive steps are not taken urgently, the disease could hit the West African bloc, the region that hosts the largest cassava producing nation - Nigeria.

Nigeria's Minister of Agriculture, Sheikh Abdallah, who was represented by Emmanuel Eniayeju, said the meeting was aimed at developing a framework with stringent measures to prevent the spread of the viral disease into the country.

"We don't want anything to happen to cassava," he added.

Producing more than 45 million tons of cassava per annum, Nigeria is presently the world's largest producer of cassava.

Abdallah said that the government is poised to tackle any pest or disease that could jeopardize the food security of the country.

Peter Kulakow, IITA cassava breeder, said the institute has the capability to tackle the outbreak of the disease, adding that IITA would apply its experiences and successes in controlling CBSD in East Africa to the western bloc.

In Nigeria where there has not been any



Participants of the multi-institution CBSD meeting held in Owerri convened by the Nigerian Federal Government.

reported cases of CBSD, Kulakow urged for increased vigilance and called for the development of local capacity to recognize the disease and deploy control programs.

He also called for the establishment of preemptive action plans to reduce the risk of CBSD spread from affected regions and put in place programs to produce and distribute clean cassava planting materials.

The meeting attracted researchers from IITA—Kulakow, Gedil Melaku, and Paul Ilona, the National Roots Crops Research

Institute (NRCRI), the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, and the Roots and Tuber Extension Project.

Chiedozie Egese, cassava breeder with the NRCRI, said the meeting was a welcome development. He indicated that NRCRI and IITA would work together to ensure the safety of the cassava sector in the country.

The institutes will be jointly developing a concept note on CBSD control measures, which they would present to the Federal Government within a week.



IITA welcomes new Senior Finance Officer...

The Ibadan Finance Office welcomes to its fold Jacqueline Musiimenta, Senior Financial Officer, who joined the team this week. Prior to joining IITA, Musiimenta worked for USAID in her home country of Uganda as Account Payable Manager.

She is a member of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants of the UK. She completed her Bachelor of Science degree at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda.

Musiimenta has a wealth of experience in finance and accounting, and has worked for various NGOs, as well as on projects for many international donor organizations.

She is married to husband Silver, and they

have four children - Victoria, Leone, Ethan, and Catherine.

Jacqueline resides at No. 4 Tropical Crescent, extension 2262. Her office is at Room 114b in Building 500, extension 2861. Her email address is J.Musiimenta@cgiar.org.

Energy conservation tips: Power down computers, monitors, and peripherals when not in use; and make use of natural light whenever and wherever possible.

... and new Postdoc Cowpea Agronomist

Haruki Ishikawa has recently joined the IITA team in Kano as Postdoc Cowpea Agronomist. He will be working primarily with Sato Muranaka under the AVEC-BF project and will be based in Kano and Saria, Burkina Faso.

Prior to joining IITA, Haruki, a Japanese national, worked as a research assistant in the Faculty of Science and Engineering at Ishinomaki Senshu University.

He also previously worked at the Photodynamics Research Centre, Institute of Physical and Chemical Research in Sendai, Japan.

Haruki holds a Masters and a Doctorate degree in Science/Plant Physiology, both of which he obtained from the Ishinomaki Senshu University.

Haruki is married to wife Aoi, and they have a three-month old son.

He could be contacted at email addresses H.Ishikawa@cgiar.org or h3ishikawa@gmail.com.

He currently resides at BP 10 Koudougou, INERA Saria, IITA Burkina Faso.



Farmers in north-central Nigeria receive improved cassava planting materials



(Top) Farmers line up to receive their cassava cuttings from an IITA-UPoCA project staff, as a woman farmer (bottom) happily goes home with her bundles of improved cassava planting materials.

The USAID-funded project on Unleashing the Power of Cassava in Africa (UPoCA) that is being implemented by IITA has, once again, distributed improved cassava stems to resource poor farmers this time in the Kogi and Osun states in the north-central zone of Nigeria.

The project previously distributed improved cassava planting materials to farmers in the south-western state of Oyo.

The distribution is part of targets set by the research team, this year, to boost the cultivation of the crop. Researchers working on the project also offered training to farmers on best farming methods and on the rapid multiplication of cassava.

Communities in Kogi Central Senatorial zone received six varieties of improved cassava. In Osun state, about 1500 bundles of improved cassava stems were distributed to individual farmers. While in Kogi state, about 600 farmers benefited from the training and also got improved cassava varieties. Out of the 600 beneficiaries, about 25% were women.

The distribution attracted traditional rulers, policy makers, farmers, agricultural extension agents and other state officials.

Benefiting farmers rejoiced over the new varieties.

"I have been looking for this variety for the last two years. Today they have given it to me for free so I am happy," said Foluronso Peter, a 46-year old farmer. He expressed optimism that the crop would increase his yield.

The farmers also promised to multiply the cuttings for further comparison with their local varieties. The District Heads of the communities thanked IITA and USAID for their effort in ensuring that they have food. They equally praised the magnanimity of IITA-UPoCA in providing the cuttings free-of-charge to them. Researchers expect that the adoption of these varieties would reduce the severity of the cassava mosaic disease, increase yields, and improve farm incomes.

Richardson Okechukwu, Deputy Manager of the UPoCA project, said its activities would help in the eradication of poverty in the communities.