

Second phase of commercialization of cassava launched

The second phase of the Common Fund for Commodities-funded project to exploit cassava's potential as an income earner through the production and use of high quality cassava flour (HQCF) in Madagascar, Tanzania, and Zambia, was successfully launched between 2 and 3 February 2010 in Lusaka, Zambia. The launch was organized by IITA, the project's implementer and the Zambian Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI), its partner in Zambia.

This four-year project is a build up of a successfully concluded Phase 1, which demonstrated that of all the products derived from cassava, HQCF held the most potential to generate income and create wealth for smallholder farmers, said Watson Mwale, ZARI Director while officially launching the project.

"The second phase of the project will introduce mechanical drying of cassava to facilitate year-round production of HQCF to supply to end-user industries, and this will facilitate the transition of smallholder farmers from subsistence production to commercial production and processing," he said.

Abass Adebayo, IITA cassava value chain specialist and the project's coordinator, said the project would engage 9,000 smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs in major cassava-producing communities of the three countries



Watson Mwale, ZARI Director (second from left), making his opening remarks. Flanking him (from left) are Nicholas Cromme from CFC, Adam Prakash from FAO, and Edward Kanju from IITA, during the project launch.

in village-level processing to make semi-dry cassava grits, which would then be sold to processors of the HQCF.

"Cassava is bulky and starts rotting within 48 hours. However, the semi-dry grits have a longer shelf life and reduce the weight of the fresh cassava by half. They are therefore more storable and easy to transport to higher scale industries for drying, milling, grading and packing into HQCF," he said.

Cassava is one of the main staple foods in Africa and plays an important role in food security. However, its potential as an income

earner has not been well exploited in eastern and southern Africa as it has in Latin America and Asia where it is a major source of foreign exchange from the export of cassava-derived products such as starch, chips, pellets, and flour for industrial use.

The workshop was attended by many stakeholders and representatives of the project's implementing partners from the three countries; ZARI in Zambia, Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre in Tanzania, and National Center for Applied Research on Rural Development in Madagascar, and CFC.

Senegalese firm indicates interest in aflasafe, *B. bassiana*

Senegalese-based Fondation has expressed interest to collaborate with IITA on the commercialization of IITA-developed biopesticides in Africa, including aflasafe and *Beauveria bassiana*.

The partnership between the two parties aims to reduce aflatoxin contamination in crops such as maize using aflasafe and also to protect cabbage against pest attacks using *B. bassiana*, according to Christiana Kooyman, Head of Research at the Fondation.

aflasafe, a recently developed biopesticide, provides a safe and natural method that



Kooyman



Sebastien

drastically cut aflatoxin contamination in African food crops.

When applied on a field, aflasafe which is made from native strains of *Aspergillus flavus* that do not produce aflatoxins (called atoxigenic strains) competitively exclude the aflatoxin producers.

This competitive exclusion principle helps

in mitigating the negative effect of aflatoxins on human beings which include predisposition to cancer and suppression of immune system, and trade losses.

On the other hand, *B. bassiana* controls devastation on cabbage farms caused by Diamondback moth (DBM), *Plutella xylostella*.

On application, *B. bassiana* kills DBM and has proved much more effective than chemical pesticides that come in most cases with prohibitive cost.

Kooyman, accompanied by his colleague, Sebastien Couasnet, says Fondation is currently conducting trials using *B. bassiana* on cabbage farms devastated by DBM in Senegal.

Owned by the Senegalese First Lady, the Fondation—a charity group—has grown to become one of Africa's largest biopesticides manufacturers.

Presently the firm is commercializing Green Muscle®, another biopesticide developed years back by IITA for the control of locust invasions.

Last year, a rapid intervention using Green Muscle® drastically reduced locust infestations in Tanzania and prevented a full blown invasion.

IITA-Uganda remembers departed colleagues



IITA, NaCRRRI, and IFPRI staff attending 2010 memorial

On 29 January, IITA-Uganda commemorated their departed colleagues during their annual Memorial Day. It has been 10 years since the death of Paul Speyer, Dirk Vuylsteker, and John Hartman, three banana scientists who are considered as the founders of the IITA station in Uganda. They perished on 30 January 2000 while traveling to IITA's Work Planning Week in Ibadan, when their plane crashed into the sea in bad weather shortly after take off from Abidjan.

Frances Onyango, IITA's regional administrator, who died one month ago from a sudden heart condition, was also commemorated. Before moving to Dar es Salaam, Frances had been a vital part of the Uganda team for 10 years. She was

remembered as a trusted colleague and an exceptionally warm person who touched the hearts of all those around her. Staff were encouraged to follow in her footsteps and help each other where possible with encouragement and warm smiles.

Speeches were made by Victor Mayong, the R4D Director for East and Southern Africa, Danny Coyne, the Officer in Charge of Uganda, Godfrey Asiah from NaCRRRI/NARO, Eriasaph Owere from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) on behalf of IITA's partners, and Anneke Fermont on behalf of colleagues and friends. Afterwards, flowers were laid at the memorial stone in Sendusu station to remember the departed colleagues.

Announcements

ISTRC-AB holds 11th symposium

The International Society for Tropical Root Crops- Africa Branch (ISTRC-AB) will hold its 11th symposium with the theme "Root Crops and the Challenges of Globalization and Climate" in Kinshasa, DR Congo, between 5 and 10 October 2010.

Deadline for submission of abstracts:

30 April 2010

Deadline for full papers' submission:

30 July 2010

Help conserve electricity!

Before leaving your workplace at the end of the day, make sure that you have:

- (1) Powered off all unnecessary electrical office/lab equipment;
- (2) Turned off air conditioners; and
- (3) Switched off all lights.

World Cowpea Conference 2010



IITA, in cooperation with partners – Pulse-CRSP, Purdue University, and the ISRA, Senegal – is organizing the 5th World

Cowpea Research Conference to be held on 27 September - 1 October 2010 in Dakar, Senegal. Global cowpea experts will tackle research issues related to enhancing the profile of cowpea as a viable income generating and food security crop. For more details and to submit papers, please visit the conference Web site at <http://cowpea2010.iita.org>.

Deadline for submission of abstracts:

15 April

Abstracts approval and contact with presenters: 16 May

Deadline for full paper submission: 30 September

Deadline for early registration: 16 July

February is Heart Disease Awareness Month

From last week

3. Lose the Christmas pounds



Now is a good time to lose those extra pounds that were piled on during the festive period. Switch to a well-balanced diet that is low in fat and high in fruit and vegetables, combined with plenty of physical activity.

4. Give the salt the shake off



Stop using salt at the table and try adding less to your cooking, or even better, cut it out completely from your cooking. It may take a little getting used to, but by the end of January your taste buds will have adapted and your blood pressure will lower.

5. Grab five!



Up your intake of fruit and vegetables and help get your 5-a-day. Try adding some dried fruits to your cereal in the morning or adding extra vegetables to pasta sauces, curries, casseroles, etc.

6. Walk off stress



If things are getting too much, go for a walk to reduce stress levels and help reach your 30 a day at the same time.

7. Cut the saturated fat



Make small changes to your diet, such as switching from full fat milk to skimmed or semi-skimmed milk, choosing leaner cuts of meat, or steaming or grilling foods rather than frying in lots of oil.

8. Up the oily fish



Eat oily fish regularly, such as mackerel, sardines, fresh tuna, and salmon. Oily fish is an excellent source of omega 3 fats, which can help protect against heart disease.

9. Check out the food label



Get in the habit of checking the label on food packets when out shopping. The information will help you understand what is in food you are buying and make healthier food choices.

10. Cut back on empty calories



Alcohol is packed with calories with a unit of alcohol containing around 100 calories! So cut back on your intake and give your body a rest after the festive celebrations.