

Invest in Cassava, Tanzania business community urged

Industries in Tanzania can consume up to 47,000 tons of cassava processed into industrial raw material such as high quality cassava flour, starch, and cassava chips that can substitute expensive imports in breweries, textile, food, adhesives, bakeries, and animal feed mills. This can offer huge economic benefits to the farmers who will have markets for their produce and will offer opportunities to transporters and processors. Consequently, it will create jobs and improve livelihoods in the rural areas.

However, for this to take off, medium- and large-scale investors need to get involved in exploiting cassava as a source of industrial raw material and not just as a food crop.

According to the Managing Director of Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre (TFNC), Godwin Ndossi, cassava is a highly marketable raw material but the transition of the crop to an industrial commodity is greatly constrained because its processing is in the hands of small-scale entrepreneurs.

He was speaking in Dar es Salaam during a meeting that is part of a project funded by the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) and implemented by the Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre (TFNC) and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA).

Ndossi said under phase I of the project, implemented from 2003-2007, small-scale mechanized processing of cassava was introduced, as an improvement over the traditional manual processing that was time and labour consuming.

"New highly marketable products such



Farmers get improved gari frying equipment as high quality cassava flour and starch were also introduced and tested with the potential end-users," he said.

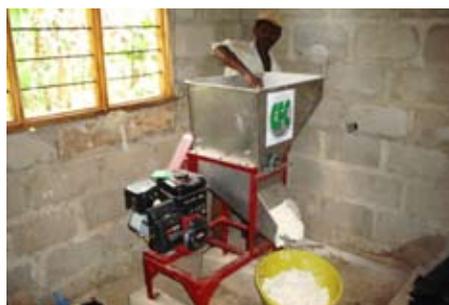
IITA's Director for eastern and central Africa, Victor Manyong also present at the meeting, said the initiative was in line with IITA's goal of saving farmers' post harvest losses and adding value to their produce to reduce poverty and hunger.

Adam Prakash from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) pointed out that in 2009 alone, Tanzania imported about 700,000 tons of wheat and that a substitution of 10-30% of the imports with high quality flour would increase the incomes of smallholder farmers thereby contributing to hunger and poverty reduction in Tanzania.

Adebayo Abass, IITA's Cassava

Value Chain Specialist and Regional Coordinator of the project, assured potential investors that cassava processing to High Quality Cassava Flour (HQCF) was a worthwhile and highly profitable venture. "From our calculations, though varying from area to area, we expect profit margins of 20-50%. You will comfortably be able to pay back any bank loan at 11-19%," he said

The potential end-user industries present at the meeting such as Bakefood, Azam Biscuit Company and Real Foods Limited, were in support of the new project and noted that by using HQCF, they hoped to contribute to the Kilimo Kwanza (Agriculture first) program of the government which is aimed at developing the sector in the country as a way of fighting poverty and fostering development.



Cassava grater increases farmers' productivity

Vacancies

1. Programmer – Systems Integration Project (Ref: DDG-SS/PSIP/01/11)
2. Associate Professional Officer – Agronomist (Coffee and Banana Systems)
3. Roots and Tuber Systems Agronomist (Ref: DDG-R4D/RTA/01/10)

For more information, please visit:
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Help conserve electricity!

Before leaving the workplace at the day's end, 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.

Health insurance for IITA-Nigeria staff underway

The Management of IITA has reviewed the existing NRS Medical scheme with an agreement with a Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) to provide comprehensive healthcare delivery for the staff, says Olu Babasanya, IITA Personnel Manager.

Under the agreement, ExpatCare Health International Limited will take responsibility of IITA staff's health care as contained in the 'IITA plan.'

Part of the 'IITA plan' requires the HMO to provide staff comprehensive health services including cancer treatment (to a limit), ante-natal care and dental care among others which were not in the previous plan.

Since 2008, IITA has reviewed other NRS policies with a view to offering better conditions of service to staff.

"The current review offers more benefits than those in the past and is in line with a directive from the Federal Government of Nigeria on the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS)," says Babasanya.

Officials of ExpatCare Health International are currently on an enlightenment mission across IITA stations in Nigeria to explain to staff how the scheme works.

Sudhakaran Parakkal, a senior official of ExpatCare, says the "The new scheme will afford



Babasanya (right) exchanges notes with a delegation of ExpatCare during the staff enlightenment forum in IITA Ibadan

staff the opportunity to enjoy health care off-campus and in several hospitals across the country."

The company says it has a network of hospitals across Nigeria that will offer staff the best of health care.

"Sicknesses listed in the IITA Plan will be treated at no cost to staff and without financial limit," Parakkal says but adds, "cancer treatment has a limit of N500, 000."

If things go as planned, the new medical policy will take effect by February, 2011. As a result, staff are expected to complete and return enrollee forms to the Personnel Unit on or before 20 January 2011.

Babasanya says the selection of ExpatCare is a product of many months of careful search/selection involving Human Resource (including Medical), Supply Chain, Finance Office, and R4D.

IITA capacity building produces results



Bukola paints a fabricated cassava presser

A capacity building program by IITA to attract more women in the design and fabrication of postharvest machines is producing positive results.

Under the program, female fabricators who are mainly interns from tertiary institutions of learning are subjected to various aspects of machine fabrication including measuring, marking, cutting, drilling and welding among others.

Thierno Diallo, IITA Postharvest Engineer, who is pioneering the project, under the leadership of Bussie Maziya-Dixon, says he intends to see more women involvement in machine fabrication in Africa.

Presently, machine fabrication is dominated by the male folks and some consider the profession as an enclave for the males owing to the physical energy that is sometimes required in

getting things done.

"This is a myth and we hope to correct that," Diallo says after two female interns successfully fabricated a cassava presser.

He says the interest shown by women in recent times to machine fabrication is a positive development.

"It signpost good things to come in the future because more women are needed in this profession," he says.

The two interns — Akinada Janet and Rufus Bukola — are spending three to four months understudying the trade under the guidance of Diallo at the Postharvest Engineering workshop of IITA.

Janet is from the Lagos State Polytechnic while Bukola is from the University of Ibadan.

The training which was both theoretical and practical has helped the interns to understand better what they have been taught in the classroom. More importantly, it has built their capacities and confidence in fabrication.

Janet attested to this fact. She says, "Now I know new things and feel more confident."

According to her, she plans to establish a mechanical workshop in the future that will roll out machines to solve Africa's postharvest challenges.

She and Bukola thanked IITA for the opportunity to learn new things.



Janet welds presser



Final product: cassava presser