



IITA-STCP holds 8th Regional Executive Committee meeting

The Sustainable Tree Crops Program of IITA (IITA-SCTP) held its 8th Regional Executive Committee on 6-7 May 2010 in Cameroon's capital of Yaounde. The meeting brought together representatives of donor agencies and partner government institutions. The event also coincided with the official launch of the Cocoa Livelihoods Program (CLP) of the World Cocoa Foundation.

The ceremony was opened by the representative of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Madam Ananga. She expressed her government's continuous support to the IITA-STCP and CLP initiatives which aim to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers and their communities. She noted that rural transformation, a key component of the programs, is clearly in line with her government's development agenda. She specifically thanked IITA for constantly engaging the ministry in the process.

Prior to the meeting, a field trip to some project sites were organized for the Executive Committee members. Visited were a cooperative in Mengag, which is being assisted by the program with training and



Members of the IITA-STCP Executive Committee during their courtesy call to Cameroon's Minister of Commerce, Magloire Mbarga Atangana.

planting materials; and a cocoa farm in Ngat being rehabilitated through IITA-STCP's Farmer Learning Group approach.

At the end of the meeting, the Executive Committee made a courtesy call to the

Cameroonian Minister of Commerce, Magloire Mbarga Atangana, to express their appreciation for the continuous support by the government and the people of Cameroon to the IITA-STCP and CLP.

Chinese research institute commends IITA's value-addition work



Victor Manyong (right) briefing Li Shaojun and Wang Xialin of the IPCCC, and Maurice Shines of USAID-Tanzania.

A delegation from the Chinese International Poverty Reduction Centre (IPRCC) recently visited IITA-Tanzania and was impressed with the institute's research for development model (R4D) and its activities on cassava value addition.

The two delegates, Professor Wang Xialin, Chief of IPRCC's Research Division, and Li Shaojun, Program Officer in charge of cooperation, were in the country to seek partnership with USAID -Tanzania and its

partners to collaborate with in their research work.

Victor Manyong, IITA Director for Eastern and Central Africa, welcomed the delegation. At IITA's offices in Mikocheni, Manyong briefed Xialin and Shaojun on IITA's activities. He also toured them to Chambezi to see the institute's breeding programs on disease-resistant cassava and a demonstration of cassava post harvest processing. Also with the group was

Maurice Shines, Private Sector Officer at USAID-Tanzania.

Manyong explained to the group that cassava value addition is one of the ways Tanzania can fight poverty and create employment in the rural areas. "IITA has many years of experience in this area, especially from the our work in Nigeria that saw the country became the world largest producer of cassava," he said. "We are also working on yams, banana and plantains, cowpea and soybean following the same value addition approach."

Xialin said China also has many experiences that African countries can learn from. "China has experienced over 30 years of economic growth and has plenty of lessons to share, especially on the development of small and medium business enterprise in the rural areas", he said. "There are also many things that we can learn from research institutions in Africa such as yours."

He said he was impressed by IITA's R4D Model, and that the institute is a potential partner that China could work with should they decide to invest in Tanzania.

IPRCC is a platform of research institutions working on poverty reduction. It promotes exchange visits of scientists between China and their partners and facilitates training of students in various areas of poverty reduction.

IITA pupils learn more about their fine feathered friends

Three experts on the Birds of Nigeria visited the IITA-Ibadan campus and delivered a lecture on the importance and diversity of birds to the excitement of pupils at the IITA-International school.

The experts, Shiiwua Manu, Phil Hall and Matt Stephens, were on campus to also conduct a survey of the birds of the IITA forest under the auspices of the newly-funded Leventis Foundation Project on the natural resources of the IITA forest.

Manu, who is also the Director-General of AP Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI) based in Jos, Nigeria, said birds are important and integral part of the ecosystem, positively affecting the nutrition, health, environment, economy and the culture of the people.

In spite of their contributions, however, Manu said the environmental services of birds are frequently underrated. He cited, for example, in an area north-west of Wichita, Kansas in the United States, some 15–20 million Red-winged Blackbirds were estimated in the 1920s to have fed their young, from hatching to independence, the equivalent of 4,260 tonnes of insects or 6.3 billion cutworms (moth larvae notoriously harmful to



Pupils eagerly raising their hands to answer a question posed by Manu during the lecture on the Birds of Nigeria held at the IITA School hall.

plants). “This is the equivalent of 17 European Airbuses...” He said the contribution of birds to nature, therefore, made their conservation a high priority for human existence and the balance of the ecosystem.

Aside from the pupils, some IITA staff, campus residents and scientists also attended the bird lecture, led by IITA

Director General Hartmann himself, underscoring the interest in the topic. On two days following the lecture, the experts showed 15 children from the school how to catch birds for scientific studies. This included weighing the birds, determining their age and sex, and tagging them by putting a ring on one leg.

IITA steps up fight against whiteflies



Professor Dan Gerling (middle) explaining a point during the whitefly biocontrol training, as James Legg (left) and Haidari Nawabu (right) of IITA-Tanzania listen intently.

The days of the cassava disease-causing whitefly, *Bemisia tabaci*, may be numbered thanks to an initiative by the institute and partners to identify and deploy their natural enemies to sustainably reduce their population.

Whiteflies are known vectors of the Cassava Mosaic Disease and Cassava Brown Streak - the two deadliest viral disease of cassava presently wreaking havoc on the crops' production in sub-Saharan Africa and threatening the food and income security of millions of farmers.

The project kicked off with a planning meeting on 22-23 April, which was followed by a two-day training involving field technicians from five IITA research stations in DRC, Tanzania, Malawi, Cameroon and Nigeria. The workshops focused on new strategies to battle the whiteflies.

Speaking during the project team meeting, James Legg, IITA vector entomologist and the project's team leader, said that there has been an explosion of

the whitefly population in areas where the two diseases are present.

Also at the forum, Professor Dan Gerling, a whitefly biocontrol specialist from the Tel Aviv University in Israel and a project team member, affirmed that *B. tabaci* was the insect transmitting the greatest number of plant viruses.

Commenting on the efficacy of biocontrol, Rachid Hanna, IITA biocontrol specialist, indicated that though it could take several years to search for, identify, test, and deploy a biological control program, once it takes off, the benefits are immense.

“This method is cheap in the long run as it costs nothing to the farmers. It also offers a sustainable and environment-friendly solution to the whitefly problem,” he added.

The initiative aims to complement IITA's other projects on increasing production of cassava and developing new opportunities for value addition.

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- (2) Turned off air conditioners; and
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