



# Germany grants €1.2M to vegetable IPM study for food security & nutrition

Efforts to improve the productivity of vegetables to feed and enhance the nutrition of people in Africa and Asia received a major boost with the release of a €1.2 million (about US\$1.6 million) research grant from the German government. The funding will be used on research to develop sustainable solutions to pests and diseases of economically important vegetable crops, increase their production, and improve the livelihoods of smallholder growers.

The grant was provided through the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The project started this month and will cover selected vegetable-growing coastal and urban communities in Tanzania, Kenya, Madagascar, and Thailand. IITA is leading the multi-partner initiative.

It will develop and promote ecologically sensitive and economically viable systems to manage key pests and diseases of tomato and green pepper – two of the most important vegetable crops in these countries – to increase production. The project will also aim to significantly lessen the use of chemical pesticides, thereby reducing hazards to farmers' health and the environment.



*An African farmer watering his vegetable crop. Photo by Arnstein Staverlokk, Bioforsk.*

Dr Danny Coyne, IITA Soil Health Specialist and project coordinator, says that the urban and peri-urban agriculture for production of perishable vegetables is being increasingly intensified to meet rising demand, leading to increased pest and disease incidence. Growers, in turn, apply more pesticides to maintain production.

"We will look for ways to help vegetable farmers raise their production

and profits without additional use of chemical pesticides," he said.

Researchers will focus on developing accurate pest and disease diagnosis and identifying durable resistance against bacterial wilt disease, nematodes – small worm-like pests, and viruses. The project will also train farmer groups in assessing new varieties for suitability, as well as develop more efficient clean-seedling production systems.

"Most infection of vegetables takes place in the seedling nursery. Farmers who buy infected seedlings unknowingly transfer the pests and diseases to their farms. To address this, we will also establish pilot clean-seedling nurseries and train farmers on pest and disease detection, proper seed production, grafting, and nursery management," Coyne adds.

The World Vegetable Centre (AVRDC) will be a major partner in the project. Researchers from the University of Bonn in Germany, Kenyatta University in Kenya, and Kasetsart University in Thailand, as well as national agricultural research services, NGOs, private sector, and vegetable farmers' groups in the four countries, will also be taking part in the initiative.

## Ghana bestows top award on DTMA scientist

The Ghanaian government has acknowledged the efforts by scientists in disseminating drought-tolerant maize, and the impact the varieties are having on rural livelihoods with an award to Dr Roger Kanton, the scientist leading the team in that country.

Kanton received the National Merit Award from the Ghanaian President as the "Best Agricultural Research Scientist in Ghana" during the 2011 National Farmers' Day celebrations at Agona Nsaba on 2 December.

The award is a testament of Ghana's appreciation of maize bred under the Drought Tolerant Maize for Africa (DTMA) project aimed at ensuring food security in the country.

More than the other requirements for the award that Kanton submitted, it was his work in DTMA maize dissemination activities in Ghana that swayed the award committee's votes to his favor.

He expressed deep appreciation particularly to Prof. Wilfred Mwangi and MAB Fakorede, Dr Baffour Badu-Apraku, Dr Abebe Menkir, Dr Abdoulaye Tahirou, Dr Sam Ajala, Dr Robert Asiedu, and other DTMA colleagues from Benin, Nigeria, and Mali.

## Nigeria Cocoa Transformation team at IITA



*Dr Aikpokpodion, Team Leader of the Nigeria Cocoa Transformation program, stressing a point during the courtesy call to IITA Directorate. With him were Dr Labu (leftmost) and Dr Orchard (rightmost).*

The Cocoa Transformation for Nigeria team was at IITA-Ibadan on 3 February, Friday, for talks on how IITA could play an active role towards the further development of the cocoa sector of the country.

The team was comprised of Dr John Orchard, Director of Research and Enterprises of the Natural Resources Institute of the University of Greenwich, UK; Dr. Peter Aikpokpodion, Team Leader

of the Cocoa Transformation for Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development; and Dr Ade Labu of the Division of Planning also of the same Ministry. They met with Dr Lakshmi Menon, DDG-R4D Support; Dr Robert Asiedu, R4D Director; and Dr Ranjana Bhattacharjee, who is leading the cocoa team at IITA.

Dr Orchard is a consultant with the World Bank and is

overseeing the cocoa program on its behalf. The World Bank is being eyed to fund the initiative.

In his brief presentation to the group, Dr Aikpokpodion highlighted the need to transform the cocoa sector of the country as cocoa "is Nigeria's single largest non-oil export earner."

"However, despite its obvious importance, the cocoa sector has generally been neglected and is plagued by many problems. These include low investments, lack of structure and regulations, old and unproductive farms and farmers, low yields, primarily subsistence farming, and poor access to and use of fertilizers and other inputs," Dr Aikpokpodion added.

He emphasized that transformation is needed, and it must happen now if the sector is to realize its full economic benefits.

He indicated that there is

much potential for cocoa in the country. For example, he cited that only 640,000 out of the 3 million hectares suitable for cocoa production are being used. The program aims to put into productive use 1 million hectares and raise yields from 340 kg/ha to 1 ton/ha.

The program will espouse public-private partnership strategy as its centerpiece platform to transform the whole cocoa value chain.

In response, the IITA team reinstated its commitment to the Transformation Program, offering to work with national partners in extending expertise and facilities.

"This Cocoa Transformation Program is very much in line with IITA's mission and vision," Dr Menon said, "and I am confident that this partnership between the Nigerian Government, IITA, and the World Bank will benefit not only cocoa farmers but the country as a whole."

## International agricultural research excites Japan

The Japanese government has commended efforts by IITA towards increasing food production in Africa amid rising population.

The Japanese Ambassador to Nigeria, His Excellency Ryuichi Shoji, during a courtesy call to the Director General of IITA, Dr Nteranya Sanginga, said, "IITA's research is producing good results... and are contributing to the development of agriculture in Africa."

The ambassador especially cited IITA's work on cowpea and yam, which led to the development of improved varieties and management techniques, contributing to food security.

He said Japan was proud to be associated with IITA and called for greater collaboration to help tackle the challenge of feeding the rising number of people in Africa.

With Africa's population at more than a billion and estimated to double by 2050,



*The Japanese delegation with the IITA team at the Bioscience Center.*

Ambassador Shoji said the challenge was not just meeting the food demands of the population but also providing jobs for the youth.

"There are more and more people in Africa. More people to feed and more in need of jobs and we have to tackle these two problems," he said.

He expressed confidence that agricultural research holds promise in tackling the challenges facing Africa and reiterated Japan's commitment to support agricultural

development particularly in Nigeria.

Ambassador Shoji also commended the efforts of the Nigerian government in agricultural development under the leadership of Dr Akin Adesina.

The DG assured the ambassador that IITA will continue to foster greater partnership with the people of Japan to fight hunger and poverty in Africa.

While calling for more collaboration, Sanginga commended the Japan for supporting IITA's research, citing the exchange programs between IITA and Japanese institutions.

He said such programs were necessary for capacity development and building synergies among researchers.

## Tubi Folake Fehintola, SP-IPM Secretary, passes on

With heavy hearts and deep sense of loss, IITA announces the passing away of Mrs. Tubi, Folake Fehintola, secretary with Dr. Hoeschle-Zeledon in the SP-IPM Unit.

She died on 10 February in an auto crash in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Tubi was 45 years of age and hailed from Okemesi, Ekiti State.

Dr. Sanginga, on behalf of the Institute, expresses his sympathy to the family of the deceased.

May her gentle soul rest in perfect peace.



*Tubi Folake Fehintola*