

“Red List for Benin” launched

On 11 June, IITA and partners officially launched the book *Protection de la nature en Afrique de l’Ouest: Une Liste Rouge pour le Bénin – Nature Conservation in West Africa: Red List for Benin* edited by Peter Neuenschwander, Bruce Sinsin, Georg Goergen. The book was produced through the generous support of the Swiss Development Cooperation, The Netherlands Embassy-Benin, Helvetas-Benin, and the Leventis Foundation. IITA served as the book’s publishing house and also one of its donors.

The ceremony was held in the Ahozon forest 20 km west of Cotonou, a top conservation priority area for Benin and the last coastal forest between Lagos, Nigeria and Accra, Ghana. The event was sponsored by Helvetas-Benin and attended by about a hundred people. A ‘forest walk’ preceded the launch.

Colonel Paul Djogbénou, representing the Ministry of Environment of Benin, introduced the launch. He said that the Red List book “constitutes a unique document that will feed into the process of sustainable development as set by the Beninese government”.

Talks were also delivered by His Excellency Wouter Plomp, Dutch Ambassador to Benin; Jean-Luc Virchaux, Swiss Development Cooperation’s representative; and Prof. Brice Sinsin, one of the editors and Vice Chancellor of the University of Abomey-Calavi

Manuele Tamò, IITA Country Representative to Benin, said that the book is a testament to IITA’s “commitment to the development of sustainable agriculture that promotes the use of biodiversity to protect plants from pests naturally.”

Goergen said that the book gives evidence that Benin has much more biodiversity than previously thought, being the meeting point of the fauna and flora from two large blocks of humid forests in Africa.

“The book is a start and the first of its kind for the whole sub-region. Benin now has a reference for nature protection to benefit future generations,” he added.

Gaston Akouéhou, Director of the Forest Management and Rehabilitation Project, gave an overview of the history of the 140-ha forest.



Neuenschwander discussed highlights of the book, explaining the status of an astonishing number of rare plants and animals still surviving in Benin. He pointed out that 64% of all rare plants occur in the south, outside protected areas, which calls for the creation of new protected forests. For credible nature protection, existing laws and the ratified International Conventions must be better respected. He also called for better land planning that, for example, segregates protected zones and those for urban development.

“By raising public awareness, the book should stimulate research and help resolve conflicts between agriculture and the protection of biodiversity,” he adds.

Ecolojah – a local community organization – held cultural presentations and served organic snacks during the

(Top) The editors and donors of the book. Standing from left to right are Georg Goergen, IITA (co-author); Peter Neuenschwander, IITA (co-author); Brice Sinsin, Vice Chancellor of the University of Abomey-Calavi (co-author); Eveline Sissinto, Helvetas-Benin (donor), HE Wouter Plomp, Netherlands Ambassador to Benin (donor). Seated are Manuele Tamò, IITA; and Jean-Luc Virchaux, Resident Director of the Swiss Development Cooperation (main donor). **(Bottom, L-R):** Colonel Paul Djogbénou, representative of the Ministry of Environment, Benin, keynoting the launch; a walk of the Ahozon forest preceded the book launch.

event. The editors also held a short press conference and signed copies of the books that were sold.

After the ceremony, Helvetas held a workshop with foresters, school principals, farmers, and local people from the surrounding area of the forest to develop ideas on raising awareness about it and to sustainably protect it.

Human Resources Office completes two training courses

AutoCAD Training for FMS Managers

Facilities Management Services managers completed a 3-day training in AutoCAD (Computer Aided Design) applications recently as part of the staff development activities organized by HR/Training Unit.

In her opening remarks, Lola Idowu, Training Coordinator, welcomed the participants to the highly interactive training and said that the expected outcome of the training is to improve their competence and precision in design/modeling and reporting activities, using the automated computer tools.

On behalf of FMS, Arman Mohammed, Head of FMS, expressed his gratitude to the HR Unit for successfully organizing this very important training in which nine unit heads from different fields of his service participated.



Building technical capacity in Liberia

Collaborative activities with the University of Liberia (UL) in Monrovia, was renewed recently with the signing of a training MoU. Three technicians from UL completed a 5-week training at the IITA Analytical Services Laboratory at IITA-Ibadan last week. These technicians have gone back to Liberia to make functional the only Soil Testing, Plant and Water Analysis Laboratory in that country.

Thanking IITA for the assistance on the capacity building efforts, authorities of the university hoped that other projects will begin to emerge from this collaboration.

Amare Tegbaru, Country Representative to Liberia, congratulated the trainees for successfully completing the training, and expressed the hope that this is the beginning of a long term partnership between IITA and UL.



(Top) Managers of the Facilities Management Services who participated in the 3-day AutoCAD training course. (Bottom) Participants and resource persons of the 5-week training course for technicians from the University of Liberia.

Obituary: Onochie Francis



With heavy hearts and deep sense of loss, we announce the death of Onochie Francis, a Plant Operator II (R & A) in the Facilities Management

Service (FMS).

Onochie died on Tuesday, 14 June 2011 at University Teaching Hospital due to injuries he sustained from a vehicle accident on his way to work. He was 52.

He hails from Egbudu Akah via Oginasi Uku, Aniocha South Local Govt. Area of Delta State, Nigeria. His colleagues at FMS described Onochie as a diligent and amiable person. May his gentle soul rest in peace.

Two IITA proposals win 2011 IFAR grants

Two out of four proposals submitted by IITA for the International Fund for Agricultural Research (IFAR) grants were among the 13 successful applications for the body's award this year. A total of 40 qualified applications were received from 12 sponsoring Centers. These proposals were evaluated by an international panel that finally decided on the 13 winners.

The IITA winning proposals are "Assessing the spread and impact of the Black Coffee Twig Borer, *Xylosandrus compactus* Eichhoff (Coleoptera: Curculionidae) in Uganda", submitted by G.H. Kagezi under the supervision of Piet Van Asten, and "Halting the Devastation of a 'Poor Women's Crop': Understanding the Spread of Taro Leaf Blight and Identification of Resistant Taro Clones in Nigeria", submitted by Joseph Onyeka,

under the supervision of Ranajit Bandyopadhyay.

The recipients would receive a grant of US\$11,000 each for their respective research projects.

IFAR gives grants to promising scientists from developing countries to strengthen their research skills, while addressing some of world agriculture's most pressing challenges such as drought, heat and salinity tolerance, resistance to shifting disease and insect pressures, and more efficient management of water resources – which are central for confronting the challenges of food security and climate change in Asia and Africa.

The IITA Bulletin is produced by the Communication Office. For comments and/or contributions, please email: Jeffrey T. Oliver (o.jeffrey@cgiar.org), Godwin Atser (g.atser@cgiar.org), or Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org).