

IITA and DuPont explore areas of possible collaboration



A team from DuPont, IITA scientists and Hartmann (middle) pose for a group photo

IITA and DuPont on Thursday, 16 September, held exploratory talks on areas of possible collaboration.

The discussions come at a time when DuPont is seeking to increase its presence in Africa.

Director-General Hartmann says that the move is a step in the right direction, adding that IITA is happy to collaborate with DuPont to fight hunger and poverty in Africa.

He emphasized the need for more public-private partnerships as part of

efforts to solve food insecurity in Africa.

The Director General also spoke on the Innovation Park for Africa project, and highlighted opportunities that DuPont could tap.

He explained that the concept behind the Innovation Park for Africa was to attract the private sector to the IITA campus in Ibadan with a view to stimulating scientific synergies among the public and private sector scientists for the benefit of Africa.

Apart from infrastructural challenges

confronting African farmers, Hartmann said the seed sector needed more private investments to commercialize and distribute to farmers.

He viewed the seed sector as a viable entry point for the private sector and an area in dire need for joint action.

Besides the cutting edge research that the Innovation Park will be generating, it will also give partners access to IITA's infrastructural facilities, according to Hartmann.

The DuPont delegation included Billy Annan, Global Product Development Manager; Doug Dollison, Senior Marketing Manager; Worede Woldemariam, Business Manager; and Ibikunle Olumide.

Annan, the head of the delegation, said their visit to IITA was aimed at understanding the West African market and more importantly rubbing minds with scientists to unravel areas of possible partnerships.

IITA scientists at the meeting included Robert Asiedu, IITA Director; Dave Watson, IITA Director; Bi Vroh, Banana Geneticist; Anthonio Lopez-Montes, Yam Breeder; Peter Kulakow, Cassava Breeder; and Sam Ajala, Maize Breeder.

The scientists spoke on several opportunities presented by research in yam, cassava, maize, soybean, cowpea, and banana.

The delegation then went around the campus to see the potential it presents to public-private sector research collaboration.

Workshop on food security, agriculture, and rural transport holds in Ibadan

A three-day workshop will be held 21-23 September at IITA headquarters in Ibadan, Nigeria. The workshop is part of the collaboration between the Africa College at the University of Leeds, the sub-Saharan Africa Transport Policy Program (SSATP) managed by the World Bank, and IITA. It will promote an interactive dialog between a range of stakeholders on food security, agriculture, and rural transport. The dialogue will focus around the following themes:

- the interaction between postharvest agricultural productivity and physical access of rural Africa to markets; and

- the impact of these interactions on the everyday lives of small farmers (particularly women).

The workshop will seek to promote an evidence-led dialogue between the agriculture and transport sectors in Africa and identify a set of concrete actions and partnership opportunities to develop this interaction. These will include:

- Building understanding and consensus on the state of knowledge and available evidence on solutions to reduce loss of harvest through improved rural transport services and infrastructure;

- Developing contributions to increase the evidence and knowledge base for CAADP Pillar 2 activities;
- Identification of opportunities to develop collaborative research projects such as the recent call by the EC for proposals on reducing postharvest losses for increased food security; and
- Identifying opportunities to influence the development of evidence-based policy and practice to improve the interaction between agriculture and transport.

For more details, please contact Toyin Oke at t.oke@cgiar.org.

Global project under way to preserve yam biodiversity

Farmers and crop scientists worldwide are engaged in an ambitious new effort to add 3,000 yam samples to international genebanks with the aim of saving the diversity of a crop that is consumed daily by 60 million people in Africa alone, according to an announcement today from the Global Crop Diversity Trust.

In almost all the countries of the African yam belt, a large number of potentially important yam varieties are preserved only in fields, where they are in danger of being picked off by pests or diseases as well as more common disasters such as fire or flooding. For example, a large fire recently destroyed a yam collection in Togo. Civil conflicts have also resulted in collections being destroyed.

Yam varieties gathered from West and Central African countries through the project are being sent to IITA in Ibadan, Nigeria, where tissue samples of the crop will eventually be frozen at ultra-low temperatures in liquid nitrogen—a technique known as cryoconservation—which offers the most secure form of long-term storage currently available. The majority of the world's crops can be conserved over long periods simply by drying the seeds and storing them under



Women farmers display yams in the market

cold, dry conditions. However, a significant number of crops, including yam, cannot be stored so easily and must be conserved as vegetative material in tissue culture.

Farmers in West Africa's yam belt, which includes the countries of Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Benin and Togo, produce more than 90% of the world's yam.

The project, however, will also include yam varieties collected in the Philippines, Vietnam, Costa Rica, the Caribbean, and several Pacific nations. It is the first worldwide effort to conserve yam species and cultivars. The project is funded with support from the UN Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Sierra Leone seeks IITA's expertise in cassava



Bramel (left) hosts a two-man delegation from Sierra Leone. Far right is Okechukwu

Sierra Leone is seeking to tap more expertise in cassava production and processing as the country plans to intensify the cultivation of the crop.

Consequently, a two-person delegation comprising a private sector operator and a government official from that country visited IITA-Ibadan, courtesy of the UPoCA project—the facilitator of the visit.

The delegation was received by Paula Bramel, IITA Deputy Director-General (Research), and included Alusine Fofana, Managing Director, Kolenten Trading Company; and Sayo Tarawalli, Crops Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security of Sierra Leone.

In a chat with Bramel, Fofana requested IITA's expertise in cassava value addition

to boost use of the crop.

While acknowledging the success of IITA's contribution towards increased cassava production in Sierra Leone, Fofana noted that the industry continues to be plagued by challenges in processing.

He said the study/tour of cassava processing equipment in IITA in particular and Nigeria in general would benefit his home country, adding that plans were under way to engage youths in agriculture, especially in cassava farming.

Bramel welcomed the delegation and pledged IITA's commitment towards ensuring food security in Africa.

Richardson Okechukwu, Deputy Manager, UPoCA, said the visit to Nigeria was timely as it would allow

farmers in Sierra Leone and Nigeria to share experiences.

The delegation visited several cassava processing industries in Nigeria, including Ekha Agro Farms in Ogun State, Vesa Foods in Benin, Niji Lukas Limited in Lagos, and several cassava farms in Ibadan.