



IITA, private sector join hands to tackle weeds menace

IITA and private multinationals in weed control are tying up a model that would tackle the menace of weeds in Africa, thanks to the USAID-MARKETS project.

The public-private sector model seeks to link resource-poor farmers with weed control giants such as Syngenta and Dizengoff, thus guaranteeing the quality of herbicides supplied to farmers. The two companies have agreed to ensure a steady supply of inputs to the farmers at a discounted rate backed by training on the safe use of their products. IITA, the provider of the platform, will provide technical backstopping to the model.

"This initiative will not only control weeds but will also create jobs in the rural communities and boost yield," says Dr. Gbassey Tarawali, Project Manager, IITA-MARKETS Cassava Value Chain Project.

Citing a publication by Land Care of New Zealand on the negative effects of weeds on agriculture, the FAO says weeds cause some \$95 billion a year in lost food production at global level.

In Africa, many youths are abandoning farms and moving to urban areas for jobs. Tarawali says the initiative would provide employment



Tarawali making a presentation during IITA-MARKETS meeting in Ibadan

for the youth in the rural communities and make farming attractive.

About 150 local youths including women representing 18 groups from the south western part of Nigeria are currently engaged in a training workshop at IITA as a prelude to the initiative.

Syngenta and Dizengoff pledged their support to the scheme.

"We are going to work with you and give you the necessary support. Our involvement will guarantee quality supply of herbicides and check profiteering by middlemen," says Goodluck Ogu, Syngenta's National Sales Manager.

"Involving the private sector in research especially extension activities is key to boosting agriculture," says the Patrick Ohaji, Manager, Crop Protection and Public Health, Dizengoff.

US Consul General makes social call at IITA-Ibadan



US Consul General Donna Blair (middle, in batik), LCDR Kenneth Collins (5th from left), and the rest of the US Navy Top Brass band at the IHouse

Lagos-based United States Consul General Donna M. Blair made a social visit to the IITA-Ibadan campus on Wednesday as part of the US Consulate General Office's diplomatic relations thrust in the country. Blair was accompanied by members of the Public Affairs Section of the US Consulate General. The visit was highlighted with a performance

of the US Navy Top Brass Band headed by US Navy LCDR Kenneth Collins, Director of the US Naval Forces Europe Band, at the International House.

Prior to coming to the campus, the group also made a stop at the University of Ibadan where the band also performed to a mostly local audience. According to Blair, the Ibadan

sortie is the first outside of Lagos for the band, who arrived in the country in January. The group is also set to visit and perform in various locations in Abuja.

"Nigeria and the United States have always had very good diplomatic ties, and this activity is one way of making people aware of and further promoting this relationship," said Blair.

"Music is a universal language, and by playing we promote goodwill between the US and Nigeria even without uttering a word of the local language," added Collins.

Help conserve electricity!

Before leaving your workplace at the end of the day, 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.

Global action needed against spread of cassava diseases



Claude making a presentation in Ibadan

The Director General of ILTAB, Dr. Claude M. Fauquet, has called on the need to step up action against the spread of cassava mosaic disease (CMD) and cassava brown streak disease (CBSD), citing their negative implications on the food security of millions of people living in the developing world.

For instance, in Tanzania alone, annual yield losses arising from CBSD attack is estimated at about \$50 million. Also root losses to CMD from susceptible cassava varieties in Nigeria are estimated at about 70%.

Elsewhere in other cassava-growing regions, the story is not much different.

In recent times, CBSD has ravaged the cassava belt in the Great Lakes Region including Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique.

Fauquet says prompt attention is needed to stem the devastating effects of the two viral diseases.

"We expect global response such as the one given to the outbreak of human diseases such as Ebola," he says.

Cultivated largely in Africa, Latin America and Asia, cassava has become a food security crop to more than 200 million people. With global population estimated to hit 9 billion by 2050, tackling cassava diseases and improving productivity are imperative.

Fauquet who is also the Co-Chair of the Global Cassava Partnership also bared his mind on the global perception on biotechnology and genetically modified organisms (GMOs). He says communication and farmer adoption are keys to the success of biotechnology.

According to him, many do not know the difference between GMOs and biotech, a situation that has created more confusion rather than clarity. However, he opined that the more experts talk about the two concepts, the better the clarity would be.

Despite the strong opposition to GMOs especially in Europe and other parts of the developing world, Fauquet says the final arbiter will be the farmer.

"We need to bring GMOs and other technologies to farmers who after trials will say whether they like them or not," he said.

Announcements

World Cowpea Conference 2010



IITA, in cooperation with partners – Pulse-CRSP, Purdue University, and the ISRA, Senegal – is organizing the 5th World Cowpea Research Conference to be held

on 27 September - 1 October 2010 in Dakar, Senegal. Global cowpea experts will tackle research issues related to enhancing the profile of cowpea as a viable income generating and food security crop. For more details and to submit papers, please visit the conference Web site at <http://cowpea2010.iita.org>.

Submission of abstracts: 15 April 2010

Abstracts approval and contact with presenters: 16 May 2010

Full paper submission: 30 September 2010
Early registration: 16 July 2010

ISTRAC-AB to hold 11th symposium

The International Society for Tropical Root Crops- Africa Branch (ISTRAC-AB) will hold its 11th symposium with the theme "Root Crops and the Challenges of Globalization and Climate" in Kinshasa, DR Congo, 4-8 October 2010.

Submission of abstracts: 30 April 2010
Submission of full papers: 30 July 2010

IARSAF to hold annual conference

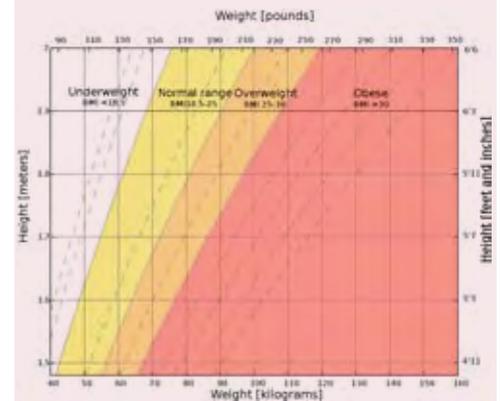
The International Association of Research Scholars and Fellows (IARSAF) will hold its annual symposium on 25 February.

The main theme for the conference is: The impact of climate change on food security in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Sub-themes include:

1. Effect and coping strategies of climate change on crop production
2. Effect of climate change on livestock and fisheries: the way forward
3. Economic impact of climate change on food production
4. Impact of climate change on gender
5. Political will to address the problem of climate change

Measure your way to a healthier heart



Do you know that a simple tape measure could help you know your risk of suffering a heart disease? With these easy-to-do measurements that you can do at home, you can determine whether you are prone to developing a cardiovascular disease:

1. Body mass index (BMI) – a measurement of your weight in relation to your height, BMI is used to gauge your percentage of body fat. To get your BMI, use this formula: weight (kg) / height (meters)². You are within the normal range if your BMI is 18.5 - 24.9; overweight if your BMI is 25 - 29.9; obese if it is >30; and extremely obese if >40.

2. Waist circumference - In addition to the percentage of body fat you have, experts emphasize the importance of where this fat is distributed and stored in the body. Studies have shown that when fat is stored around the abdomen, you are more likely to develop hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes than if the majority of your fat is stored in the lower part of your body. One way to determine your risk based on abdominal fat is to consider your waist circumference. Men who have a waist circumference greater than 40 inches and women who have a waist circumference greater than 35 inches are at increased risk of heart disease and other obesity-related problems. Studies by the WHO have indicated lower thresholds for Asians: 35 inches for men and 31 inches for women.

3. Waist-to-hip ratio: you could also evaluate your health risk based on fat distribution by determining your waist-to-hip ratio. Measure your waist circumference in inches and divide this by your hip measurement in inches (the widest point around your hips and buttocks). A healthy waist-to-hip ratio for men is <0.9, and for women <0.8.

Spend a few minutes at home with your tape measure – it could save you a bundle later. Have a healthy 2010!