



IITA-MARKETS: Improving the fortunes of cassava farmers

The ongoing USAID-MARKETS project on increasing cassava productivity in selected states is improving the livelihoods of the participating farming households.

The provision of high yielding cassava varieties and intensive capacity building has resulted in increased yields per unit area. Linking the producers to large-scale agro-processors has provided these farmers with ready markets to sell their tubers at competitive prices. Previously,

marketing has been a serious problem among growers. This relationship has also led to an accelerated and steadier supply of raw materials to the mills.

Johnson Ojebiyi and Olasiji Ajelani, farmers from Kajola Local Government Area of Oyo State, shared their experiences with the IITA Monitoring and Evaluation team. The farmers claimed that their farms yielded 28 and 27 tons, respectively, from a hectare of land. They sold the tubers to

EKHA-Agro Ltd, Ibafo, one of the millers in Ogun State, for N9,000 (about US\$60) per ton. Their yields are 2-3 times more than the baseline yields of 13.56 tons/ha and the national average of 11.8 tons per hectare according to 2008 statistics of FAO. In addition, these farmers' yields were within the range of those obtained from IITA demonstration trials of 25-35 tons/ha.

In the words of Ojebiyi: "With the project's support, I now practice modern farming using improved technologies that is less laborious, and for the first time I have a bumper harvest from my farmland! In the past, my farm had much lower output". Ajelani explained to the team that he originally planned to only give the project a try. Now, he plans to adopt the project for longert term since he testifies that it has improved his farming knowledge and provided him with more income.

The duo said that part of the proceeds from their farms would be reinvested into cassava production while the rest would be spent on their children's education and upkeeping their homes. They also mentioned that all the farmers in their locality have decided to go into cassava production to take advantage of the improved farming techniques and available market.

Dayo Ogundijo, an agronomist in the project, has confirmed to IITA that the farmers have continued to sell their tubers to EKHA-Agro Ltd. This has led to a steadier supply of high quality raw materials for processing at the factory.



Cassava roots awaiting processing at an EKHA-Agro Ltd mill. The roots were supplied by growers supported by the IITA-MARKETS project.

November 6 is

IITA Open Day

Celebrating "Unity in (Bio)Diversity"

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.

PDMO pledges more support to scientists

Dave Watson, IITA Director and Head of the Project Development and Management Office (PDMO) has said that his office would continue to provide quality support to scientists as they seek funds for research. He also promised to work more closely with other units to improve the marketing of IITA.

According to him, the institute has restructured the Contracts and Grants Office, created PDMO and improved the efficiency and effectiveness of proposal development and project administration.

In his R4D seminar titled "Proposals, Projects, Partnerships and Paymasters," Watson also identified bottlenecks to funding for research.

Top on the list of bottlenecks confronting research funding are the uncertainty about the future of the CGIAR, fallout from the global financial crisis, and increased competition for big budget development-focused projects from US-based NGOs and private management consultancy companies.

He, however, said that the PDMO is working tirelessly and strategizing to overcome these challenges. Dr Watson reported that in the last three years that he



Dr Dave Watson presenting to a captive audience during his R4D Seminar on "Proposals, Projects, Partnerships, and Paymasters" at IITA-Ibadan.

and his team at the PDMO have endeavoured to improve the quality, timeliness, and accuracy of submission of technical and financial reports to donors, resulting in improved working relationship with them.

As part of his work mandate, he provides critical backstopping to IITA's DDG-Research.

Looking ahead, Dr Watson said he would canvass IITA's greater involvement in political and institutional processes in sub-Saharan Africa.

"IITA should be an initiator, not a follower, of change," he concluded.

Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Program EPMR team visits Kano Station

The EPMR team for the sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Program (SSA-CP) visited IITA Kano on 10-12 October.

The team, led by John Lynam, held meetings with diverse stakeholders partnering to implement activities in the Kano-Katsina-Maradi Pilot Learning Sites (KKM-PLS) of the program.

The three taskforces of the KKM-PLS (Northern Guinea Savanna, Sudan Savanna, and Sahel Taskforces) presented to the team the project's achievements, lessons learned, challenges encountered, and the way forward.

The EPMR team also held consultative meetings with the IITA-led Sudan Savanna Taskforce during which the EPMR team sought detailed information on issues addressed by Alpha Kamara, the taskforce leader. Staff of partner institutions stressed the importance of the partnership developed through the project and were optimistic that it will enhance technology delivery to end users.

Members of the EPMR and the Sudan Savanna Taskforce also visited the Maize-Legume-Livestock IP in Bunkure LGA, Kano, and the Sorghum-Legume-Livestock IP in Safana LGA, Katsina.

During the site visits, The EPMR team was briefed on the operations of the IPS and the benefits derived by the farming communities through the new institutional arrangements put in place by the project.



*(Top) KKM-PLS staff presenting to EPMR team.
(Bottom) Members of the EPMR team during a visit to one of the project sites.*

Scholarship at Wageningen University

The Wageningen University Fund and the Paul Speijer Fund have established a new scholarship for postgraduate study (MSc) in Wageningen. The scholarship is being offered to candidates from Africa who have completed a BSc in Plant Sciences or Agronomy with outstanding results, who are currently working as professionals in a local research institute, and who will use this MSc-level postgraduate education to become leaders in their fields.

Candidates must be committed to returning home after finishing the MSc study with the aim of contributing to the improvement and further development of the agricultural production of food crops in the home country. Further requirements for the Paul Speijer scholarship are:

- A GPA of at least 80% of the maximum grade.
- Admission to the Wageningen University MSc programme in Plant Sciences or Plant Biotechnology.

More information about the enrolment procedure and admission requirements are available from the Wageningen Web site at <http://www.wageningenuniversity.nl/UK/informationfor/stud-outside/>.

Highest rainfall in 10 years at IITA-Ibadan

IITA-Ibadan witnessed 118 mm of rainfall accompanied by 35 km/hr winds on the night of 20th October. This has been the highest recorded daily rainfall for the month of October in the last decade. Data was provided by the IITA Weather Station, Geospatial Lab.