



## You have been a wonderful team, Sanginga tells staff

Dear Colleagues:

In less than two weeks, we shall enter into a New Year. It is amazing how time flies when you are busy! I congratulate you and your families for your hard work and dedication to the goals and the vision of IITA.

You have been a wonderful team, working across the continent to improve livelihoods. Let me inform you that your work has brought so much fame and recognition to the Institute; for instance, the cassava bread that the Nigerian Government through the Honorable Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, and President Goodluck Jonathan are championing. This is a result of our joint research effort for the last past decade.

Beginning next week, traditional celebrations will commence. As you go about with friends, mummies, daddies,



*Sangina, IITA Director-General*

children, grandchildren, and other relations, I encourage you to share with

them the good stories about your field work, and most importantly, the vision of IITA. By so doing, you will make them appreciate better what IITA stands for, and the contributions you are making.

We had a very fruitful Board of Trustees' meeting in Tanzania and I am sure many of you would want to know what 2012 will look like. We now have the responses to the following questions that I had asked during my first message to you: "So what changes? So what stays the same? When does it happen? Do I have a role to play?" I will be giving the details early in January 2012 to all staff. Our IITA team is still strong. I am optimistic that we will tap every opportunity that comes our way.

My dear IITA fellows, this is not an occasion for long speeches. I wish you and your families a wonderful holiday celebration.

## Cowpea: Driving a silent revolution in Nigeria



*A lady fries akara by the roadside and makes money.*

Cowpea production and processing is propelling a silent revolution in Nigeria, as incomes from the crop are improving rural livelihoods in the country.

Farmers and processors in Osu, a community in southwestern Nigeria, say processing the protein-rich crop into cakes popularly known as akara is akin to hitting a goldmine.

"The benefits are many," says Mrs. Olaiya Oluwakemi—an akara vendor.

"From frying of akara alone, I have been able to afford sending my son to the university. I built a house and now own a car," Oluwakemi adds.

Oluwakemi says she had tried other businesses in the past but the processing of cowpea grains to akara remained the most viable option. The business has grown in the last seven years and she currently employs more than 20 people. On average, she gets profits of between N1500

(US\$10) and N2000 (US\$13) daily. In a country where about 50% of the population thrive on less than US\$2 per day, this is a lot of cash.

"I have tried other businesses but this is just the best," she reiterates.

Another cowpea processor, Chief Mrs. Olorunisola, says she inherited the business from her mother.

After managing the business in the last 30 years, Olorunisola now owns the famous Iyadunni Akara processing enterprise. The business uses about 100 kg of cowpea grains as raw material daily for making akara; it has five branches spread across Nigeria.

Incomes from the firm have helped Olorunisola to build two houses. The third, a 3-storey building, is still under construction.

Three of her children have graduated from the university, thanks to income from akara.

Like Oluwakemi and Olorunisola, several other processors have benefited from the processing of cowpea in the community. Most of the houses built in Osu have at least the foundation laid with income from akara.

Thousands of travelers passing through Osu town, located between Ile-Ife and Ilesha, stop daily to buy the popular 'akara Osu' from the vendors and eat.

Consumers interviewed say the protein-rich crop replenishes lost energy arising from fatigue experienced during long journeys.

"I look forward to eating akara osu whenever I am traveling on this route," says passenger Friday Adeshina.

Elsewhere in the northern part of Nigeria—home to cowpea production, this leguminous crop has proven to be a veritable source of income for farmers and processors.

In Borno, Katsina, Kaduna, Kano states and as far as Niger Republic, cowpea farmers who adopted improved cowpea varieties and management practices reported an average of 55% rise in their incomes, according to data from the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA).

# Innovative approach to pest control is critical to Africa's food security

Classical biocontrol which involves the innovative use of natural enemies against crop pest offers one of the best options in securing agriculture and improving livelihoods.

"The approach is sustainable with little or no negative impact on the environment as opposed to the use of pesticides," says Dr. Tamo Manuel, IITA entomologists and country representative for Benin Republic.

While receiving participants from the seminar for 'Better Science Reporting' organized by the Association of Science Journalists and Communicators in Benin, Manu says biocontrol is offering benefits to African farmers.

As at 2004, researchers estimated that IITA biocontrol program against cassava mealybug brought benefits to Africa valued at between \$15.6 and 27.8 billion, as it saved one of Africa's major staples—cassava.

A similar approach on green mite that had destroyed 30 to 40% of cassava also saved the ECOWAS region an estimated \$1.7 billion over the last 18 years.

Journalists and communicators who visited the station commended the



L-R: Dr. Rousseau Djouaka, Dr. Ousmane Coulibaly and Dr. Tamo Manuele, briefing journalists in Benin.

research quality.

"It is amazing... I never expected such quality science existed in Africa," says Dior Mbacké Dia, a Communication Officer with the International Development Research Center (IDRC).

"This is good for Africa because such is needed for food security," she added.

For David Dickson, Editor in Chief of Scidev, the IITA-Biological Center in Benin is not only strategic in the region but also an interesting place to visit and see science in action.

"It was interesting for me seeing scientists working and innovatively proffering solutions to new and emerging problems," he says.

## Buruli Ulcer: IITA launches an Agro-Eco-Health 'system thinking' fight

A technical workshop of experts was held November 7-9, 2011, at Erata Hotel in Accra (Ghana) for developing collaborative strategies to fight Buruli Ulcer (BU) in the wet agro-ecosystems of West Africa. The meeting was organized by IITA with technical and financial support from the World Health Organization (WHO-Geneva), national research institutions and several international NGOs including AfricaOne, MAP International, Raoul Follereau Foundation (France), Follereau Foundation (Luxembourg), Fairmed (Cameroon), and ReBUild. The workshop brought together 40 experts from Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon, with different profiles and backgrounds from medical, agricultural and social sciences, providing an ideal platform for collaborative and multi-disciplinary efforts to fight BU in wet agro-ecosystems.

A "system thinking" is the required approach for fighting BU because (i) this neglected yet emerging disease occurs in the humid agro-eco-systems of West Africa, (ii) it seems to be exacerbated by poor agricultural practices such as excess



Buruli ulcer

tillage, poor land use and inadequate water management, misuse and overuse of synthetic pesticides, (iii) it has a major negative impact on agricultural productivity in terms of work losses and long absences from farming activities for caring for sick members of the family, (iv) with its stigmatization effects and its high rate of deformities, the disease prevents affected persons from attending schools and increases the illiteracy level in the community, (v) and has a negative effect on communities' livelihood and increases the level of poverty in households.

The workshop sought: (i) the identification of important research gaps

on BU, (ii) the identification of relevant technical partners and researchers capable of implementing the proposed 'system thinking' initiative, (iii) the establishment of a list of potential funding bodies to fuel the proposed initiative, (iv) the networking of all scientists working on BU in West Africa.

The Agro-eco-health 'system thinking' initiative for fighting BU in wet agro-ecosystems of West Africa is coordinated by Dr. Rousseau Djouaka of IITA-Benin (r.djouaka@cgiar.org) and receives supports from Dr. Kingsley Asiedu from WHO-Geneva.

### Nigeria declares holidays

The Federal Government of Nigeria has declared **Monday 26** and **Tuesday 27 December, 2011** as public holidays to celebrate Christmas and Boxing Day.

In addition, **Monday 2 January, 2012** has also been declared a public holiday to celebrate the beginning of year 2012.

Management has approved the holidays and consequently, all IITA offices in Nigeria will remain closed to business on these three days.

Supervisors are advised to please make necessary arrangements to maintain essential services during the holiday.