



Tanzania must invest more in cassava to support economic development

Cassava stakeholders in Tanzania called on the country's top leadership to champion the crop to transform the country's agricultural sector and catalyze its economic development. The appeal was aired at the conclusion of the first-ever Cassava Week in Tanzania, held on 12-16 September in Dar es Salaam.

The stakeholders noted that the crop, if well exploited under a national cassava development platform, can fight poverty and hunger in the country. However, this would require commitment and support from the highest office.

They observed that the direct involvement of the presidents of other countries such as in Ghana, Nigeria, and Zambia in cassava development initiatives had played a big role in their successes and wished to see the same in Tanzania under the guidance of the current president, H.E. (Dr) Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete.

Echoing their sentiments, Hartmann, Director General of IITA, in a speech read on his behalf by Victor Manyong, R4D Director for East and Central Africa, at the launch of the Cassava Week said that agriculture offered the country great opportunities for economic development and cassava was one crop that can play a key role in transforming the sector.

The DG added that it is important to increase the country's technological capabilities to acquire, adapt, and apply modern agricultural sciences, and invest in developing the skills of Tanzanian youths to develop and run successful agribusiness. He said that the country did not lack investors; rather, it lacked skilled graduates to operate commercial agribusinesses.

Hon Prof Jumanne Maghembe, Minister for Agriculture Food Security and Cooperatives, the guest of honor at the launch, also noted that cassava was not only a hardy food crop that grows in almost all agro-ecological

zones but can also significantly contribute to poverty reduction and foster rural development through its diverse uses. In Tanzania, cassava is the second most important source of energy after maize, making up about 19% of the country's food basket.

However, he said the country's current average yield of 6 t/ha of fresh weight, compared to the potential of 30 t/ha, needed to be addressed on top of value addition and marketing. He commended the efforts by cassava sector partners to tackle issues such as breeding improved varieties, seed multiplication, and value addition. He especially cited related work by IITA, his ministry, FAO, Concern Worldwide, Africare, and universities, among others.

But more need to be done on the marketing side, the Minister emphasized.

"We must build local capacity to efficiently, profitably, and sustainably satisfy new market demands with quality cassava products. This should go hand in hand with serious investments to increase processing and to create a wide range of diversified



(Top) Hon Prof Maghembe keynoting the opening of Cassava Week; (bottom) The Minister admiring products made from processed cassava at the Cassava Week exhibition.

cassava products, promoting local industrial utilization of cassava products, promoting export, creating market linkage, and developing technologies that will ensure all-year round production," he said.

He congratulated IITA and local partners for organizing the event.

Themed "Food & Wealth for All", the Cassava Week aimed to sensitize Tanzanians on the importance of cassava as food, industrial, and export crop. The event attracted farmers, NGOs, policy makers, donors, and

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end-users. Activities included media briefing, a one day field trip to expose participants to the wide range of activities being undertaken to develop the cassava value chain, and a three-day exhibition at Karimjee Hall and grounds in Dar es Salaam.

An open forum was also held where stakeholders discussed ways to transform the crop. During the forum, H.E. Dr Ishaya Majanbu, the Nigerian High Commissioner to Tanzania, also presented a paper by Oluwotoyin

Adetunji, former Special Assistant on Food Security advisor to former President Obasanjo, on Nigeria's presidential initiative on cassava experience.

A one-day training on increasing production, processing, value addition, and marketing was also held in which over a hundred cassava farmers and processors from across Tanzania participated. Cooking demonstrations were also held for the general public.

Japan, IITA joint efforts crucial to Africa's development

Stronger ties between Japan and IITA are imperative to tackle Africa's agricultural challenges and food productivity.

This is according to Tetsuro Yano, President, Association of African Economy & Development Japan ECA Committee, and former Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, adding that such joint effort would help address the current limitations faced by resource-poor farmers on a larger scale.

"This is something Japan would want to see happen for maximum impact," Yano said during a visit to IITA on Sunday.

He expressed satisfaction with IITA's work especially in raising the productivity of crops.

He recommended to further collaboration between IITA and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the major aid agency of Japan for extension technologies.

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including Paula Bramel, Lakshmi Menon and Dave Watson, Yano said the challenges faced by Africa should be a concern of all.

For Japan, he said, support to agriculture on the continent is one of the options that could turn around the fortunes of the continent for the better.

Bramel commended the partnership and support between Japan and the Institute. She said IITA applies the Research-for-Development model in tackling challenges faced by farmers. This involves carrying out research that tackles the challenges faced by farmers and not just research for research sake.

According to her, the R4D approach addresses the needs of the farmers and in turn presents scientists with research questions from farmers that demands further answers.

Yano, who was accompanied by embassy officials— Hamano, Maruo,



IITA School welcomes new teacher



Moira Grant.

The IITA International School welcomes to its roster Moira Grant, a British national, as a new Grade 1 Teacher. Moira holds an MA in Primary

Policy and Practice from the Institute of Education, University of London, a B.Ed. from the University of the South Bank, and a CELTA from Hammersmith and West London College.

She has taught internationally for 12 years in Taiwan, UAE, Oman, Egypt, Kuwait, and Tunisia, and served as teacher representative on the school board of the America Cooperative School of Tunis. Moira is experienced in teaching British and American curricula.

She resides on campus in Apartment 3C, telephone extension 2276. Her e-mail address is M.Grant@cgiar.org.

Koyano, and Hagino, later visited some Japanese-funded projects and also listened to scientists' presentations.

At the Bioscience Center, Satoru Muranaka of the Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS) briefed the contingent on JIRCAS-funded projects on cowpea and yam, specifically on improvement work along the value chain of the crop.

He said work on genetic improvement of the crop is helping farmers in tackling stresses associated with cowpea production.

Hidehiko Kikuno, IITA Yam Physiologists, demonstrated the vine cutting technology of propagating yams. He also spoke on the benefits of the technology which included the production of healthier yam seedlings to farmers.

At the conclusion of the visit, Yano commended the Japanese researchers for their work.

The Japanese contingent, headed by Tetsuro Yano, with IITA Management during their visit to Ibadan on Sunday.