

Cassava products hit supermarkets shelves in Sierra Leone

Cassava's future in Sierra Leone gets brighter as products from the crop are now sold in supermarkets, thanks to the United States Agency for International Development-funded project tagged, "Unleashing the Power of Cassava in Africa" (UPoCA).

Traditionally, Sierra Leoneans consume cassava by boiling or roasting the roots.

But the UPoCA project has opened up new processing options and opportunities for farmers and processors that participated in the project.

"We now process cassava into gari, cassava flour, odorless fufu and tapioca," says Mrs. Rhoda Akinola, a member of NETWEPS-a local NGO that is promoting the utilization of cassava.

"We sell to consumers directly and also distribute to supermarkets in Freetown," she added.

After the civil war in Sierra Leone, Akinola visited Nigeria and was introduced to the benefits of cassava at a workshop. She went back to Sierra Leone and began to raise awareness on the potential of cassava as a poverty alleviation crop.

The coming of the UPoCA project strengthened farmers such as Akinola by building their capacities through hands-on trainings on innovative approaches on cassava cultivation and processing. As a result, several farmers adopted the innovations and stepped up the cultivation of the crop.



Victoria Kamanda prepares cassava custard, thanks to UPoCA

"Our efforts never made much impact until UPoCA came to our aid," Akinola said.

"They assisted us by training us on how to make different recipes from cassava and also provided us with business training," she added.

Today, apart from marketing the products, Akinola is also using her cassava center to train other farmers on how to make the different recipes. So far, more than 50 women have benefitted from the training with some now training others.



Senessi displays a variety of cassava products in Freetown

"The multiplier effect has been wonderful. Moreover, the acceptability of cassava products--cake and bread among others makes things a lot easier," she said.

Marion Senessi, who runs "Home Foods and Drinks Ltd" in Freetown--the capital of Sierra Leone--says her shop provides an urban market outlet for cassava processors, and confirms the growing interest and demand of cassava products in the city. The shop is linked to UPoCA trained growth centres and farmer based organization processors in rural Sierra Leone from where she gets supplies of new cassava food products. Senessi sells the cassava-based recipes (e.g., odorless fufu, Tapioca pap, buttered gari) to the public directly from the shop and also through St Mary's supermarkets, Monoprix supermarket, Freetown supermarket, Payless supermarket and Choithram supermarkets in Freetown.

"The market is picking up but we need more awareness for more patronage," she said.

Returns from the sale of cassava products are helping farmers and processors in meeting their daily needs hence alleviating poverty. Akinola and Senessi thank the American people and IITA for this timely income generating opportunity.



Akinola speaks on cassava potential. Displays cassava products

IITA DDG (Support) speaks at employers' forum



Menon addresses participants at the fourth quarterly meeting of NECA

IITA Deputy Director General (Support), Lakshmi Menon on Tuesday 14 December addressed the premier body of employers under the aegis of the Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA).

The address came at a time when IITA hosted the association's fourth quarterly meeting in Ibadan.

The meeting offered stakeholders a platform to consult and dialogue among themselves on issues of common interest.

Olu Babasanya, IITA's Personnel Manager, who is also the current Chairman of NECA's Ibadan Geographical Group, explained that the association's primary objective was to protect employers' interests.

Other functions include: influencing economic agenda and policies through public advocacy and group representation to government on issues of interest to employers, and defending and providing the legitimate rights of member companies.

"NECA also provides advice and counsel on diverse human resource management, employee and industrial relations, government/community relations as well as best practices," he added.

NECA, the umbrella organization of employers in the Organized Private Sector of Nigeria was formed in 1957 to provide a forum for the government to consult with the private sector employers on socio-economic and labor policy issues.

IITA-Kano commends staff, wins football trophy



Falaki presents the trophy to the captain, Garba Bala, of IITA

Boukar Ousmane, IITA-Kano Representative, has lauded the contribution of staff to the success recorded by IITA in 2010.

At an event marking the end of the year, Ousmane urged staff to remain dedicated in the years ahead. He also

restated the Institute's commitment to staff welfare and motivation.

The event provided staff the opportunity to interact, crack jokes, dance and wine.

In another related development, IITA-Kano football team triumphed over a team made from four other organizations—the Institute of Agricultural Research (IAR) Zaria; United States Agency for International Development (USAID); WASA; and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA).

At the end of the contest, IITA-Kano team won by 1-0.

Ahmad Falaki, Officer-in-Charge, IAR Kano station-- the host organization-- presented the trophy to IITA.

He thanked IITA for organizing the match, adding that it would strengthen the relationship between the research organizations. Falaki encouraged such interactions and also congratulated the winning team.

Three IITA scientists participated in the football match— Satoru Muranaka, Christian Biemond and Hakeem Ajeigbe.

Photo news



Bosede Akinnu of the Computer Unit

and Olugboyega Pelemo of the Yam Barn are now married. Both are IITA staff.

Bosede now wishes to be addressed as Mrs Bosede Pelemo.

Announcement: Nigeria declares public holiday

The Federal Government of Nigeria has declared the following days, as public holiday to enable workers to celebrate Christmas and the New Year:

Christmas-----Monday 27 and Tuesday 28 December 2010

New Year-----Monday 3 January 2011

Consequently, IITA management has decided that the Institute will remain closed on Friday 24, Monday 27, Tuesday 28 December 2010 and Monday 3 January 2011.

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



IITA-Kano team in red pose for a group photo with opponents in white

The IITA Bulletin is produced by the Communication Office. For comments and/or contributions, please email: Jeffrey T. Oliver (o.jeffrey@cgiar.org), Godwin Atser (g.atser@cgiar.org), or Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org).