

Nigeria, the Netherlands, and IITA's cooperation is necessary to improve agriculture

Greater cooperation between the government of the Netherlands with Nigeria and IITA can help solve problems of hunger and unemployment in the country.

Hans de Brabander, Deputy Head, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, who visited IITA-Ibadan, said such a synergy was necessary to improve agriculture.

"Although I am impressed with what IITA is doing, I would like to see more cooperation between my government, Nigeria, and IITA," he said.

de Brabander commended IITA for its innovative approach in the fight against hunger and poverty in the tropical world, adding that IITA's presence in Africa provided the necessary link between advanced research in the developed and the developing world.

The envoy, who was received by Robert Asiedu, IITA Director, and Hilde Koper -Limbourg, Head of Contracts and Grants, reiterated that agriculture provided the key to the economic problems facing Nigeria.

He said that the Netherlands, with its advanced agricultural technologies, is willing to help Nigeria in this regard.

Earlier, Asiedu expressed appreciation



Robert Asiedu (left), Hilde Koper (second from left), and Hans de Brabander (rightmost), during a visit to IITA in Ibadan.

to the Netherlands government for its support to IITA over the years, noting that funds received from that country had helped the Institute in keeping to its mandate. Asiedu said that the Institute tackles agricultural productivity constraints across entire value chains for staple crops.

"For instance, in crop improvement programs, IITA works with soil scientists, breeders, molecular geneticists, and several other specialists to ensure that our research meet the needs of the farmers," he said.

Koper -Limbourg also noted the beneficial partnerships between IITA and the Netherlands' institutions such as the University of Wageningen.

She praised the harmonious collaboration between the country and IITA and more importantly the support through the Associate Professional Officers scheme.

The envoy was taken on a tour of the campus to the Genetic Resources Center, the Bioscience Center, Postharvest/Utilization Unit, and the IITA forest.

IITA-Tanzania bids goodbye to Boumweester

Staff at IITA-Tanzania held a reception to say a hearty farewell to Hein Boumweester, GIS Specialist who served as APO at the regional hub for over three

and a half years.

The staff acknowledged his critical contribution to projects across the region through the application of GIS

in project planning, data interpretation, data visualization, and modeling. His team spirit and willingness to share and discuss information was praised and his voluntary contribution to establish a demonstration plot of IITA's mandate crops at the hub was commended.

Victor Manyong, R4D Director for East and Central Africa, thanked him for the positive impact his work had achieved and reminded him to remain in strong collaboration with IITA.

Boumweester, on his part, said he had gained tremendous experience through working alongside IITA colleagues and partners and had made many good friends. "It was good! I will have very fond memories of my time at IITA and stay in Tanzania."



L-R: Hein Boumweester (left) receives a plaque from R4D Director Victor Manyong while Eveline Odiambo looks on.

IITA and CSIR sign a Technical Cooperation Agreement



Lakshmi Menon (in middle) signs the technical cooperation agreement with officials of CSIR, Ghana

IITA has entered into a technical cooperation agreement (TCA) with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in Ghana. The agreement would allow IITA to operate in Ghana under the CSIR.

The agreement was signed by the Director General of CSIR, A.B. Salifu and the Deputy Director General, Support Services of IITA, Lakshmi Menon, in Accra.

The TCA is the beginning of a long-term collaboration between IITA and the Government of Ghana through its different agricultural research entities. CSIR will also facilitate a process for IITA towards the completion of a

Host Country Agreement with the Government of Ghana with associated privileges accorded similar international development organizations in Ghana.

IITA has operated in Ghana with the national agriculture systems on a project by project basis until the establishment of the Sustainable Tree Crops Program (STCP) which is being implemented under a Memorandum of Understanding between IITA and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) – Ghana.

IITA's highly recognized position in agricultural research contributed to the facilitation of this agreement between CSIR and its affiliates research institutions and IITA.

The agreement was handed over to CSIR by Menon at a recent working visit in Ghana. Menon expressed her appreciation to CSIR in particular and the research partners for fast tracking this agreement. The Deputy Director of CSIR expressed the desire of CSIR to jointly develop research programs as well as technical assistance support between CSIR/IITA on one hand and other national agricultural systems in the West African subregion. She emphasized that the agreement demonstrated the commitment to a long-term collaboration between both institutions.

Present at the brief signing ceremony were the IITA West/Central Africa Regional Administrator, Yacoubou Aboubakar and the IITA representative in Ghana, Isaac Gyamfi.

Potential partnership with IITA on conservation agriculture

Professor Forbes Walker from the University of Tennessee's Institute of Agriculture visited IITA-Tanzania to explore possibilities of collaborating and creating linkages on conservation agriculture, a form of farming that aims at improving productivity while still conserving soil, water, and air qualities.

During his seminar, he talked about conservation agriculture and its three main aspects: diversified crop rotation, maintaining soil cover, and minimum soil disturbance. Therefore, special equipment to get the seed into the soil with little disturbance and alternative ways to control weeds without tilling are used.

He also talked with the staff at the hub about the university's success in promoting the technology in Tennessee in the US, and in Lesotho in southern Africa, which they are looking to expand to Tanzania. In the US, the farming methodology was used by commercial farmers, while in Maphutseng village in Southern Lesotho, it had been piloted with very positive results among small-scale farmers.

"The average yield of maize in Maphutseng was 300 kg/ha only. With our conservation tillage and other recommendations such as early planting, increasing plant populations, use of fertilizer, and weed management using herbicide, we were able to raise yield to 6 t/ha," he said. "The village was able to export food for the first time in 30 years."

He explained that the farmers were able to plant early as they did not have to queue for ploughs to till their land. Without tilling and weeding, they needed less labor on their land, and most important, there was significant reduction in soil erosion and improvement in the soil.

Walker added that although in many cases the practice may not increase the farmer's yield, it saves a lot, with fewer equipment to purchase or hire and reduced labor and field costs; more importantly, it improves soil fertility.



Prof Forbes Walker makes a presentation in IITA-Tanzania.

Lucy Brader passes on



Lucy Brader

Lukas Brader, former IITA Director General, has lost his wife, Lucy, to cerebral hemorrhage.

Lucy died on 16 June after she was unable to recover from an illness which started in December 2010, Lukas wrote in an email.

The family said Lucy's death came with great sadness, but also with beautiful memories.

"We would like to let you know that after a good and fascinating life, we said farewell to Lucy."

She has since been buried on 22 June in the Netherlands.

Lucy is survived by Lukas, their children Steven, Dickey, and Anne Griet, and a wider family.