



IITA, partners to intensify fight against aflatoxins in Nigeria

The Nigerian Ministry of Agriculture, USAID, World Bank, and IITA are teaming up to further tackle the menace of aflatoxins and aflatoxin contamination in Nigeria.

During visits to the partners' offices in Abuja on 7 February, Paula Bramel, DDG-R4D, and Ranajit Bandyopadhyay, Plant Pathologist, sensitized officials of the three organizations on IITA's efforts against aflatoxins, as well as to obtain their commitment and support.

At the Ministry of Agriculture, Bramel and Bandyopadhyay briefed Emmanuel D. Eniayeju, Deputy Director (Crops), and four other senior officials. Eniayeju first came to know about IITA's work on aflatoxins, specifically aflasafe, during a meeting organized by the National Export Promotion Council in 2010. Impressed by aflasafe's performance, the Ministry decided to allocate resources to procure and distribute aflasafe to farmers, and to train them on aflatoxin management. The officials agreed to discuss the matter with the Permanent Secretary and the Minister.

As follow-up, DG Hartmann sent a letter to the Minister highlighting, among other things, an aflatoxin management plan for groundnut and maize in Nigeria including technology dissemination and capacity-building, and requesting for an appointment



A screen grab from a CNN documentary on aflatoxins showing Dr Ranajit Bandyopadhyay, IITA Plant Pathologist and one of the lead scientists who developed aflasafe, inspecting an aflatoxin-contaminated maize cob. Aflatoxins not only pose risks to people's health but also hinder global trade especially of vulnerable crops such as maize and groundnuts.

to discuss ways of moving the plan forward.

The IITA representatives also met with officials of the USAID Abuja Office headed by Sharon Pauling, Director of the Economic Growth and Environment Office. As IITA has a pending grant application to set up a demonstration-scale manufacturing plant of aflasafe with the Development Innovation Venture (DIV) of USAID, they discussed the potential of aflasafe as a solution to aflatoxins and the need to fill the gap in aflasafe's manufacturing capacity, which is the rationale for the application. Pauling promised to find out more about the DIV and to send a support letter to USAID in Washington DC for IITA's grant application.

At the World Bank's office in Abuja, Bramel and Bandyopadhyay met with Lucas Akapa, Senior Operations Officer and Technical Team Leader of the Commercial Agriculture Development Project (CADP), and Abimbola Adubi, Senior Agricultural Specialist and Technical Team Leader of FADAMA III project. The meeting was a follow-up to a consultation in

Washington DC on 26 January between IITA, WB, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation wherein the World Bank expressed that the use of aflasafe in Nigeria can be expanded through CADP that works on maize value chain in three states.

Representatives of both organizations agreed that aflatoxin management is relevant to and should be included in the CADP and FADAMA III projects. To kick things off, they decided on the following action points: (1) a meeting with CADP Kaduna, Kano, and Enugu State Project Coordinators to be held before the end of February at IITA to plan aflatoxin management work in CADP including timeline, responsibilities and budget for various activities; (2) a Memorandum of Understanding between IITA and the three state projects to be prepared before the end of February; (3) the first set of farmer-training to begin in March or April; and (4) the conduct of a national workshop in June involving a wide range of stakeholders from the public and private sectors and with the participation of internationally recognized experts on aflatoxin.

Help conserve electricity!

Before leaving the workplace at the day's end, 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.

Farmers enjoy better yields from improved cassava varieties

Nigerian farmers in the southern state of Oyo have more than double the yield of cassava, thanks to the Unleashing the Power of Cassava in Africa (UPoCA) project that is being implemented by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture.

Farmers in Ido community say yields rose from an average of 10 tons per hectare to more than 20 tons per hectare.

“With local varieties, I used to harvest 10 tons per hectare but now, it is more than 20 tons per hectare,” says Bashir Adesiyani, Chairman of the local chapter of the Nigerian Cassava Growers Association.

“During the harvest period, other farmers accused me of applying juju—supernatural or magical powers—on the farm but I told them it was the improved cassava stems and training I got from IITA that has made my farm better,” he adds.

Like Adesiyani, several other farmers in the community that participated in the project have witnessed increases in cassava yield.

In 2009, the Ido community became a beneficiary of the IITA-UPoCA project which was part of the United States Agency for International Development’s response to cushion the effect of the 2008 food crisis that resulted to riots in some parts of the world.

Apart from Ido in Oyo state, other states that benefited in the project were: Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Kogi, Nasarawa, and Benue states.

Farmers say the project has boosted the production of cassava with the availability of improved cassava stems, making food more secured and generating wealth.



Adesiyani showing off the large roots of the improved cassava that he just harvested.

With abundant cassava in the community, the price per ton for the root crop has dropped from N20,000 per ton in 2007/2008 to about N7,000 per ton presently.

The fall in price has led to calls for increased processing machines in the community. The British American Tobacco Foundation has responded to the call with the donation a cassava processing center to promote the processing of the crop.

Mr. Benjamin Isola, Oribiyi 11, the Onido of Ido Land (i.e. traditional chief of the community) says “This processing center came to us because of the intervention of IITA-UPoCA which led to

increases cassava in our community.”

“The project has also benefited individual members of this community and we are happy,” he adds.

The community leader called on the state and federal government to establish more cassava processing centers in the community.

In the meantime, IITA-UPoCA is upgrading the equipment donated to the community by BATN Foundation for greater efficiency.

Dr. Richardson Okechukwu, Deputy Manager for IITA-UPoCA, says the project will give the farmers the necessary backstop.

IITA-Liberia has new station administrator



Lawrence Morris

The Human Resources Office announces the appointment of a new Station Administrator for IITA-Liberia in the person of Lawrence Morris. He assumed his post effective 21 February 2011.

Lawrence joins IITA having worked with USADF and AFRICARE in Liberia and has a wealth of experience in Administrative matters. He holds a graduate degree in Accounting as well as an MBA in Financial Management.

Lawrence could be contacted via his email address at L.Morris@cgiar.org for all matters related to administration of the IITA-Liberia station including human resources, accounts, travel arrangements, and logistics.

Announcement

Former IITA staff and families to hold grand alumni reunion

Former staff of IITA and their families will be holding a grand reunion on 11-14 March 2011 at the Sanur Beach Hotel in Sanur, Bali, Indonesia. The IITA Alumni Association says that current IITA staff and their families are most welcome to attend the reunion as well. For further details interested parties should contact the following persons:

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