

Nestlé explores possible collaboration with IITA to improve livelihoods

Global food giant, Nestlé SA is in talks with the Ibadan-based International Institute of Tropical Agriculture on joint efforts aimed at increasing crops' productivity, guaranteeing food security and improving the incomes of resource-poor farmers.

The company intends to tap IITA's expertise in crop improvement as it intensifies its drive to locally source its raw materials to feed its subsidiaries in Africa.

"The strategy is not just investments but also collaborations with research institutes in the region such as IITA and the community at large. Our approach is creating value in a wide dimension as much as possible," says José Lopez, Executive Vice President, Nestlé SA who concluded his visit to IITA today in Ibadan.

The discussions with IITA are not only towards crop improvement programs but also value addition that will ensure farmers get the most out of their investments.

Lopez says the choice to work with IITA is a result of a long relationship.

"They have demonstrated leadership and ability over the years and we have learned to work with them. It is also a product of trust," he added.



Lopez making a presentation during Nestlé visit to IITA-Ibadan

Other areas which the two institutions are looking at include the rapid propagation of cocoa seedlings which the company plans to distribute to African farmers, and also the dissemination of aflatoxin-resistant maize and other aflatoxin controlling measures to farmers.

The Director-General, IITA, Peter Hartmann welcomed the interest shown by the food giant

in IITA's research and promised that the institute was willing to partner with the private sector with a view to improving livelihoods in Africa.

In his words: "Our scientists have been working with Nestlé for long and we see this as another opportunity to forge ties ahead."

Yam scientists undergo training on advocacy, communication and proposal writing



Participants at the advocacy, communication and proposal writing workshop

About 30 scientists working on yam development and research from 16 various institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa are being trained on "Advocacy, Communication and Proposal Writing". The five-day workshop is organised by IITA to make research activities into yam more vibrant, interesting

and appealing to young scientists with the aim of developing their skills in advocacy, communications and proposal writing that would ultimately attract donors into the sector. The workshop, which takes place in Accra, Ghana is part of the Strengthening Capacity for Yam Research-for-Development in Central

and Western Africa (SCYReC) project funded by the EU-ACP Science and Technology Program being implemented by IITA in collaboration with the National Agricultural Research Systems in Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, Nigeria, Ghana, Benin and Cameroon.

Though a significant crop in West and Central Africa, it is observed that young scientists are not interested in the crop and the passion and interest of the few existing researchers for the crop within the sub-region is gradually eroding due to a number of factors. Furthermore, the knowledge base for the crop is limited due to years of research and development neglect in the crop, making it extremely difficult for young researchers and graduate students looking for research subjects for their degree-related training to go into yam research. Besides, the existing yam researchers have not been able to influence policy decisions for increased investment in yam research because they have not developed strong or effective advocacy, communications and lobbying skills that would convince both the public and private sectors to invest into yam research.

Research by IITA is yielding positive results

Research outputs by the Ibadan-based IITA and its national partners are yielding positive results in Nigeria and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, according to Nigeria's Technical Sub-Committee on the Release of Crop Varieties.

The committee which certifies and assesses the performance of released crop varieties in the country noted that improved varieties developed by IITA had contributed significantly in raising crops' yield and increasing farmers' incomes.

This has consequently, earned Nigeria the position of not only the largest world producer of cassava but has also resulted in significant gains in maize, yams, soybean, plantain/banana and cowpea production.

"The IITA improved varieties are performing well in farmers' fields because breeding has always been targeted at particular ecological zones and specific production constraints relating to pests and diseases. For example, maize varieties that are drought-tolerant are targeted for the drought-prone regions, while stemborer-resistant varieties makes it possible for maize to thrive in the southeastern zone of the country where stemborers are a major challenge," said Prof. Peter Oyekan, Chairman,

Technical Sub-Committee of Crop Varieties Release in Nigeria.

"Others are high yielding cassava varieties, improved hybrid yam varieties, Striga and Alectra resistant cowpea and soybean rust-resistant varieties. All these are doing well and they are making it possible to increase agric production," he added during a courtesy visit to IITA headquarters in Ibadan.

Oyekan, who was accompanied by the Director/Chief Executive Officer, National Centre for Genetic Resources and Biotechnology (NACGRAB), Mr. Wasiu Odofin, said the adoption of IITA improved varieties by farmers had been high and impressive but added that the government needed to support



Members of the Nigeria's Technical Sub-Committee on the Release of Crop Varieties during a visit to IITA in Ibadan

the seed industry to promote the dissemination of improved varieties.

On plans by Nigeria to fast track the release of varieties, Oyekan said Nigeria had cut the time taken to release improved varieties to farmers from about five years to between two and three years.

Butterfly experts meet exciting audience at IITA International School



IITA International pupils at the butterfly lecture

Entomologists taking a survey of butterfly species in IITA forest met an exciting audience at the IITA International School with pupils in the age bracket of 3-9 asking thought provoking questions about the diversity of butterflies.

Lepidopterist, Robert Warren, who made a presentation on "Nigeria Butterflies", gave answers to a deluge of record questions by the youngsters.

Pupils in the school sought to know why

butterflies have four wings. Do they taste through their feet? How long do they live? Where do they live? How many species are in existence? And how long do they stay in the cocoons?

Indeed nature created butterflies with four wings and YES they taste with their feet were some of the answers given by Warren.

About 20,000 species exist in the world while 1,400 species have been reported in Nigeria. In IITA forest, about 150 species have been identified and Warren who made the collection has handed it over to the IITA International School.

Warren and his team intend to research further on the diversity of butterflies in the IITA forest as interests to study the regeneration of the forest waxes stronger.

Warren spoke further on the identification of butterflies, their habitat, and distribution in Nigeria and ended with a short quiz.

He was accompanied by Szabolcs Sáfián of Hungary and Oskar Brattström of Sweden.

IITA welcomes, Antonio Lopez-Montes, Yam Breeder/Geneticist



Antonio Lopez-Montes has joined IITA as Yam Breeder/Geneticist. He is from Colombia and prior to joining IITA worked with the Colombian Corporation of Agricultural Research (CORPOICA), International Trade Centre and CIAT-

CLDYUCA (Spanish acronyms for International Centre of Tropical Agriculture and Latinoamerican Consortium for Cassava Development and Research)

Antonio has an MSc in Agriculture and Natural Resources (focused on plant breeding) from CATIE University of Panama and he completed his PhD in Participatory Plant Breeding and Agricultural Production Systems at the University of Wales in the UK.

Antonio has arrived with his wife Elva and his son Miguel. He will be based in office 40, Building 400, telephone extension 2731.

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Before leaving your workplace at the end of the day, 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.

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).