



## IITA research excites Nordic ambassadors

The ambassadors from Finland, Norway, and Sweden have commended the quality of research and scientific professionalism displayed at IITA in fighting hunger and poverty in tropical countries.

The visit to IITA West in Ibadan, Nigeria by the diplomats further reinforced the imperative for agricultural research to address the challenges of food insecurity in tropical countries.

H.E. Anneli Vuorinen, Finland's Ambassador to Nigeria, said "The level of excellence and knowledge at IITA is extraordinary."

Established in 1967, IITA is now one of the world's leading research partners in finding solutions to hunger, malnutrition, and poverty.

Using the research for development (R4D) approach, the Institute works with partners to enhance crop quality and productivity, reduce producer and consumer risks, and generate wealth from agriculture.

In its over four decades of existence, the Institute has contributed to building the capacities of scientists in tropical nations, thereby helping to stabilize the national research systems especially those in sub-Saharan Africa. Improved maize varieties released by the Institute today make up 60% of farmers' preferred varieties in West and Central Africa. "The biological control programs of the Institute against food crop pests saved cassava, a major staple in Africa," said Hartmann, IITA's Director General.



*Ambassadors Vuorinen (in foreground), Lindgärde (leftmost), and Lillerud (rightmost), during a meeting with IITA management in Ibadan. In photo are (L-R) Hartmann, Lakshmi Menon, and Hilde Koper.*

Norway's Ambassador to Nigeria, H.E. Kjell Lillerud, said he was proud of his government's support to IITA and the positive outcomes that research has had on the lives of people in the tropics. "I am happy my country is supporting IITA and I am impressed with the work here," he said.

Among the areas visited by the ambassadors were the Institute's Genetic Resources Center, which holds in trust for the world the largest collection of cowpea and other crops such as soybean, cassava, maize, yam, and banana, among others. The team also visited the Bioscience Center and the IITA forest—one of the

few surviving secondary forests in the West African region, where thousands of indigenous tree seedlings are being raised for reforestation.

The Swedish Ambassador to Nigeria, H.E. Per Lindgärde, who was instrumental in organizing the visit, said his country appreciated the positive impacts IITA's work has had on food production in Africa. "We see the value in the work IITA is doing and we will continue to give our support," he said.

The visit provided the Nordic ambassadors and IITA Administration the opportunity to explore a broad range of development challenges.



*L-R: Ambassadors Lindgärde, Lillerud, and Vuorinen visit IITA's Genetic Resources Center in Ibadan with Seed Bank Officer Niyi Oyatomi.*



*Project Manager John Peacock (right) and Consultant Deni Bown (second from left) take the ambassadors on a tour of the IITA forest in Ibadan.*

## IITA family mourns loss of David Sewell, beloved alumnus

A former Head of the International House and IITA pilot, David Sewell, has passed on. David died in an air crash in Kaduna, northwestern Nigeria while test-flying an aircraft belonging to Shoreline Consultancy Limited that was on maintenance check.

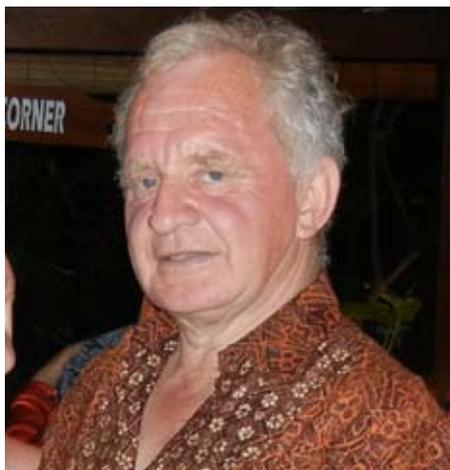
The aircraft crashed in a farm and burst into flames, leading to the death of David and another Nigerian who was flying with him, according to Margaret Nightingale, David's partner.

"I have lost my best friend and the love of my life," she wrote in an email.

The IITA Alumni Association deeply mourned the tragic passing of David, a beloved colleague and friend.

Dimiyati Nangju, on behalf of the association, expressed his condolences and prayers for the repose of his soul.

Kasali Aderogba, another alumnus who worked at IITA as Principal Administrator from 1973 to 1989, said that he worked closely with David who was then Head of the Institute's Catering Services.



*The late David Sewell*

"I assisted him in getting enrolled at the Nigerian Flying School at Ikeja and what started as a hobby quickly became his new career and we had to recruit a new Catering Manager.

"His ability to negotiate his way around Nigerian bureaucracy was amazing and even during our country's worst periods of military rule, David always managed to get all the clearances and authorizations to keep the IITA plane flying to even more dangerous parts of my dear continent!"

Rob Dumsday, another IITA alumnus, says David was "passionate about IITA and Africa". But Aderogba added, "To me he was much more passionate about Nigeria than I could ever hope to be; and we always had robust arguments, with me pointing out what is wrong with my country and David taking the opposite view. He is absolutely irreplaceable and we all need to be brave in facing this great loss."

IITA DG Hartmann described the death of David as tragic and sad.

If you would like to be kept up to date with memorial arrangements, kindly write to: [davidsewelltribute@gmail.com](mailto:davidsewelltribute@gmail.com). View photos of David at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/iita-media-library/>

## DRC researchers trained on nematode control



*Participants at a training on detecting and controlling nematodes in DRC.*

Selected staff members from the National Institute for Agronomic Study and Research, INERA, in DR Congo, recently underwent a week-long IITA-funded and conducted training to detect and control nematodes.

Nematodes are a devastating group of pests of banana and plantain, and other important food crops in the country. Worm-like and tiny, they penetrate the roots and hamper the uptake of nutrients from the soil, drastically reducing yield and in severe cases, toppling the whole plant.

The training was conducted at the Mvuasi Research Station in Bas Congo Province in DRC on 6-11 May, with 13 technicians and staff drawn from various research stations including Yangambi Research Station, Kinshasa, and Bukavu trained on various aspects of nematode management--from recognition, control, and damage assessment.

Banana and plantain root samples brought from across DRC were examined to show the variability of nematodes across DRC. A field excursion to intensively cultivated vegetable fields was also undertaken to provide greater understanding of nematode damage assessment for a variety of crops.

The training was a follow-up to a similar one held in 2009 for most of the participants and was organized due to popular

demand for a repeat training to reinforce and extend the earlier exercise.

The training was conducted by IITA scientists Stefan Hauser, and Danny Coyne. They were supported by Kamira Muller, who recently finished his MSc in banana nematology within the framework of an agricultural and forestry research project, (REAFOR). The trainers were impressed by the enthusiasm and energetic interest of all participants.

### 2011 World Environment Day on 2 June

The College of Environmental Sciences of Joseph Ayo Babalola University (JABU) in collaboration with IITA, National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA), Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF), and Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN) will hold the 2011 World Environment Day Symposium on 2 June.

The topic of the symposium, "Forest Resources, Our Environment And Us," derives from the United Nations' theme for the International Year of Forests: "Forest For People, Forest For Life".

The keynote address will be delivered by Chief Philip Asiodu (MA, OXON, CON), Chairman, NCF. Discussants will include Deni Bown (IITA), Maiwada M. Omar (NESREA), S. Badejo (FRIN), Augustine Isichei (OAU, Ile-Ife), Ade Adeola (JABU), Emmanuel Obot (NCF), E. Agbelusi (FUTA), A. Adedokun (JABU), and David Ladipo (CENRAD), among others.

The symposium will be held at Oba Oladele Olasore Auditorium, JABU, Ikeji-Arakeji starting at 10.00 am.

### 30 May 2011 is a public holiday

The Federal Government of Nigeria has declared 30 May 2011 as a public holiday to mark the 2011 presidential inauguration ceremony and the 2011 Democracy Day celebration.

While the Institute will remain closed for the holiday, supervisors are advised to please make the necessary arrangements to maintain essential services.