

Yam research gets \$1 million boost



A trader displays yams for sale in a local market

Research on yam improvement in West and Central Africa (WCA) involving Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, and Togo has received about US\$1 million (about €750,000) lifeline, thanks to the European Union- African, Caribbean and Pacific Science and Technology Program (EU-ACP).

The support is coming amid global reawakening on the importance of yam as a food security crop in Africa

The research project tagged, "Strengthening Capacity for Yam Research-for-development in Central and Western Africa (SCYReC)" aims to improve the capacity for yam research-for-development in the region.

Specifically, it will help in finding sustainable solutions, through science and technology, to the challenges facing the crop and exploit its tremendous potential for food security and poverty alleviation.

IITA, Africa's leading research partner, will manage and implement the project in collaboration with a team of national partners in 13 research institutions in the 5 countries including the National Root Crops Research Institute, Umudike.

"This is something good for the region where yam plays an important role in the nutrition and economic well-being of the people," says IITA's David Annang, Coordinator for the project.

"We are hopeful that the project will tackle the many challenges to research militating against increased yam production," he adds.

Despite its contribution to food security, yam faces a plethora of limitations among which are high costs of planting material and of labor, decreasing soil fertility, inadequate yield potential of varieties, as well as the increasing levels of field and storage pests and diseases associated with intensification of cultivation.

The labor requirements in yam cultivation for mounding, staking especially in the forest zone, weeding, and harvesting exceed those for other starchy staples such as cassava. These account for about 40% of yam production costs, while 50% of the expenditure goes to planting materials. The seed yams are also perishable and bulky to transport. If farmers do not buy new seed yams, they must set aside up to 30% of their harvest for planting the next year.

The EU-ACP-funded project, therefore, seeks to tackle these challenges by helping in the development of a framework for yam research-for-development in WCA.

Ten West African countries sign CAADP's Compact agreements

Ten West African countries have restated their commitment to fund and support agricultural development with the signing of the Compact Agreements of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

The West African countries which have completed their CAADP Roundtable process and signed their compacts include Benin, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Togo, says Yade Mbaye, Regional Coordinator, Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (SAKSS).

"Senegal is also planning its Round table between 9 and 10 February 2010." The Compact agreement sets the parameters for long-term partnership in the agricultural sector, specifies key

commitments on the part of government and development partners, and clarifies expectations with respect to the agribusiness and farming communities. Most important among these are sector policy, budgetary and investment commitments as well as commitments to align and scale up long-term development assistance to the sector.

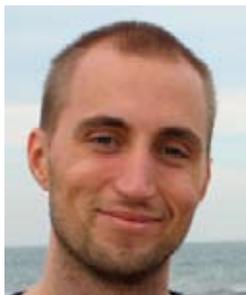
The signing of the Compact agreements by the West African governments is one of the instruments of the CAADP, a strategic program identified by African Heads of State and Government under the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) of the African Union (AU), to boost agricultural growth on the continent.

Specifically, CAADP aims to align and guide national agricultural sector policies,

strategies, and investments to realize the targets of a 6 percent agricultural growth rate and the allocation of 10 percent of national budgets to the agriculture sector to fight hunger and poverty. In addition to identifying four key investment pillars, the CAADP agenda, in line with the philosophy of the broader NEPAD initiative, also emphasizes accountability and peer/mutual review, as part of a transition towards evidence and outcome based policy planning and implementation.

With about 70 percent of the population in Africa depending on agriculture as a source of employment, the signing of the Compact Agreements signpost brighter prospects for the sector.

IITA-STCP welcomes Associate Professional Officer, Sander Muilerman



Sander Muilerman has joined the IITA-STCP in Accra, Ghana as an Associate Professional Officer, Social Science. Before joining IITA, he was a Technical

Assistant with Alternatives Durables pour le Développement in Cameroon for a Belgian NGO. In 2004, he obtained a MA in Development Sociology and Cultural Anthropology from Leyden University in the Netherlands and a BA in Marketing and Management for Tourism from 'Hogeschool HBO the Netherlands' in 2005. He is married to Elke and has two children, Milan (son) and Noor (daughter).

Library Services update

IITA Google books

Latest publication added:

Perry, R.N. et al. 2009. Root-knot nematodes. CABI, Wallingford, UK. 488p.

IITA Google Books:

Use statistics of IITA publications for the week of 17/01 ~ 23/01/2010)

-About 1,353 persons visited IITA's books while 11,000 pages were viewed

For more information please contact e.ezomo@cgiar.org.

IITA bids Ivan farewell



Ingelbrecht Ivan poses for a group photo with colleagues during his farewell party

All eyes on black-eyed peas: Experts to meet for World Cowpea Research Conference in September 2010



Cowpea experts from across the globe will converge on the historic city of Dakar, Senegal from 27 September to 1 October 2010 for the 5th World

Cowpea Research Conference. For five days, participants will tackle research-related issues to enhance the profile of cowpea as a viable income-generating and food security crop.

The conference will cover a wide range of topics - from cowpea genetic improvement and use of molecular tools, to human nutrition and processing and enterprise development.

Cowpea (*Vigna unguiculata* L. Walp.), also commonly known as "black-eyed peas", is an annual legume and is one of the most ancient crops known to man.

For more information, please visit the 5th World Cowpea Conference website at <http://cowpea2010.iita.org/>

ISTRC-AB holds 11th symposium

The International Society for Tropical Root Crops- Africa Branch (ISTRC-AB) will hold its 11th symposium with the theme "Root Crops and the Challenges of Globalization and Climate" in Kinshasa, DR Congo between 5 and 10 October 2010.

Deadline for the submission of abstracts: 30 April 2010

Deadline for full papers' submission: 30 July 2010

February is Heart Disease Awareness Month

In celebration of Heart Disease Awareness Month this February, the IITA Medical Unit is running a series of articles dedicated to raising awareness about heart disease and increasing our knowledge of its prevention.

Heart disease is a leading cause of death worldwide. It includes conditions such as hypertension, coronary heart disease, heart failure, heart valve disorders, ischemic heart disease, and other related illnesses. It affects both sexes and all races.

Many risk factors have been identified, some of which are uncontrollable (e.g., family history, age, etc.), while others can be prevented through changes in lifestyle, thus reducing the risk of heart disease. Some of these controllable factors include smoking, persistent high blood pressure, diabetes, physical inactivity, obesity, stress, and anxiety.

The British Heart Foundation (www.bhf.org.uk), highlights 10 great ideas for a heart-healthier 2010. These are:

1. Get your 30 a day



Try to do at least 30 minutes of moderate activity on 5 days or more a week. You could break it down to three lots of 10-minute bouts or two lots of 15 minutes, and fit them where you can.

2. Kick the habit



Give up smoking; it is one of the major risk factors for coronary heart disease. By a year after you have stopped smoking, your risk of a heart attack falls to about half that of a smoker.

to be continued in next week's edition