

## FAO commends IITA over the successful execution of CFC-funded Project



*A motorised cassava grating machine commissioned by IITA-CFC in Sierra Leone*

The Food and Agriculture Organization has lauded IITA's efforts in implementing the project on Cassava Value Chain Development in West Africa.

The project, which is funded by the Common Funds for Commodities, and executed by IITA and partners, seeks to contribute to sustainable improvements

in welfare and livelihood of farmers and processors in the cassava sector, while at the same time increasing food security particularly in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Republic of Benin.

The FAO Supervisory Body led by Adams Prakash expressed satisfaction with the progress of implementation of the project components, especially the on-time commissioning of the processing centers given the logistical and communication constraints in the region.

He also commended Prof. Lateef Sanni, IITA-CFC Project Leader and his team for effective coordination of the project.

In a 20-paged report, Prakash said IITA staff as well as the national implementing partners should be cited for their hard work and dedication towards realizing the project's goals.

Also of interest to the FAO Supervisory Body was the continued relevance and potential of the project in realizing the goal of alleviating rural poverty, using sustainable market-led initiatives.

The FAO SB report gave kudos to the provision of opportunities for farmers and villagers to participate in value chains which would improve livelihoods.

The report further encouraged IITA and

project partners to deploy more superior cassava stems to farmers, organize activities on enterprise management, farmers' field day and facilitate microfinance linkages to ensure project sustainability.

The report, which is a product of an FAO supervisory mission/monitoring exercise carried out between 4 and 10 February 2010, made field visits to all the project sites in Sierra Leone and two of the three sites in Nigeria.

Particularly, it visited the following commissioned cassava processing sites in Sierra Leone: Gbotima processing center in Bo District; Njala Agricultural Research Center, in Moyamba District; Adamaris cassava processing center in Bombali District; UPWARDS cassava processing center in Port Loko District; and another center in Waterloo in the Western Rural District.

In Nigeria the FAO SB visited MPC Shabbak at Kuje, Abuja; and Joe Beg Bajju in Nassarawa State.

The FAO Supervisory Body also had discussions on the project activities with stakeholders, beneficiaries, IITA, and the implementing national partners in Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

## Sixteen yam technicians benefit from IITA-SCYReC

Sixteen yam research technicians from Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Benin, Togo and Nigeria have benefited from a study visit to IITA.

The study tour is part of activities funded by the European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific Science and Technology Program (EU-ACP) aimed at "Strengthening Capacity for Yam Research-for-development in Central and Western Africa (SCYReC)."

The event, which started on 12 April and ended on 23 April 2010, was meant to intimate the participants with good practices that would improve their skills for better job performance.

It afforded participants the opportunity to improve their knowledge on GIS, soil sampling and rapid yam propagation techniques using minisetts.

The training also touched on post flask management of plantlets from in vitro culture, germplasm collection and exchange/field conservation of yam germplasm, and rapid propagation techniques using vine cuttings.

The event was wrapped up on Friday with discussions anchored by David Annang, IITA-SCYReC Coordinator.



*Yam participants during a study visit to IITA-Ibadan*

## IITA Board of Trustees meets in Ibadan



**Sitting from left to right:** Barbara Becker, Trine Hvoslef-Eide, Hartmann (DG), Bryan Harvey (Chair), Emmy Simmons

**Standing from left to right:** Daniel Uza, Dean Lewis, Paul Mafuka, Henri Maraite, Jenny Cramer (Secretary), Hans Jöhr, Tom Medlycott

The IITA Board of Trustees (BoT) held its first meeting for 2010 in Ibadan on 26-29 April. Among the highlights of the meeting included moving forward with the CGIAR Reforms and the Mega Programs. Other discussion points covered finance, audit, and human resources, among others.

During the cocktails and dinner held on 27 April, BoT Chair Bryan Harvey introduced the new members of the Board. They are Anne Kathrine Hvoslef-Eide, Assistant Professor of Applied Biotechnology at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences; Hans Jöhr, Corporate Head of Agriculture at Nestlé in Switzerland; Tom Medlycott, Director of Internal Audit, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Ireland; and Salihu Aliyu, Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Nigeria.

Paula Bramel, Deputy Director General for Research, and Lakshmi Menon, Deputy Director General for R4D Support, on their part, introduced new IRS of their respective units to the board members.

## Survey unravels pests/diseases threats on legumes in southern Africa

A survey by IITA and national partners in the southern African region has investigated pests and diseases problems affecting legumes which, if left unattended to, might affect the food security of that region.

The survey team including James Legg, Danny Coyne, Ousmane Boukar, Steve Boahen, Hailu Tefera, Manuele Tamò, and Lava Kumar visited selected areas of Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique.

The team identified and assessed the impact of the most common diseases, arthropod pests and nematodes affecting cowpea and soybean.

On soybean, bacterial pustule was observed in almost all the locations but damage was light. Soybean rust (*Phakopsora pachyrhizi*) was only observed at Bvumbwe Research Station (Malawi), but at this site, the disease had caused the complete defoliation of most varieties. *Cercospora* leaf blight, brown spot, and leaf blotch were also observed at some locations. A few interesting cases of field tolerance were observed and will be the object of further studies in this locality which is considered a real hotspot for the disease. Soybean rust appeared around Chitedze Research Station (central Malawi).

Virus infections were observed in soybean at all locations, however, disease incidence was low and symptoms were mild. In Ruace/Gurue (Mozambique), severe symptoms were observed in about 15% of soybean plants.

Another interesting discovery was the presence of 'crazy plants' that had floral parts transformed to leaf-like structures, giving the plant a broom-like appearance and resulting in 100% yield loss. Molecular diagnostics confirmed that this disease is caused by a phytoplasma that belongs to subgroup 16SrII-C, hitherto, unreported in soybean in Africa. Further studies are necessary to characterize this pathogen, understand its epidemiology and develop appropriate control measures.

Among insect pests, the most visible



IITA and ZARI scientists discussing soybean's pests problems with a farmer (third from left) around Chipata, Zambia

symptoms of attack were caused by defoliators (mainly caterpillars of *Spodoptera* sp. and *Helicoverpa armigera*), but the extent of the yield loss and related economic impact of these pests is not clear yet and will be a subject of further investigations.

Termites also appeared to be consistent pests across the region, often causing plant toppling.

Severe symptoms of root knot nematodes (*Meloidogyne* spp.) were observed in Malawi, especially at Bvumbwe, and in Mozambique at one site (Mutequelese in Gurue district).

On cowpea, the major problems were caused by different viruses with high incidence particularly in Bvumbwe (Malawi) and at Ruace/Gurue and Nampula

(Mozambique). Of the major insects vector groups, Chrysomelids were observed at several locations, aphids were absent and *Bemisia tabaci* whiteflies were not frequent, although whiteflies were more common in Mozambique, where the incidence of virus infection and symptom diversity were greatest.

The incidence of the pod borer *Maruca vitrata* was surprisingly high around Lusaka (Zambia) and Nampula (Mozambique). Occasionally, mixed flower infestations with the bollworm *Helicoverpa armigera* were observed. Other major pests were pod weevil (*Apion* sp.) whose larvae feed inside the grains in the pods.