

Agric research is improving livelihoods in Africa

Research by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture is not only increasing knowledge generally in the sciences, but also positively transforming livelihoods in Africa, says Ms Cecilia Akintomide, Secretary General, African Development Bank.

“The impact is real and I am proud of the results coming out of this African-based research institution,” Akintomide said during a private visit to IITA in Ibadan on Monday.

This is not the first time IITA is being commended for its impact in Africa. In 2007, an impact assessment team by the Science Council of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) reported that about 70% of the impact by the CGIAR in Africa came from research outputs of IITA. Today, more than 60 % of improved maize grown in West and Central Africa comes from IITA varieties.

Working with international and national partners in Africa, IITA has over the years developed improved crop varieties which are superior in terms of yield to local varieties. Most of these improved varieties are resistant to pest and diseases. In the Great Lakes region where cassava brown streak is a menace, tolerant cassava varieties developed by IITA are helping farmers in cutting down annual losses that are estimated at \$50 million.

Growing up, Akintomide spent her childhood and early adulthood years in IITA, where her father was the first African Director of Administration. The multicultural and multilingual environment in IITA created in her a deep appreciation of diversity. For her diversity was normal while the lack



L-R: Ranjana Bhattacharjee, Hilde Koper, Godwin Atser, Lakshmi Menon, Nteranya Sanginga, Cecilia Akintomide (Secretary General AfDB), Shalewa Sholola, and Toyin Oke during Akintomide's visit to IITA in Ibadan.

thereof was abnormal.

During the trip to IITA, Akintomide visited the gene bank, and given AfDB's keen focus on post conflict and fragile states, she was impressed by the impact of the gene bank in post-conflict countries, as the source of the seeds and plants of hope that were used to restart farming in post conflict countries such as Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Rwanda.

On the economic importance of agriculture, she recalled that in Nigeria, for instance, before the discovery of oil, agriculture was the key driver of the economy, with cocoa playing a leading role particularly in the southwestern region. The early infrastructure in the region was built from revenues generated from cocoa.

The AfDB secretary general noted that the bank's Medium Term Strategy included in its pillars; infrastructure,

higher education, science and technology. These MTS pillars provided areas of convergence between AfDB and IITA.

Receiving the AfDB secretary general, Dr. Nteranya Sanginga, IITA Director General commended the bank for its investment in research and development.

He said that besides improving the quality of research, IITA would continue to focus on capacity building and the strengthening of partnership with international and local institutions.

The director general said these areas of focus by IITA would help in addressing the challenges facing the continent and compliment the bank's efforts towards improving livelihoods.

Both IITA and AfDB have a long history of partnering for development, with tangible results of such partnership. The two institutions are working together to enhance that partnership in the near future.



First photo from left: Akintomide (left) chats with Niyi Oyatomi during her visit to the genebank.

Second photo from left: Akintomide admires 40 per cent cassava bread baked by IITA while Samiran Mazumdar looks on.

IITA and NAQS join forces against the spread of emerging diseases ... launch alert campaign

IITA and the Nigerian Agriculture Quarantine Services (NAQS) have announced the 'Alert Campaign' in an effort to protect the country from the invasion of dangerous emerging diseases in sub-Saharan Africa.

The joint action is coming at a time food security in Africa is being threatened by emerging crop diseases such as cassava brown streak disease (CBSD), banana bunchy top disease (BBTD), banana bacterial wilt (BBW) and several other diseases.

Researchers say in 2010, the new outbreak of CBSD attack on cassava in Eastern Africa was estimated to have resulted in losses worth US\$75 million per year.

"But fortunately, Nigeria is free from these diseases, and every effort should be made to prevent their entrance," says Dr. Lava Kumar, Head, Germplasm Health Unit and Virologist, during the NAQS-IITA Annual Meeting held on 15 December 2011.

"The country also needs to establish preemptive disease control strategies because there are no effective solutions to these diseases," he adds.

The 'Alert campaign' seeks to create and promote awareness on these dangerous diseases among growers, government officials, quarantine and extension agencies operating



Members of the 'Alert Campaign' team pose for a group photo.

particularly in the border posts.

"It will also involve more rigorous monitoring at the borders," says Mrs. Awosusi, Deputy Director, NAQS.

Noting that exotic diseases and pests like taro blight, papaya mealybug, fruit flies are already devastating crops in West Africa, Awosusi says West Africa can no longer afford more diseases and pest attacks.

On the exchange of germplasm, Awosusi said international germplasm exchanges of IITA comprise nearly 85% of the total germplasm exchanges from Nigeria.

The deputy director lauded efforts by IITA's Germplasm Health Unit (GHU) in ensuring safe and secure germplasm exchange approaches.

In 2011, the GHU facilitated 150

germplasm exchanges between IITA and 42 other countries around the world.

Robert Asiedu, IITA R4D Director-West Africa, says that disease control cuts across all aspects of agriculture and food security.

According to him, agricultural intensification efforts must duly recognize disease threats and put in place control strategies otherwise envisioned gains can easily be compromised. He commends NAQS' support to IITA's research and says that every effort will be made to protect crop health.

For further information about 'Alert campaign' contact, Lava Kumar (L.kumar@cgiar.org)

Photo News



IITA DG, Nteranya Sanginga addresses staff during the end-of-year get-together in Ibadan



Bramel (left on the podium) and Sanginga during her farewell speech

Dr. Paula Bramel, Deputy Director-General (Research) has bade IITA staff in Ibadan bye during a get-together organized by the General Directorate to mark the end of the year.

Bramel spent 7 years with IITA out of which she served as the DDG-R4D for 4 years.

She will be joining the Global Crop Diversity Trust (GCDDT) as the Assistant Executive Director in 2012.

In her earlier email to colleagues, Bramel said that although the appointment with GCDDT was a wonderful opportunity, she was very sad leaving IITA.

Nigeria declares holiday

The Federal Government of Nigeria has declared **Monday 2 January, 2012** as a public holiday to celebrate the beginning of year 2012.

Management has approved the holiday and consequently, all IITA offices in Nigeria will remain closed to business on this day.

Supervisors are advised to please make necessary arrangements to maintain essential services during the holiday.

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).