



Stakeholders refine work plan of US\$12M yam initiative for West Africa

Stakeholders in the “Yam Improvement for Income and Food Security in West Africa (YIIFSWA)” project are meeting in IITA-Ibadan to fine tune the implementation workplan of the landmark initiative for the next five years. The workshops, which started on Thursday (29 March), will culminate with the official launch of the project on Monday, 2 April, also in IITA-Ibadan.

The YIIFSWA project, which is supported by a US\$ 12 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), aims to dramatically boost yam productivity and double the incomes of 3 million yam farmers in West Africa, particularly Ghana and Nigeria.

Present at the implementation workshops are representatives of YIIFSWA stakeholders: IITA, National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI) of Nigeria, Crops Research Institute (CRI) of Ghana, UK’s Natural Resources Institute (NRI), the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), and Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

In his remarks at the opening of the workshops, Robert Asiedu, R4D Director, said that although significant progress has been made in the area of yam research to improve the lives of farmers, “we have not yet reached the ‘Premier Leagues’ just yet.”

“We still have much work to do, and this project will contribute a lot in achieving our goal of helping resource-poor yam growers in our target countries.”

“I would also like to thank the BMGF for their substantial support to make this project possible,” he added.

In addressing the partners present, Ken Dashielle, DDG for Partnerships & Capacity Building and who represented the IITA DG at the opening, said that “partnerships will play a very key role in attaining the lofty objectives that this project has set for itself -- of helping about 200,000 farm families or 1.6 million individual yam farmers -- over the course of five years.”

“This project will be about delivering tried and tested technologies that we already know; however, we all

still need to keep that creative spark alive.”

“Let us not be discouraged if we encounter criticisms and challenges along the way, we need to push forward for the sake of yam farmers everywhere,” he said as he egged on the project team.

Norbert Maroya, YIIFSWA Project Coordinator, said that “at the end of these workshops, we must all have that sense of ownership, accomplishment, and confidence that this project will succeed because we planned how to go about it well, and we planned it together.”

As mentioned, the YIIFSWA project will be officially launched on Monday, 2 April, at the Conference Center in IITA-Ibadan. Expected to grace the event is Nigeria’s Honorable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Akinwumi Adesina. Some private yam processing companies have also been invited to exhibit their yam-based products during the launch event. A press briefing is also scheduled for selected members of the project team.



Stakeholders and partners in the BMGF-funded YIIFSWA project pose for a group photo during a break in the workshop sessions.

Partners of project on safe vegetable pest control meet

Partners of the recently approved project seeking to develop safe pest and crop management practices to strengthen the vegetable value chain in the humid tropics held their first planning meeting on 1-2 March 2012 at the World Vegetable Centre (AVRDC) in Arusha, Tanzania. It brought together the stakeholders from the participating countries of Tanzania and Kenya as well as potential collaborators from the private sector and other researchers undertaking related work.

The event familiarized participants about facets of the project to ensure that all are on the same page. Participants also assessed the need for additional support and complementary activities. A visit of AVRDC facilities in Arusha was also organised as part of the meeting.

One of the project's goals is to improve the sanitary conditions of the seedling production systems for improved crop health and vigour. This will include the evaluation of microbial antagonists or "bioprotectants", which will be applied to plants or seedling beds to specifically protect against root-knot nematodes.

After the workshop, some of the project team members: Danny Coyne of IITA-Tanzania, Valerie Williamson of



Some members of the project at the BeCA Hub in Nairobi.

the University California Davis, Florian Grundler from University of Bonn in German, and George Kariuki from Kenyatta University in Kenya, visited tomato farms in Kenya to see the extent of damage caused by pests and diseases, and current options available to farmers.

As part of efforts to get more partners on board, the group also met with the Director of the Mombassa Campus of Kenyatta University and the DG of the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (icipe). They also did a series of presentations on the practical application of molecular

nematology in Africa at the Biosciences Eastern and Central Africa (BeCA) Hub at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI).

The project is funded by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of Germany. It is led by IITA in collaboration with the University of Bonn (Germany), AVRDC, Kenyatta University (Kenya), Kasestart University (Thailand), FOFIFA (Madagascar), and Tanzania Agricultural Research Institutes.

Harmonizing protocol for fertilizer analyses

Stakeholders in the agricultural sector converged in IITA-Ibadan to harmonize methods for fertilizer analyses. The workshop was organized by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in collaboration with IITA.

The participants, drawn from key institutions including universities and research institutes, deliberated over issues involving the evaluation of the quality of organic and inorganic fertilizers. General laboratory practices that affect the quality of analytical results were also discussed.

Declaring the training forum open, Stefan Hauser, IITA Systems Agronomist underscored the importance of fertilizers to agricultural productivity.

He said that the growing world

population demanded agricultural intensification to produce more food without compromising forests, water and land resources.

Fertilizers today may contain undesirable additives that may be harmful to crops and the environment. Hauser emphasized that the issue of examining the quality of fertilizers and their impact on environment was imperative to safeguard ecosystems and biodiversity. According to him, protocols on fertilizer analyses need to be verified and harmonized for efficient and effective quality control.

He commended the Nigerian government for supporting the training forum, adding that recommendations from the meeting would assist the

government in her agricultural transformation action plan.

The meeting was facilitated by Joseph Uponi and Lola Idowu of IITA. Lead Presenter, Professor G.O. Adeoye of the University of Ibadan, said the workshop came at the right time when the issue of food security is hot on the country's agenda.

He urged participants to examine current methods of fertilizer analysis and come up with standard methods for use in Nigerian laboratories.

New NRS per diem rates

Following a series of intensive consultations involving the regional administrators, station administrators, and most country representatives, the R4D Support Directorate announces that the NRS per diem rates for countries in which IITA operate have been updated.

The new rates will take effect starting 1 April 2012.

Staff are encouraged to visit the IITA Intranet for the new rates or contact their respective station administrators for more details.



Participants of the fertilizer protocol harmonization workshop held in IITA-Ibadan.