

IITA BoT members commend staff ... Wish staff happiness and good health in 2011



From the archive: BoT Chair, Bryan Harvey addressing staff for a job well done at the 2009 BoT meeting in Ibadan

IITA Board of Trustees (BoT) has lauded the commitment, determination and dedication of staff to duty in 2010.

The Board, specifically, congratulated staff for their efforts in developing the Consortium Research Programs (CRPs), and also managing IITA's contributions to the CGIAR transition program.

Harvey Bryan, IITA BoT Chair, in a message to staff, says transitions are always stressful but they present a window of opportunity which IITA must take advantage of.

According to him, "We are well aware that you had to work with a minimum of guidance and with terribly short time lines and often shifting targets. We are also aware that much of this effort came during a time when many staff and their families normally take holidays.

"It is further noted that we are not done with the process yet so that additional demands will be made on you and your families.

"The Board wishes to commend you for both the quality and quantity of your inputs and for the sacrifices that you and your families have made. Not only have you done this extremely well but you have also continued to do the vital work, which is our mandate.

"An institution is only as good as its people and we are one of the best. Keep up the good work."

Harvey also wished staff all the best during the festive season.

In his words: "I wish you all good health and happiness in 2011. It is a privilege to serve on behalf of such an outstanding group of people as you."

Malawian farmers get improved cassava stems

IITA-UPoCA has distributed improved cassava stems to farmers in five districts of Malawi, raising hopes for a brighter outlook for cassava production.

The districts are: Kasungu, Dowa, Ntchisi, Mzimba, Lilongwe and Blantyre.

The distribution of the improved cassava materials is part of efforts to increase the productivity of the root crop and mitigate the impact of the 2008 food price crisis that had dire consequences on developing countries.

The Malawian government hailed the distribution of the cassava stems, saying that it will significantly contribute to food security and even household incomes by increasing food availability.

The government also thanked the United States Agency for International Development—the funding agency—and IITA-UPoCA for implementing the project.

Over the past five years, cassava production in Malawi has been increasing by an average of 7.8%, according to government's data. Current root yields are estimated at 16.6 t/ha but the government plans to at least double the figure. However, there are many challenges to the attainment of the objective due to limited access to clean cassava planting materials.

Mrs. Erica Maganga, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, says, "It is pleasing, therefore, to learn that the distribution of clean cassava planting materials is one of the core activities of IITA-UPoCA project."

Faced with difficulties in cereal production due to climatic change and escalating food prices; cassava is now a very important crop in Malawi, contributing significantly to the food basket and rural incomes.



Ntawuruhunga (second right) distributes improved cassava stems to farmers

"Today cassava is the second most important food crop after maize in Malawi," Maganga notes.

Pheneas Ntawuruhunga, IITA-UPoCA Coordinator says the overall objective of the project is to enhance food security among the target group through profitable cassava production systems, increased market access and value-addition activities.

According to him, over 15 000 households are set to benefit from the seed distribution by 2011, since the initial beneficiaries will have to pass on the improved planting materials to other farmers.