

Helping DR Congo cope with climate change

In an effort to better equip the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and its farmers cope with a changing climate, IITA held a four-day intensive training course for the staff of the *Institut National pour l'Etude et la Recherche Agronomiques* (INERA) – DR Congo's national agricultural research institute – to manage electronic meteorological stations installed by the institute across the country and to use the information they generate.

The training and the set of nine stations strategically located across the DRC provide much-needed boost to the country's capacity to accurately and adequately collect weather data for climate change research. This, in turn, will support informed decision-making by the government and concerned entities to help farmers manage the negative effects of climate change and maintain or increase agricultural production under such condition.

According to Stefan Hauser, IITA agronomist and training resource person, a firm knowledge on the type of change that is happening in the environment is needed to effectively prepare the national agricultural research system and farmers. This knowledge is lacking in many regions in the DRC as the current network of meteorological stations does not adequately cover the country and agricultural researchers have very limited options to help farmers cope with changing climate.

"The few conventional meteorological stations in operation do not furnish all the data required at the right resolution and accuracy," Hauser says. "This limits the ability to model the changes that have taken place and to predict the magnitude of future changes."

Scientists agree that climate change will severely reduce the production capacity of smallholder farmers, and consequently their ability to earn a decent living, due to erratic weather patterns and the resulting intensification of pest and disease pressure, among others.

Present deliberations on climate change are largely based on modelling



Dr Stefan Hauser (at left) briefing some of the trainees on the technical and practical aspects of a meteorological station's operation.

Participants listening intently as Hauser gives an overview of the training workshop.



and not on real time data of fluctuations that are currently happening or have happened in the recent past. Therefore, to obtain reliable information for better decision making, countries must have independent systems to acquire and manage meteorological data.

In this country still reeling from war, over 70% of the population depend on agriculture. Climate change, in addition to insufficient infrastructure and services, will further set back the agricultural sector if the country does not adequately prepare crop producers deal with its effects.

The training, held on 23-27 June 2011 and financially supported by the Belgian Technical Cooperation (CTBBTC), covered physical installation and verification of the operation of meteorological stations, programming data acquisition, and meteorological data transfer, exportation and presentation. The activity was held at the INERA Research Center in Mvuazi, Bas Congo and was attended by staff from seven stations and centers and the General Directorate.

IITA cited in Africa College International Conference prize

IITA has been cited in an award at the just concluded first Africa College International Conference held in the United Kingdom.

The award was given to Peju Onadipe, Assistant Project Coordinator, IITA/CFC-WA for her presentation entitled: "Cassava Value Chain Development in West Africa: Innovations and Partnerships that Worked."

The presentation highlighted the successes of the IITA-implemented cassava value chain project in West Africa, providing evidence-based impact on target beneficiaries and lessons learnt.

Onadipe, while receiving the award certificate, thanked the UKCDS which sponsored the African College prize for the initiative.

Paula Bramel, IITA DDG-Research, was also at the conference where she presented an overview of the CGIAR



Peju Onadipe receiving her award certificate at the first Africa College International Conference held at Leeds University in the UK.

Integrated Systems for the Humid Tropics Research Program that IITA will be leading.

The Africa College International Conference was held on 22-24 June at the Devonshire Hall of the University of the Leeds, UK. This year's theme

was "Food security, Health and Impact Knowledge Brokering".

The goal of the conference was to demonstrate and share lessons on how to translate research results into impact on food security and human health in sub-Saharan Africa.

Chinese delegation visits Abuja station, seeks stronger partnership with IITA and Nigeria



Chinese and Nigerian delegations viewing IITA-developed cassava products presented by Dr Peter Kulakow at IITA-Abuja.

A delegation of 15 Chinese political leaders and businessmen connected with the cassava industry in China visited IITA's Abuja station on 13 June to discuss cooperation to develop the cassava sector in Nigeria. The group was led by the honourable Chinese Vice-Minister of Agriculture Zhang Tao Lin. Also at the station to welcome

the guests were representatives of the Nigeria-China Cassava Centre Initiative headed by Chief James Awoniyi.

Peter Kulakow, IITA cassava breeder; Peter Iluebbey, International Trials Manager; and Francis Adunoye, IITA-Abuja Station Manager set up a demonstration of IITA's research activities on cassava in Nigeria.

Kulakow also showcased improved IITA varieties and cassava products including biofortified yellow cassava.

The Chinese delegation also visited the National Biotechnology Development Centre where they were briefed on Nigeria's investment in utilization of advanced technologies. They also met with the Permanent Secretary at the headquarters of the Federal Department of Agriculture where they discussed priorities for future cooperation between China and Nigeria. Both parties highlighted the importance of meeting food security needs over the development of biofuel and other cassava-based industries.

This delegation visited Nigeria two weeks after six IITA scientists went to the Chinese Academy of Tropical Agriculture Science (CATAS) in Hainan and Guang Xi provinces of China to discuss a memorandum of agreement on research collaboration between IITA and CATAS.

Songbi Chen of CATAS and lead scientific advisor for the Chinese delegation in Nigeria emphasized the importance of IITA/CATAS collaboration and the need to quickly move general discussion of cooperation into specific research projects to capitalize on the momentum generated by the two visits.