

Network appeals for action on roots and tubers challenges in southern Africa

Speakers at this year's annual meeting of the Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) of the Southern Africa Root Crops Research Network (SARRNET) have called on stakeholders to work more closely together to address the challenges facing the utilization and commercialization of roots and tubers in the region.

Speaking at the forum held in Maputo, Mozambique on 8-10 June, Calisto Antonio Laurinda Francisco Bias, Director of the *Instituto de Investigação Agrária de Moçambique*, said roots and tubers are vital for food and income in the region but are currently facing many challenges that needed to be addressed collectively.

Other key speakers echoed Dr Bias' sentiments stressing the need to increase synergies in the region to address the crops' common challenges.

They also urged the meeting attendees to explore ways to sustain the network which heavily invests in these two crops. They included Martin Chiona, RAC Chairperson; David Chikoye, IITA Director for Southern Africa; and Cecilia Khupeand, Senior Regional Program Manager for USAID-Southern Africa.

Also present were the heads of the national research programs of Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia. Participants discussed progress on addressing issues

on varieties and processing technologies, seed systems, emerging threats, global warming, stakeholder collaboration, market information, funding, and human capacity in roots and tubers.

These issues will form the basis of the network's workplan for 2010/11.

The participants also visited the sweet potato breeding and an on-farm trial at Umbeluzi Research station and a privately-owned cassava processing center at Changalane.

Ntawuruhunga Pheneas, the SARRNET coordinator, said the annual meeting was an important forum to share progress of the network's activities and discuss ways of moving forward.

The meeting also served as a learning platform for new participants. A farmer



Members of the SARRNET-RAC at the meeting in Maputo, Mozambique.

from Mozambique representing the farming community, indicated that he learnt a lot from the discussions and the field visit. He appealed for more involvement of the private sector in the meetings, describing it as the 'engine' for such projects.

Anabela Zacarias from Mozambique was elected as the new RAC Chairperson.

IITA welcomes new regional finance officer, research associate



Sharon Kabahuma Kanyamunyu, Regional Finance Officer – East & Southern Africa

Sharon, who hails from Uganda, is Fellow of the Association of Chartered Certified

Accountants with 10 years experience: 4 years as an external auditor at Ernst & Young, 2 years as a Country & Regional Internal Auditor for Coca-Cola Sabco, and 4 years at Celtel/Zain Uganda initially as an Internal Audit Manager and then as Finance Manager, a position she held just before joining IITA.

She is passionate about professionalism and looks forward to contributing positively at IITA. She is married and has five children – three boys and two girls.



Elisha BG William, Research Associate (Agricultural Economics), IITA-Tanzania

Elisha William, a Tanzanian, has an Msc in Agricultural Economics and a Bsc Agricultural

Economics and Agribusiness both from Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA),

Morogoro, Tanzania. He also has a Diploma in Education from Monduli Teachers' College in Arusha.

William has over 20 years of experience as an education officer and 2 years as a research officer. Before joining IITA, William was with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives based in Dodoma.

He is married with four children.

Energy conservation tips:

Power down computers, monitors, and peripherals when not in use; and make use of natural light wherever possible.

Nigeria taps IITA expertise on crop pest management



Participants of the 2010 National Validation Seminar on the Nationwide Crop Pest Survey.

Maria Ayodele, who represented IITA's Deputy-Director General-R4D Paula Bramel, said the institute was glad to be part of the event which would further increase Nigeria's capacity to export and also guarantee food security.

The Nigerian government is tapping IITA's expertise in the management of crop pests as part of efforts to boost the country's food production and to step up exports of agricultural commodities.

In the renewed efforts, IITA is leading a pack of national partners in a pest survey program on four crops - pineapple, sesame, rice, and sugarcane - across the country.

Nigeria's Minister for Agriculture & Water Resources, Sheik Ahmed Abdullah said the nationwide crop pests' survey was of immense benefit to the country.

"The crop pests' survey will provide the list of quarantine pests that will constitute the basis for the declaration of pest freedom in surveyed areas, thus paving the way for the export of agricultural products from such areas," said Abdullah, who was represented by DM Dauda during the pest workshop held in Minna, Niger State.

The workshop, tagged "2010 National Validation Seminar on the Nationwide Crop Pest Survey", was jointly organized by IITA, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture & Water Resources, and the Nigeria Agricultural Quarantine Service.

In his remarks, Mohammed Magaji, the Executive Director of the Nigeria Agricultural Quarantine Service said that one of the major requirements for export of plant and plant products was the establishment of pest-free areas.

"It has become imperative that a crop pest survey be conducted for the determination of the occurrence and spread of pests of some selected economic crops in the country."

According to him, the conduct of the survey is enable the country to review its plant import regulations and also conduct a pest risk analysis.

IITA Women's Group awards scholarships to 30 students

Thirty students received scholarships from the IITA Women's Group (WG) this year as part of the group's efforts to assist deserving children of IITA staff to obtain good quality education. The scholars received their certificates during the awarding ceremony held on 25 June at the Conference Center, IITA-Ibadan.

The WG scholarship started in 1993 with the aim of assisting the children of IITA staff on pay grades 1-6.

During the first year of the program, 10 students were given scholarships. Since then,

the WG scheme has awarded a total of 526 scholarships, a tremendous achievement.

The event was attended by the 30 awardees along with their families and members of the IITA Women's Group.

Dr Samson Adeleke of the IITA Clinic delivered the key note address, while the scholarship certificates were presented by Dr Dominique Dumet, Head of the Genetic Resources Unit, with Ms Monjama Sartie, Chair of the WG, and Ms B Ajayi.

This year, to encourage consistent high

performance, a bonus award was given to the top performing student in each age category. The top achievers were Abosede Alabi (JSS), Ayodeji Ajidele (SSS), and Christopher Tasié (PSS).

The IITA Women's Group Scholarship Committee extends its sincerest gratitude and thanks to all those who donated towards the scholarships and to those who assisted in organizing the awarding ceremony.



The 2010 WG scholars and members of the IITA Women's Group pose for a group photo after the awarding ceremony.