

## IITA trains beneficiaries of cassava chipping machines in Cameroon

Recipients of cassava chipping machines from 25 groups in Cameroon were, from Wednesday, trained on cassava processing and best maintenance practices by IITA.

The capacity building workshop was conducted by Busie Maziya-Dixon and Thierno Diallo. Ngue Bissa Thomas, National Coordinator, *Programme National de Developpement des Racines et Tubercules* (PNDRT), officially opened the activity.

Onadipe Peju, representing Busie Maziya-Dixon, IITA Crop Utilization Specialist, spoke on the various cassava-based products and processing options.

The introduction of the machines under the IFAD-funded project aims to reduce the drudgery often associated with traditional cassava processing and to improve the quality of cassava products.

Diallo said the processing machines had a processing capacity of between 120kg/hr and 200kg/hr as opposed to manual chipping of 5kg/hr.

The training emphasized on the effective use of the machinery, operational safety, and maintenance to ensure their durability.

Thomas earlier indicated that the postharvest machines would not only ease



Participants and facilitators of the training on cassava chipping machines held in Cameroon under the auspices of PNDRT pose for a group photo.

the process of chipping but also hasten the drying process.

He commended the IITA team for ensuring the timely implementation of the project.

According to the PNDRT Coordinator, the project is vital given the increase in cassava production in the rural areas with the introduction of improved varieties by IITA.

One of the beneficiaries, Mrs Mabona

Robert-Helen, who is also the President of the Common Initiative Group Begoul de Yambasa - a women's group - said the project was timely and that it would boost cassava production in the rural areas of Cameroon.

"We will certainly need more cassava roots to keep these machines running," she beamed.

## Swedish Ambassador at IITA-Ibadan



Swedish Ambassador Honorable Per Lindgärde (2nd from right) being briefed by DG Hartmann as Drs Lakshmi Menon, Paula Bramel, and Dave Watson look on.

Postharvest losses in Africa have opened a vista of opportunities for agro-processors willing to invest in the continent. These opportunities come at a time when crop improvement programs by IITA and partners are offering better varieties and increasing yield, thus expanding the role that the private sector could play in providing key solutions to such a challenge.

This was the statement made by IITA Director General Hartmann to Sweden's Ambassador to Nigeria, Honorable Per Lindgärde, during the latter's courtesy visit to IITA-Ibadan on Friday, 30 April.

Hartmann especially cited Sweden's longtime commitment and contributions to help IITA address postharvest losses and other agricultural challenges in Africa.

The DG also briefed the Ambassador on the institute's major programs and projects, highlighting the R4D approach.

Also on hand to welcome Lindgärde were other members of the General Directorate and some scientists.

The Swedish Ambassador, on his part, lauded IITA's contribution to agricultural development, poverty alleviation and wealth creation.

In his words: "I am impressed with what the institute is doing and it has a positive impact on agricultural development not only in Nigeria but also in Africa."

After the meeting, Lindgärde was given a tour of the Biotechnology Laboratory, the Genetic Resources Unit, Cassava Processing Unit, and the Forest and Plant Tree Nursery.

# Cameroon has more than doubled cassava yield, official says

Cameroonian farmers participating in the *Programme National de Developpement des Racines et Tubercules* (PNDRT) have more than doubled cassava yield, using improved cassava planting materials from IITA.

"From 10 tons per hectare, farmers are now harvesting from 25 to 30 tons," says Ngue Bissa Thomas, National Coordinator of PNDRT during the presentation of cassava chipping machines to beneficiaries in Cameroon (see main story).

Cassava production in Cameroon is currently estimated at 2.3 million tons, but Thomas said he expected the figure to be higher after a country review of crop statistics.

Cultivated mainly for its starchy roots and leaves as vegetable, most local varieties in Cameroon are susceptible to pests and diseases that cause substantial yield losses.

Using conventional breeding methods aided by cutting edge molecular tools, IITA has produced improved varieties with multiple resistances to diseases, pests, low cyanide content, short crop cycle, and high yield, and in some cases resistance to drought. Such improved varieties constitute environmentally sound and economically efficient options for combating pests and diseases.

Thomas added: "Our next challenge is processing and the creation of markets for cassava farmers and to avoid glut. In collaboration with IITA, we have developed 100 processing machines that we are giving to farmers today."

With a processing capacity of between 120kg/hr and 200kg/hr as opposed to manual chipping of 5kg/hr, the machines would make cassava processing in rural Cameroon less laborious and more efficient.

The PNDRT project, funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, involves 250 villages across Cameroon.

Local farmers say they have benefited from the project. Many are optimistic that the processing equipment would add value to cassava, create more marketing options, and make the crop more profitable.

Rachid Hanna, IITA Country Representative in Cameroon, said the chipping machines were developed by the Institute to reduce the bulk of cassava, extend its shelf life, and reduce transportation cost while adding value and creating markets.

He emphasized that cassava production in Cameroon, as in most other areas in the Congo Basin in Central Africa, relies heavily on family labor. He added that the equipment were affordable and are easily transportable.

## IITA-MARKETS launches Weed Control Businesses in Nigeria

In a bid to enhance profitable cassava production in southeast and southwest Nigeria, the Cassava Value Chain Project (IITA-MARKETS) has launched more than 30 Weed Control Group Businesses to provide cost-effective and timely services to farmers.

Weeds are pests that compete with cassava for nutrients, moisture, sunlight, and space, thereby reducing yield, quality, and profitable production.

Presently, on-farm weeds management accounts for more than 40% of the cost of growing cassava in Nigeria because traditional implements such as cutlasses and hoes are still being used.

Manual weed control is time consuming, and with dearth of labor in agriculture weeds have become a big problem in cassava production

To address this, IITA-MARKETS identified and trained more than 30 farmer groups (mainly youths) on the use of herbicides and modern implements for weed control in cassava farms.

This is envisioned to not only reduce related costs by over 50%, but it will also ensure that farm operations required for a reasonable profit are carried out on time.

The launch took place on the premises of the Weed Control Business Groups and attended by local government authorities and representatives of private agrochemical



*A farmer-participant of the recently launched Weed Control Group Business under the IITA-MARKETS project in Nigeria.*

companies such as Syngenta, Harvestfield, and Saro-Agro-Chemical.

During the event, the local government authorities assured the groups of moral and financial support to help ensure good business performance. On the other hand, the chemical companies promised a regular

supply of herbicides and farm implements to the established businesses. They also provided each Weed Control Group Business with one sprayer and promised continuous training for the groups. Products worth over a million Naira were purchased from the chemical companies.

### Announcements

#### **IITA Women's Group 2010 scholarship**

The IITA Women's Group is pleased to announce the annual scholarship competition for 2010. Applications are still being accepted from qualified candidates for scholarships in the following categories: (a) Junior secondary school; (b) Senior secondary school; (c) Polytechnic; and (d) University.

For criteria and other details of this year's scholarships, please contact any member of the IITA Women's Group or the Human Resources Office.

Interested parents with children in these categories may collect the forms from the Employee Services Unit of the Human Resources Office in Building 500.

**Completed forms should be returned to the Employee Services Unit on or before 14 May.**

Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

#### **Change in name**

This is to inform all concerned that former Ms Nwaude, Perpetual Uchekukwu of the Supply Chain Unit should now be addressed as Mrs Erewa, Perpetual Uchekukwu henceforth.