IITA
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IITA and ILRI explore more areas of collaboration

Two major CGIAR centers in Africa, IITA and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), will step up collaboration in tackling the challenge of hunger. The two centers intend to build synergies that would unleash the power of crop and livestock improvements to address poverty and malnutrition in Africa.

Discussions in this direction are ongoing with the Director General of ILRI, Dr Jimmy Smith visiting his counterpart, IITA DG, Dr Nteranya Sanginga in Ibadan.

At a dinner held in honor of Smith, Sanginga said he foresaw a closer partnership of the two institutes.

Sanginga reiterated that IITA alone could not solve all of Africa's problems, hence the need for partnership with institutes with similar vision as IITA.

Both institutes join forces in the past in bringing benefits to African farmers in projects such as 'Promoting Sustainable Agriculture in Borno' or PROSAB.

That project which was implemented in northern Nigeria helped raise incomes by 81 percent among participating households and also improved the nutrition of beneficiaries.

Let's join forces and help our beneficiaries. Sanginga (left) Smith (right)

Sanginga said "We need to work more closely to help farmers get benefits."

In his response, Smith said he envisioned IITA and ILRI harnessing their strengths for the betterment of farmers.

He said the presence of a 'crop and a livestock' research partnership in Africa provided an opportunity for the continent to mine.

ILRI is headquartered in Kenya with the mandate to improve the productivity of livestock while IITA has its headquarters in Nigeria with the mandate to improve sub-Saharan's major staples such as cassava, yam, maize, soybean, cowpea, cocoa, banana and plantain. Both institutes operate Africa wide, and have over the years signed an agreement to maintain offices on each other's campus.

ILRI's Country Representative in Nigeria, Dr Iheanacho Okike, said the collaboration between IITA and ILRI was a step in the right direction that would create a major impact in sub-Saharan Africa.

He noted that the discussion for greater partnership between the two institutes was at an opportune time when the CGIAR through its reform agenda is fostering greater collaboration among centers.

Smith was accompanied by his wife, Charmaine, and Dr Shirley Tarawali who is ILRI's Director of Institutional Planning.

'Let us join hands and build IITA together'

Sanginga (center) with wife, Charlotte (right) and Mrs. Toyin Oke during his address to IITA spouses in Ibadan

DG Dr Nteranya Sanginga on Friday sought the support of spouses of staff in building a stronger IITA.

The DG made the appeal during a lunch organized by his wife, Charlotte Sanginga, for spouses of staff in Ibadan.

The luncheon provided an opportunity for Charlotte to welcome spouses to her residence.

Noting that spouses are critical to the attainment of the institute's goals, Sanginga urged spouses to remain sources of encouragement to their husbands/wives so that they could be productive at work.

"Support your husbands/wives and encourage them…do not see IITA as a place for collecting salaries only… but see yourselves as stakeholders," he said.

Charlotte, Sanginga's wife, said the aim of the luncheon was to formally welcome the spouses to her residence, stressing that she sees them as friends.

"The meeting is for us to know each other… you are my friends and if I find myself in town, I may call on you and make a visit too…" she explained.

The spouses appreciated the efforts by Management in beautifying the campus and also rekindling staff morale.

Mrs. Okome who spoke on behalf of spouses of Senior Staff Association said, "We sincerely thank Dr. Sanginga and his wife for bringing happiness to our families. With the little time this administration took off, we noticed and felt the positive impact this has had on our families; we now see a new look and attitude among our spouses; the old unhappy/moody look was wiped off automatically as a result of the new style of administration."

The spouses also commended the renovation of the campus crèche and promised to support IITA in the fight against hunger and poverty.

"We are excited and happy over the renovation of the crèche because no mother will like to have her child in an untidy environment," said Mrs. Okechukwu.

The spouses also took advantage of the informal meeting to make requests, such as allowing them to visit the campus on weekends, revision of the IITA educational grant, restoration of the Christmas get-together which was a forum of meeting other staff members and families, and the provision of specially marked ID cards that could enable them have access on campus not as visitors but as part of this institute.

They also requested that the gathering should not be the last.

Partners closer to understanding the transmission of buruli ulcer to humans

Following the technical meeting held in Accra in November 2011 during which the Agro-eco-health systems thinking initiative for fighting Buruli Ulcer (BU) in wet agroecosystems was launched, IITA has moved this initiative a step ahead by organizing a second regional workshop held in March 28-30 in IITA-Benin. The objective of this second workshop was to harmonize protocols for research on BU transmission with more emphasis on the description of standard operational procedures (SOPs) for collecting soil, water, and other environmental samples for isolating the causative agent of BU, *Mycobacterium ulcerans* (Mu). This workshop is important as the BU-AgroEcoHealth group plans to start sets of field and laboratory activities for elucidating the mode(s) of transmission of Mu from the environment to humans.

This second workshop organized by IITA received technical and financial support from the World Health Organization (WHO), the Water for All Children organization (WAFAC), Pasteur institute of Cote d'Ivoire (IPC), ReBUILD, and the CSIR-Soil Research Institute Ghana. The workshop brought together 25 experts from Benin, Ghana, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, and Nigeria, with different and complementary profiles and backgrounds from medical, microbiology, hydrobiology, agriculture, soil, water, and social sciences providing an ideal platform for discussions and development of targeted SOPs. The following documents were elaborated during the workshop: (i) SOP on the collection, transportation and analysis of soil sample for isolating Mu, (ii) SOP on the collection, transportation, and analysis of water sample for Mu isolation, (iii) a guideline document for studying the relationship between humans and soil in relation to Mu potential modes of transmission and risk factors for BU transmission, and (iv) a guideline document for studying the relationship between humans and water in relation to Mu potential modes of transmission and risk factors for BU transmission. To capture contributions of scientists who could not make it to the workshop, a 2-hour video conference was organized.

Training participants in IITA-Benin

The opening speech was made by Dr. Manuele Tamo, Country Representative of IITA-Benin, who emphasized on the high costs for BU treatment, the stigmatization and social rejection associated with the disease, loss of educational opportunities for children, negative impact of the disease on agricultural productivity, and the impoverishment of families in several West and Central African communities. Following the opening speech, Dr Rousseau Djouaka, Coordinator of the AgroEcoHealth platform for fighting BU in West and Central Africa, highlighted the importance of the developed SOPs and guideline documents and explained how these documents could help the various research activities to understand the mode of transmission of Mu from the environment to humans.

The Agro-eco-health system thinking initiative for fighting BU in wet agroecosystems of West and Central Africa is coordinated by Dr Rousseau Djouaka of IITA-Benin (r.djouaka@cgiar.org).

IITA DDG Partnerships receives Oyo State Police Commissioner

Dashiell presents gift items to Mohammed

Oyo State Commissioner of Police, Mr Tambari Mohammed, on Thursday paid a courtesy call to IITA and was received by IITA DDG Partnerships and Capacity Building, Dr. Kenton Dashiell.

The visit reinforced stronger ties between IITA and the Police Force, with the Commissioner of Police promising to step up support, in terms of adequate security to IITA.

Welcoming the police commissioner and his delegation, Dashiell commended the Police Force for their support to the institute.

He explained that the institute's primary objective was the reduction of hunger and poverty through increase in agricultural productivity.

In his response, Mohammed gave kudos to IITA for its research over the years, noting that the benefits from IITA's work has benefited not only Nigeria but also Africa at large.

Former IITA Head of Biotech Unit, Dr. George Thottapilly, passes on

Former IITA Head of Biotech Unit, Dr. George Thottapilly, has passed away. Born on 22 April 1941, Thottapilly died on 23 April 2012 and was buried on 27 April in India.

He started his career with IITA as a Senior Virologist in October 1978 and was later made the Head of Biotechnology Research Unit based in Ibadan, Nigeria. Thottapilly was an extremely effective scientist with excellent work habits.

He was undoubtedly devoted, diligent; and an inquiring researcher during his time in IITA.

The IITA Bulletin is produced by the Communication Office. For comments and/or contributions, please email: Jeffrey T. Oliver (o.jeffrey@cgiar.org), Godwin Atser (g.atser@cgiar.org), or Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org).