

Board approves blueprint for IITA



Hartmann addressing staff during IITA Open Day held at Ibadan recently

The Board of Trustees has approved IITA's Ten Year Strategy, spelling out the road ahead for the Institute, says the Director-General Hartmann in his New Year message to staff.

The strategy, which comes into effect in 2011, is built on the successful approaches and concepts that members of staff have contributed over the years.

In the New Year message tagged, "Where

we are-Where we are going- and Thank You," Hartmann wished staff good health and a satisfying 2010 and also spoke on IITA's past and its future outlook.

He said the Institute ended 2009 at the top in terms of international publications with R4D efforts delivering spectacular results.

"In one program, cassava production was boosted by 12 million tons without a price drop and in another, black-eyed pea

(cowpea) varieties boosted farmer profits by fifty percent."

Hartmann said such outcomes were important to the Institute's supporters.

According to him, IITA also improved its services delivery, balanced its budget, and put many time-sapping tasks online, making the information usable to the whole Institute and the world.

Despite the achievement, he said a lot was still ahead, citing emerging crop diseases human population increases, changing market demands and galloping energy costs.

On the CGIAR reforms, the director general said the restructuring would phase out, in two to three years, the old "core" or "unrestricted funding" for centers. Funding of centers will be through 'mega' programs. Based on these developments, Hartmann said the Institute planned to increase the number of scientists and move more research upstream to be competitive with the mega programs.

He explained that these were not threatening times, but just different times.

In the future, he said the Institute was working towards creating an Agricultural Research Park for Africa, in partnership with the private sector. "This park would be based in Ibadan, Nigeria. It will not only boost scientific synergy and our profile, but also help us use facilities better."

He envisioned IITA to be 'limber', leaner, and more courageous but with more scientists and fewer administrative structures.

Irish Aid increases collaboration with universities and research centers to reduce global hunger

The Irish Minister of State for Overseas Development, Peter Power announced in a recent press release funding for collaborative research between Irish universities and international research centers to combat hunger.

Minister Power said: "This initiative represents an investment in research that will ultimately help to increase food production, improve diets, and reduce vulnerability to crop failure across the developing world." The Irish Aid funding provides €150,000 to support PhD research projects on plant breeding which will be

conducted at IITA Uganda and IITA Nigeria with the National University of Ireland, Galway, and University College Cork.

In addition, about €210,000 will be provided to each of the three international research centers (ICRISAT, IITA, and ILRI). Commenting on IITA, the Minister noted that "IITA is widely recognized as having had a significant impact. For example, improved drought-tolerant maize varieties which they developed have benefited more than 50 million people in sub-Saharan Africa, and translated to about US\$10 billion in net benefits. The majority of direct

beneficiaries are poor farmers."

Irish Aid is the Government's program for overseas development. For further information, visit <http://www.irishaid.gov.ie>



Yellow maize to receive support from Irish Aid

Help conserve electricity!

Before leaving your workplace at the end of the day, make sure that you have:

- (1) Powered off all unnecessary electrical office/ lab equipment;
- (2) Turned off air conditioners; and
- (3) Switched off all lights.

SS TF KKM project: Changing lives in the savannah

Despite the plethora of challenges facing the savannah region of West Africa, agricultural research is helping in transforming the lives of millions of resource poor farmers in those areas.

The deployment of improved seeds backed by the dissemination of innovative agricultural practices is helping in changing the fortunes of farmers in northern Nigeria—a savannah region where agriculture is the main source of livelihood—thanks to the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture and partners working on the Sudan Savanna Task Force of the Kano-Katsina-Maradi (SS TF KKM) Pilot Learning Site (PLS) of the Sub-Saharan Challenge Program.

Local farmers say the improved seeds have raised their incomes, improved health and agricultural productivity.

“My family is happy I am now a successful farmer. I can easily feed my family and send my children to school,” says Mohammed Mustapha, a farmer in Kunamawa village in Safana Local Government of Katsina State.

As a participant in the SS TF KKM PLS project, Mustapha has seen his yield double using the same plot of land but with improved varieties and agronomic practices.

“This was possible due to the training and also the improved seeds I acquired from the Sudan Savannah Task Force team that are working on the KKM project. Before I used to get two bags of cowpea from this field but in 2009, I harvested five bags which were more than double the initial amount,” he explains.

For Hajia Binta Garba, who heads a women farmer group in Bunkure Local Government Area of Kano State, the drought- and *Striga*-tolerant varieties are helping farmers in her



Mustapha harvesting cowpea. With him are two women offering assistance

group to overcome the negative effects of climatic change in the region.

She says the varieties which are either early-maturing or drought-tolerant have raised yield by more than 100 percent.

“I used to get one and half bags of cowpea but now I harvest nothing less than four bags on this field,” Garba says. Like Mustapha and Garba, several farmers in northern Nigeria are tapping the opportunities presented by improved seeds and agronomic practices to better their livelihoods.

Though rich in vast arable land, northern Nigeria is faced with myriad problems

that reduce agricultural productivity and keep farmers in poverty. These include the predominance of parasitic weeds, *Striga* and *Alectra*, and pests which lower yields of major cereals and legumes. Others are ineffective extension systems, poor soil fertility, poor crop management by resource-poor farmers, poor access to information, low access to animal feeds, dysfunctional market and postharvest losses. Besides, the prevailing negative effect of climatic change occasioned by unpredictable bouts of droughts and floods has dire consequences on the food security in the region.

The SS TF KKM project, which is funded by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa, (FARA) is seeking to mitigate these constraints and also to enhance marketing opportunities for farmers in the region.

Partners in the project include the Katsina State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), Institute of Agricultural Research, Zaria; National Agricultural Extension Research and Liaison Services, National Animal Production Research Institute, Bayero University Kano, Local Government Councils and input and output dealers.

Alpha Kamara, IITA-Savanna System Agronomist who is the Sudan Savannah Taskforce Leader, says the dissemination of the solutions is helping in boosting crops' productivity and generating wealth in the drought-prone regions of the savannas.

According to him, the team is tackling the limitations via innovation platforms in a holistic manner.



Garba, a women leader, taking care of the group's cowpea farm

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