



aflasafe™ excites Nigeria's private sector

Representatives of local investors under the aegis of the Nigeria Economic Summit Group and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Business Group have expressed interest in the biocontrol of aflatoxins using aflasafe™. A A Roberts, Executive Secretary/Chief Executive Officer, NEPAD Business Group-Nigeria and Endurance Uhumuavbi, NESG Representative, commended the technology and promised to sell the business opportunity to their members with a view to finding an investor.

The interest from the Nigerian private sector groups came during a UNIDO-convened meeting with the private sector in Lagos that offered IITA Plant Pathologist Ranajit Bandyopadhyay and CGIAR SP-IPM Coordinator Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon the opportunity to make a presentation on aflatoxins in Africa.

Bandyopadhyay noted that aflatoxin contamination in grains was a pain to human health and trade but added that the development of aflasafe™ to contain the contamination of grains was good news to farmers.

According to him, "aflasafe™ works based on the principle of competitive exclusion."

On the economics of the product, Bandyopadhyay said the technology



L-R (Standing): Bandyopadhyay (IITA), Hoeschle-Zeledon (IITA), and Masayoshi Matsushita (UNIDO Representative in Nigeria) exchanging notes during a meeting with the private sector in Lagos

was a viable investment option that the private sector could tap into.

With an initial investment outlay of between \$1-\$3 million in an aflasafe™ manufacturing plant, investors are likely to reap about N20 million annually, according to Bandyopadhyay's projections.

Stakeholders from the poultry industry who attended the meeting affirmed that aflatoxin-contaminated grains that were used in livestock feeds were hurting the industry in Nigeria by reducing productivity and in some cases resulting

in mortality of birds.

"This is a major problem that is unknown to many farmers. When it attacks, some farmers assume that it is a 'spiritual attack'," said Dotun Oladele, a Senior Laboratory Technology Manager with Animal Care Consults.

"Once there is aflatoxicosis, egg production drops and mortality of birds follows," he added.

Produced by the fungus *Aspergillus flavus*, this invisible toxin obstruct exports of sub-Saharan African maize and peanuts to Europe and America.

IITA and AFD explore areas of possible collaboration



Asiedu (second from left) makes a presentation to the French Development Agency led by project attache Laurent Pacoud (rightmost)

IITA and the French Development Agency (AFD) held talks and explored areas of possible collaboration that would boost food production and reduce poverty in Africa.

During the AFD visit to IITA, Robert Asiedu, IITA Director, gave an overview of IITA's activities.

He cited the Cassava Enterprise Development Project as one of the many

projects that showed a big impact in sub-Saharan Africa.

The French delegation, led by Laurent Pacoud, Project Attaché, also listened to presentations made by scientists including, Gbasse Tarawali, Bussie Maziya-Dixon and Ranajit Bandyopadhyay.

The team also visited the cassava processing unit and the Genetic Resources Center and was received by GRC Head Dominique Dumet.

The team likewise met with David Watson, IITA Director, Project Development and Management.

Pacoud commended IITA's work, stressing that the AFD considers IITA as a strategic stakeholder in agricultural development in SSA.

He and his team also sought information on the status of Nigeria's agricultural development.

According to him, the information will help the Agency in designing development interventions for Nigeria.

Another success story: Farmers reap rewards from cassava

Harrings Chirwo, 52 years old, is a contented man. He is able to meet the basic needs of his family of five children, three nephews, and a niece. He is also comfortably able to pay their school fees.

However, this was not the case a few years ago when he used to rely on other crops for his food and income. Then, his farm did not yield enough to feed his large family from one harvest season to another. They often had to work as casual laborers to raise money to buy food.

Farmer Chirwo, who comes from Sulungwe village, Kasungu district in Malawi, is a beneficiary of a food security project of Plan-Malawi and the IITA-implemented Southern Africa Root Crops Research Network (IITA/SARRNET). The former provided the funds for the project while the latter provided technical expertise.

The project mobilized farmers into groups to ease delivery of extension services and distribution of planting material. Chirwo is a member of Kaluluma B Cassava Production Club established in the 2005/06 season.

When he joined the club in December 2005, he was given 13 bundles of cassava stems to multiply on 0.1 ha of land. After the first growing season, he paid back 26



Farmers harvesting a cassava field for leaves, thanks to IITA varieties

stems to the club, based on the agreement, and sold the roots.

In subsequent years he gradually expanded his cassava field to the current 5 ha. This year, 2010, Chirwo made US\$1,700 from the sale of cassava roots and planting material! He then bought 12 bags of fertilizer for his 1.4 ha of maize, paid the school fees for his secondary school child, bought two goats and 16 chickens, and clothes and bedding for his family. He also hired casual laborers for ridging and planting of a new cassava field.

Announcement

The IITA Intranet is being revamped. Please participate in the survey and use this opportunity to tell us about your problems with the current Intranet and what you would like to see in the new Intranet. The Communication Office will take responses until 18 June 2010. The link to the survey is:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/8BVPYBW>

... as UPoCA trains farmers on quality management and hygiene



Participants at an UPoCA training on cassava processing in Tanzania

IITA's Unleashing the Power of the Cassava in Africa (UPoCA) has conducted another training on quality management and hygiene for cassava products, such as chips and high quality cassava flour (HQCF).

The training is part of efforts aimed at achieving food security through improving the production, processing techniques, and quality of diverse cassava

products in five African countries.

During the opening session, Edward Kanju said that ensuring high quality and hygiene standards would enable the products derived from processed cassava to penetrate outside markets. He said the project aims at promoting the use of HQCF as a versatile raw material for which diverse markets had already been identified in pilot studies.

The training targeted farming groups, processors, and village extension workers from the eastern zone of Tanzania and was held 24-26 May. It was conducted by Nanam Tay Dziedzoave, the country manager for Cassava Adding Value in Africa (C: AVA) - Ghana, and Adebayo Abass from IITA-Tanzania.

The training covered all aspects of quality, safety standards, principles of good hygiene practices and the potential hazards and control measures associated with cassava processing.

The issue of product safety has been a major bottleneck, which has prohibited the growth of the small-scale processing entrepreneurs in east and central Africa. UPoCA aims to develop sustainable methods of improving cassava products through novel approaches such as fermentation techniques to reduce cyanide levels and to promote hygiene and quality management of products.

UPoCA is expected to develop value chains for HQCF in Ghana, Tanzania, Malawi, Nigeria, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sierra Leone. This will improve the livelihoods and incomes of at least 150,000 smallholder households as direct beneficiaries, including women and disadvantaged groups.