

Cassava Matters

Issue No. 014

31 August 2018

TAAT Cassava Compact adopts recommendations from IITA-CWMP to reach farmers at scale



Farmers during a farmers field day inspecting a demo of the IITA-CWMP

The Cassava Compact of the African Development Bank (AfDB)-funded Technologies for African Agriculture Transformation (AfDB-TAAT) is using the recommendations of the IITA Cassava Weed Management Project as part of its Good Agricultural Practices in cassava production. The IITA-CWMP recommendations which have been put in a toolkit known as the Six Steps to Weed Management in Cassava Production is helping farmers to more than double the national average of about 10 tons

per ha to more than 20 tons per ha.

Once the steps are carefully followed, farmers are guaranteed of bumper yield from cassava cultivation. The Six Steps to Weed Management in Cassava Production comprise recommendations based on a five-year research work on cassava covering areas such as agronomy—variety, tillage, and plant spacing, and the use of integrated weed control involving either of the following—mechanical and chemical weed control.

Dr Alfred Dixon, Project Leader, IITA-CWMP said the adoption of recommendations from the IITA-CWMP was a welcome decision.

“We are glad to share the good work and findings of the project with partners,” he added.

The Cassava Compact of the African Development Bank (AfDB) funded Technologies for African Agriculture Transformation (TAAT), plans to reach thousands of cassava farmers in Africa with best-bet technologies in cassava production to help narrow the productivity gap.

TAAT as simply called is a strategy of the AfDB - Feed Africa Program that is seeking to scale out proven technologies to farmers on the Continent.

In Nigeria, the Cassava Compact will reach 5000 cassava farmers in year one.

Cassava Compact Coordinator, Dr Adebayo Abass said the project will work with the IITA-CWMP project by adopting both its research findings and scaling out approach to reach thousands of farmers.

ACAI holds Training of Trainers to kick off DST validation

ACAI held a training of trainers for the Tanzanian development partners in August to kick off the validation of the ACAI decision support tools in the country. The training was organized to create a better understanding of the ACAI use cases in Tanzania, the process of effectively evaluating the decision support tools (DSTs) and teaching reliable means of collecting feedback. This was the first step towards the planned capacity building for the project partners to carry out the validation exercises.

IITA's senior Agronomist and ACAI coordinator for East Africa Dr. Veronica Uzokwe led the training; outlining the project approved

standard protocols to be used for site selection, layout of the fields to be monitored during the validation and inputs to be used in the trial fields.

The two-day event was held in Mtwara, the southern zone of Tanzania on 14th and 15th August, 2018 with 37 people in attendance. Participants drawn from organizations partnering with ACAI in Tanzania including CAVA-II, FJS Starch Development Company, MEDA and MINJINGU Fertilizer received practical training on using the current version of ACAI's DSTs and the methodology of how to train extension agents and farmers to implement the validation exercises.

ACAI is targeting more than 500



Veronica Uzokwe (left) on the field with trainees

farmers in Tanzania for the validation of the DSTs using 40 extension agents pooled from the network of development partners. During the validation, farmers will run a side by side
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IITA-CWMP and Bestacor Enterprises train 200 farmers on weed management in Benue

The IITA-CWMP and Bestacor Enterprises have trained 200 farmers in Benue State on Six Steps to Cassava Weed Management.

The training was organized by Bestacor Enterprise on 17 August in Gboko, and IITA-CWMP was invited to facilitate the meeting.

Bestacor Enterprise is a for-profit organization that is involved in agro-services with about 12,000 members across Benue State.

Ms. Becky Usugh, Managing Director of Bestacor got in touch with IITA-CWMP via Facebook after her farmers suffered losses from weeds in cassava production. Thereafter, a date was fixed for the training on weed management.

After the training, participants were excited over the novel techniques being used by the IITA-CWMP to address weeds in cassava farming systems.

The training in Gboko was facilitated by Godwin Atser, IITA Communication & Knowledge Exchange Expert; and Dr Mary



Participants at the training organised by IITA-CWMP and Bestacor in Benue

Agada, an Agro-Ecological Zone Scientist based at the University of Agriculture Makurdi.

Ms. Usugh commended the quality of training and promised to work

more with IITA-CWMP to scale out the recommendations to other farmers. Both parties agreed to work together in the coming days to train more farmers.

ACAI holds Training of Trainers to kick off DST validation

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side comparative cropping of their normal cassava farming practices against a plot within their fields where ACAI recommendations will be applied based on the tool that is applicable.

The project is running validation trials in the farmer's fields for the Scheduled Planting Recommendation decision support tool (SPT), Site Specific Fertilizer

Recommendation decision support tool (FR) and the Intercropping recommendation decision support tool.

Each of the partners is expected to carry out step down trainings in their respective extension networks and are tasked to monitor the extension agents they will have trained to ensure a successful implementation

of the validation process for the DSTs.

Dr Desudedit Peter Mlay from the Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute, TARI, led the discussions that drew a schedule of planned activities starting from the onset of the new planting season in September.

Each partner is responsible for coordinating their extension agent network, to communicate to them the expectations from the project and maintain a close relationship with the farmers under their scope. ACAI has also developed an incentivized trial monitoring and data collection system that encourages spirited involvement of EAs and lead farmers, reward their efforts and appreciate their contribution to the project.

The project is carrying out validation exercises to test the version one of the decision support tools that it has been developing. The validation kicked off in Nigeria early 2018 with similar trainings followed by step-down trainings at state and partner levels.

Results and feedback from the validation exercises will be incorporated into further development and improvement of the second version of the decision support tools to improve their prediction and recommendation.



Participants at the training organised by ACAI

IITA-CWMP and CRS link cassava seed entrepreneurs to buyers in the framework of BASICS



Godwin (2nd from left) interacting with officials of Taraba state

IITA-CWMP collaborated with the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) by providing a link for sale of cassava stems being produced by the Village Seed Entrepreneurs working under the BASICS project.

The VSEs are farmers who are farming and trading in cassava seeds, thereby

helping farmers across Nigeria to have access to improved planting materials.

Through interactions with the IITA-CWMP on weed control in cassava production, Dr Alfred Dixon, IITA-CWMP Project Leader was

approached by the government of Taraba state to help get improved certified cassava stems.

The IITA-CWMP team linked the government of Taraba to the CRS/ BASICS team who then contacted the VSEs for aggregation of the improved certified stems.

One of the VSEs in Benue, Mrs Ngufan Chiichii said they were excited over the sales of cassava stems this year.

“We currently don’t have stems because everything has been bought,” she said.

The certified variety procured by the state was the popular TME 419, which has high dry matter and is good for gari and high-quality cassava flour.

Project Director for BASICS, Hemant Nitturkar and CRS team leader, Emmanuel Azaino commended the collaboration between IITA-CWMP and BASICS and they called on other projects to emulate the partnership.

IITA-CWMP establishes 80 demos in four states in Nigeria ...Trains 10,000 farmers in 2018



One of the 2018 demo plots of IITA CWMP

The IITA-CWMP has established 80 demos this year (2018) across Abia, Benue, Ogun and Oyo state to showcase best-bet good agronomic and weed control practices to stimulate adoption by farmers. The demos are split equally across the four states — Abia, Benue, Ogun and Oyo. The demos were implemented using the Six Steps to Cassava Weed Management toolkit in both intercrop and sole cassava.

The toolkit, which was developed by the IITA-CWMP offers farmers a step-by-step approach on how to grow cassava with less troubles from weeds. Farmers using the toolkit have seen their cassava yield more than double the national average of about 10 tons per ha.

Closely linked to the demos is the training of 10,000 farmers in local communities and the organization

of farmers field days.

Farmers across the states are excited over the demos and the new knowledge and are learning how to use the toolkit to address the challenge of weeds on their farms, which is a major cost factor in cassava cultivation taking up to 80 percent of labour cost of cassava production on a hectare.

Besides, weeds are a big pain to the back of African women farmers who spend up to 500 hours per annum stooping to clear weeds from cassava farms.

The Principal Investigator, IITA-CWMP, Prof Friday Ekeleme said the adoption of the Six Steps to Cassava Weed Management toolkit would change the narrative of cassava in Africa.

Though a strategic crop and a staple in Africa, cassava farmers on the Continent have suffered from low yield. One of the major drivers of poor yield is poor weed control, which hurts farmers’ health and incomes. In the last 5 years, the IITA- CWMP has developed research solutions to control weeds, offering farmers a new lease of life.

North East: IITA and AfDB to help Taraba transform cassava in the framework of TAAT



Godwin (right) representing the IITA DG, and Cassava Compact Leader, Dr Adebayo Abass at the inauguration of Cassava Compact in Taraba

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) will work closely with the Taraba State Government to transform cassava in the framework of the African Development Bank-funded Technologies for African Agriculture Transformation (TAAT) program.

The decision was part of a two-day visit to Taraba state, which witnessed the inauguration of the Cassava Compact—a component of the TAAT, training of extension agents, sites selection, and validation

for the establishment of cassava demonstration plots.

Dr Nteranya Sanginga, IITA Director General, said the inauguration of the Cassava Compact of the TAAT in Taraba would open the door for scaling of new innovations to cassava growers in the state and the north east region of Nigeria.

Dr Sanginga, who was represented by Godwin Atser, IITA Communication & Knowledge Exchange Expert, said the

transformation of cassava in Taraba State offers tremendous opportunities in food security and job creation.

“We hope that this program will contribute to reducing the food import bill to Africa of about \$35bn per year,” he added.

The move to invest more in north east Nigeria comes at a time when IITA received the 2018 Africa Food Prize for its efforts in transforming agriculture on the Continent.

The Governor of Taraba State, Mr Darius Ishaku commended IITA and AfDB for selecting Taraba state as part of the TAAT-Cassava Compact program, adding that the program would amplify the efforts of the state government in cassava transformation and revitalise agricultural activities in the state.

“While we remain grateful to AfDB and IITA for the kind gesture and honour done to the state, I wish to also pledge that Taraba State Government will do its best to ensure the success of the program in the State,” Governor Ishaku, who was represented by the Secretary to the State Government, Mr Anthony Jellason said.

ACAI and IITA CWMP organize field days



ACAI farmers field day

ACAI development partner in Anambra state in Nigeria, Sasakawa Africa Association (SG2000) organized farmers’ field days to showcase results from ACAI’s research and validation trials within three local governments between July and August 2018.



Prof Steve Weller (2nd from right) during a field visit to IITA-CWMP demo

Similarly, IITA-CWMP and partners are holding farmer field days across Abia, Benue, Ogun and Oyo state. The IITA-CWMP demos are showcasing the effectiveness of using the Six Steps to Cassava Weed Management with fields

devoid of weeds. The demos are demonstrating the benefit of good weed control in the context of improved cassava varieties, with agronomic practices such as tillage, fertilizer, appropriate spacing, and cassava/maize intercrop.