

**Communique issued at the Meeting with Commissioners of Agriculture, Permanent Secretaries of Agriculture and Program Managers of Agricultural Development Programs (ADPs) with the theme, “Digital Tools: Disruptive innovations in cassava/maize farming systems.”**

**Venue: Conference Center, IITA**

**Date: 2 December 2019**

The meeting on “**Digital Tools: Disruptive innovations in cassava/maize farming systems**” was organized in response to the low agricultural productivity, weak extension system in Nigeria and the lack of knowledge and appreciation of the digital tools available in the farming ecosystem. The overarching aim was to share the digital tools developed by IITA Projects (African Cassava Agronomy Initiative, Cassava Seeds System (BASICS), Cassava Weed Management Project and IITA Communication) with commissioners of agriculture, permanent secretaries, and other state actors for dissemination in their various states to empower the extension system and farmers. Digital tools shared included videos on the *Six Steps to Cassava Weed Management & Best Planting Practices* that can be played on mini-rechargeable projectors, IITA Herbicides Calculator, Akilimo, radio programs in English and local languages, cassava online electronic-market hosted on *Cassava Matters* website, Viamo 3-2-1 service on Airtel, Seed Tracker, and IITA News App. Through this approach, states across Nigeria will have access to improved agronomy recommendations and be able to increase their agricultural productivity (especially for maize and cassava) and ultimately the incomes of farmers. The meeting also took advantage of the presence of policymakers to discuss and reflect on the importation, use and planned ban of paraquat in Nigeria. About 50 persons participated in the meeting including commissioners of agriculture, Permanent Secretaries, Directors of Agriculture, Program Managers of Agricultural Development Programs (ADPs), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), IITA Scientists, the academia, agrochemical companies and the media.

The meeting ended with the following resolutions and recommendations:

1. The role of IITA in piloting digital tools in agriculture and pioneering innovations in Africa was appreciated. Participants also commended the results of the work done by the Cassava Weed Management Project and the ongoing research by the African Cassava Agronomy Initiative (ACAI).
2. It was agreed that the public extension through the ADPs is still relevant and important for technology transfer and cannot be replaced with other extension approaches. However, digital extension has a significant role to address the weaknesses in the public extension system/approach.
3. Participating states expressed readiness to adopt some of the digital tools (for instance radio programs and videos) and to raise awareness in their respective zones about the digital tools available in the ecosystem. For instance, Delta State requested ACAI’s support on the use of videos.

4. Awareness and use of available digital tools in agriculture is low. Joint efforts involving both the public and private sector are therefore needed to address these limitations.
5. In the last 5 years, the IITA Cassava Weed Management Project developed integrated weed control methods that are helping farmers to double the productivity of cassava and maize. These recommendations are being scaled out to farmers through a variety of digital platforms in the framework of the African Cassava Agronomy Initiative (ACAI). To ensure up-scaling and sustainability, advocacy for government collaboration/participation (buy-in) is important. ACAI should intensify advocacy through regional platforms such as the Governors Forum and Development Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN) Commission.
6. IITA through ACAI should also work towards making presentations of the result/findings and recommendations to interested state governors. (that have interest in agriculture.)
7. Participants commended the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) for its efforts on the ban on the use of Paraquat in Nigeria. Given the availability (In the light) of new, safer and environmentally friendly herbicide alternatives to Paraquat in the market, the meeting urged for speedy conclusion (completion) of the process to ban Paraquat to protect (safeguard) the health of resource-poor farmers, (and) the general public and the environment (in general).

#### **Participants List:**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>NAMES</b>	<b>DESIGNATION/LOCATION</b>
1	Hon. Adegboyega Adefarati	Commissioner for Agric, Ondo State
2	Hon. Folorunsho Olabode	Commissioner for Agric, Ekiti State
3	Fadekemi Akande	Programme Manager, Oyo State ADP
4	Ben Onuze	Director, Technical Services, Enugu State
5	Anthony Mamman	Programme Manager, Taraba State ADP
6	Ben Agamah	Programme Manager, Delta State ADP
7	Yakubu Oladele	Programme Manager, Ekiti State ADP
8	Suleman Rijau	Programme Manager, Niger State ADP
9	Taiwo Ayansanwo	Programme Manager, Ogun State ADP
10	Adeniyani Babashola	Programme Manager, Ondo State ADP
11	Kehinde Bamigbola	Director of Extension Service, Osun State
12	Oluwatosin Oni	Catholic Relief Services, Abuja
13	Abegunde Ebenezer	Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Ekiti State
14	Sanni Boluwaduro	Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Ondo State.
15	Johnson Ekpere	Independent Consultant
16	Joseph Kwaghdega	Harvest FM-Benue State

17	Abimbola Akeem Olajide	SYNGENTA
18	Lateef Sanni	President, The International Society For Tropical Root Crops-Africa Branch (ISTRC-AB)
19	Philomena Okoh	Ebonyi South ADP
20	Victor Atilola	MD/CEO ADYINK
21	Seun Akinola	Splash FM, Oyo State
22	Rasheed Adegbola	Amuludun FM, Oyo State
23	Olatoye Abiodun	Oyo ADP
24	Ahmed Mansur Bello	BAYER
25	Adeyemi Adeyemo	BAYER
26	Ayodele Kayode	BAYER
27	Philomena Okoh	Ebonyi State ADP
28	Moses Dafiaghor	Technical Manager, SARO
29	Patrick Ohaji	SARO
30	Olaitan J. Alloh	Kingsapple Consultant
<b>IITA Representatives</b>		
31	Alfred Dixon	Director, Development and Delivery, IITA
32	Friday Ekeleme	Principal Investigator, Cassava Weed Management Supplement.
33	Christine Kreye	ACAI Project Coordinator, IITA HQ
34	Godwin Atser	Digital Extension & Advisory Services Specialist, IITA
35	Wilson Igbaifua	IITA Farm Manager
36	Peter Iluebbey	International Trials Manager
37	Elohor M. Diebiru-Ojo	Seed Specialist
38	Peter Kolawole	Head, Mechanization
39	Frederick Schreurs	CEO, BIP
40	Victor Saleh	Communication Executive, Go Seed
41	Ezinne Ibe	Administrator
42	Abioye Oyewale	ACAF