

At R4D Week, Dr Dashiell thumbs up IITA-CWMP for research and delivery



Dr Kenton Dashiell addressing IITA Board members and researchers during the 2017 R4D Week in Ibadan

In a 30-minute presentation to more than 300 researchers including members of the Board of Trustees of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Dr Kenton Dashiell acknowledged the efficient mechanism of the IITA-managed Cassava Weed Management Project (IITA-CWMP) in the core areas of partnership creation, research, and dissemination of innovations to farmers.

Dr Dashiell's presentation, which focused on IITA's Partnership for Delivery strategy, highlighted IITA's renewed commitment to impact on farm levels and how the Institute

is responding to Africa's agricultural realities in the context of food security and wealth creation.

He noted that IITA's scaling out approaches were based on excellent research at IITA and highlighted the role of partners as a critical component to the research and delivery continuum.

Other projects which featured in the presentation were the Ag Results project on the control of aflatoxins, N2Africa, the IITA Business Incubation Platform, and the IITA Youth Agri-Business program.

The IITA Cassava Weed Management Project, which began in 2014, has five components—three focusing on research and two on delivery and effective project management. All these components are integrated in a research-for-development model.

Three and a half years down the line, the project has developed an integrated weed control package that is now being disseminated to farmers at scale using diverse platforms such as traditional and social media, on-farm demonstration, extension agents, and spray service providers.

The integrated weed management technology is today showing farmers the best approaches to control weeds in cassava farming systems, making farming cassava less burdensome, and increasing yields.

The project intends to reach at least 125,000 farmers in its lifecycle of 5 years.

Dr Dashiell who oversees a portfolio of projects said the vision of the Partnerships for Delivery Directorate was to ensure that the excellent research being generated is delivered at scale, support policy dialogues, and promote youth and private sector entrepreneurship.

Yield from trial plots is changing farmers attitude

Ritu Maanzi, from Kisamwene in Butiama provided his land for the ACAI Nutrient Omission Trial (NOT) during the 2017 cropping season. This was the first time he had cassava in his farm after more than a 5-year hiatus due to what he termed a fruitless endeavour with cassava in the past.

When the ACAI team from the Lake Zone visited to harvest the trial plots, the yield from some of the treatments did not escape his attention.

"The treatments occupied a small part of my farm, but the yield from the plots is far much more than any previous harvest I have gotten from this land," Manzi said.

The 46-year-old father of five was swamped with orders and requests for planting materials from his farm by his neighbours.

The curious fellow farmers engaged ACAI team at the site to get more information on how to improve cassava farming.

In Butiama and Serengeti areas of the Lake Zone in Tanzania, cassava root yield spiked to as much as 17 roots per plant with an estimated average yield of between 25-30 t/ha. This was especially in NPK treatments witnessed across all clusters in the region.

Cassava yields from ACAI field trials have debunked doubts about how cassava would perform in response to fertilizer application. The crop performance and yields from treatments in trials that ran during the 2017 cropping season have been self-evident on how the root crop performed under different growth conditions and agronomic practices.



A happy farmer with cassava, thanks to ACAI

...Continue on Page 3

Stakeholders re-echo weed menace at Zero Hunger Forum

The challenge of weeds against Nigeria's agricultural transformation was re-echoed at the October meeting of the Nigeria Zero Hunger Forum held in Ebonyi State, southeast Nigeria.

Ebonyi State Governor, David Umahi, in listing the challenges facing the agricultural development of the State, noted that weeds were the most notorious constraint limiting agriculture development in the State.

Worse still, the adulteration of herbicides is not helping matters and undermining efforts by resource-poor farmers to raise their productivity.

Expressing concerns over the issue, stakeholders unanimously issued a communique calling on the Federal Government to step up the regulation of herbicides and input market as it was taking a negative toll on agricultural productivity.

They worried that the uncontrolled influx of adulterated herbicides in the Nigerian market further jeopardizes the gains made so far in transforming agriculture.

Since the declaration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the Nigerian Government has expressed commitment to achieving all the SDGs by

2030.

Nigeria's former president Olusegun Obasanjo has initiated and is leading efforts to help the country to achieve SDG 2 known as Zero Hunger.

The former president, with the support of IITA, the World Food Program, and the African Development Bank (AfDB), has created a forum comprising six pilot states that are desiring to hit the target even earlier.

The meeting in Ebonyi, which attracted about 500 persons in both public and private sectors, is the second after the initial one in Benue state where stakeholders reviewed what participating states are doing to achieve zero hunger.

Governor Umahi and several other stakeholders said that once the problem of weeds is addressed, farmers would have a boom in harvest.

This aspiration can only be achieved using herbicides as labor dries up in local communities, no thanks to rural-urban migration.

With cassava featuring as a priority crop in Ebonyi and Benue states, Dr Alfred Dixon, Project Leader for the Cassava Weed Management Project, said the project could provide innovations to help the state to tackle the weed challenge.

"Our innovation in cassava weed management can help states with cassava as a priority crop to tackle weeds in the farms,"



All eyes on Dr Nteranya Sanginga (arrowed) as he shed light on agricultural issues during a field tour in Ebonyi, organised by the Nigeria Zero Hunger Forum

ACAI and development partners discuss

Between 14th and 27th November, ACAI held two meetings with development partners in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Ibadan, Nigeria to review the collaboration between the project and the partners, and to agree on short and long-term plans for the upcoming ACAI activities.

The meetings come ahead of the annual review meeting slated for the second week of December in Mwanza, Tanzania. The discussion between ACAI's core team and the partners focused on the role that the development partners have to play especially as the project enters its third year of implementation that is earmarked for validation and dissemination of ACAI's decision support tools.

The ACAI project demand driven model is based on the needs identified by development partners as priorities in the cassava value chain. In this respect, ACAI's partners in Nigeria and Tanzania are drawn from fertilizer manufacturing, cassava processing and marketing, as well as organizations that provide solutions to cassava growers.

In Nigeria, ACAI is working with Notore, SG2000, OYSCGA, 2SCALE and PSALTRY. In Tanzania, the development partners are Minjingu, MEDA, CAVA-II, FCI and FJS. ACAI Use Cases are specific to the needs of each development partner as identified at the onset of the project.

From the discussions, partners will work together in synergy in their respective countries, and complement each other with their specific specializations. The discussions also centered on the upcoming annual meeting in Mwanza, where the partners are expected to present their feedback on the development of the decision support tools in respect to their organizations and commercial objectives.

The meeting in Tanzania was led by ACAI Senior Systems Agronomist, Dr Pieter Pypers. In Nigeria, the meeting was led by ACAI's Head of Partnership Liaison, Dr Veronica Ne Uzokwe, and Nigeria's Country Coordinator, Dr Christine Kreye.

During the Mwanza meeting, the development partners will evaluate ACAI's site specific fertilizer recommendation, decision support tool, as well as make joint presentations per country.

Development partners are critical links between the project decision support tools and innovations, and the end users as the last mile service provider based on their grassroots dissemination networks and understanding of their end user needs.

The Mwanza meeting is to provide the platform for both parties to discuss sustainability of the tools developed by the project, identify specific gaps, and review the project's critical path in respect to the original objectives.



ACAI core team in Nigeria meeting with development partners in Ibadan, Nigeria, in November

Weed control as a game changer to cassava production



Cassava maize intercrop field treated with a pre-emergence at 10 weeks after planting.

Research conducted by IITA Cassava Weed Management Project (IITA-CWMP) and partners has demonstrated that farmers can more than double cassava yield by switching to integrated weed management.

Presenting the work done by the IITA-CWMP at the 2017 IITA Annual Work Planning Meeting also known as Research for Development Week, Prof Friday Ekeleme explained that participating farmers in the project recorded an average cassava root yield of 22 to 27 t/ha across the four participating states of Nigeria. This figure is more than double the national average of 8 t/ha (FAO).

The presentation, "New Innovations in Cassava Weed Management" was authored

by Friday Ekeleme, Stefan Hauser, Alfred Dixon, David Chikoye, and Godwin Atser.

Prof Ekeleme explained that the 22-27 tons per ha was achieved using some of the identified safe and environmentally friendly herbicides. The herbicides were screened from 41 in 2014 to 11 in 2017.

Another component of the IITA-CWMP, which investigated best-bet agronomic practices in the control of weeds also found that tillage, and increasing the density of cassava by planting at 12,500 stands per ha using vigorous growing varieties such as TME 419 could also control weed pressure and help farmers to go above the national yield threshold of 8 t/ha.

A graph presented by Dr Nteranya

Sanginga, IITA Director General, confirmed the work by the team of researchers working under the IITA-CWMP where more than 85% of plots demonstrated that best-bet agronomic practices raised yields above the national average.

Dr Sanginga noted that such discoveries from the IITA-CWMP underscored the importance of IITA research to Africa's agricultural transformation.

He emphasized that IITA's focus on research and its people were two cardinal objectives that would not be compromised.

Dr Alfred Dixon, Project Leader IITA-CWMP, said the project would intensify efforts to ensure that farmers are aware of the weed management technologies in cassava as the team plans to establish more than 100 demonstration farms across Nigeria next year.

The demonstration plots will be backed by training of farmers and spray service providers in local communities.

The overall goal is to raise the productivity of cassava, improve incomes, enhance environmental sustainability, support better health for women and children, and create wealth.

Achieving these goals requires partnership and the IITA-CWMP is working the National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI) Umudike, the Universities of Agriculture in Makurdi and Abeokuta, and private and public extension service providers across Abia, Benue, Ogun, and Oyo states—representing key cassava growing agroecologies in Nigeria.

Yield from trial plots is changing farmers attitude

From page 1

The remarkable visual distinction of roots per plant and weight across different fertilizer treatments on trial plots have been indicative of how fertilizer influences cassava performance. This has not gone unnoticed by cassava farmers within ACAI project sites.

According to Dr Simon Jeremiah from the Lake Zone Agricultural Research and Development Institute, farmers around the ACAI trial plots have expressed interest in the treatments that promise the most yields with others offering their plots for trials in the new cropping season.

"Our trials have performed very well, even in places where we had heavy rains and we expected minimal results," Dr Jeremiah said.

ACAI is running trials that will provide data for modelling and development of six use cases: best planting practices, site specific fertilizer recommendation, best fertilizer blends for cassava growers, high starch content, best intercropping practices, and scheduled planting and harvesting.

The project runs trials applying different treatments on several trial plots against control plots within the cropping location.

From Nigeria, Dr Adeyemi Olojede from the National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI), Umudike, has witnessed a growing interest in the agronomic practices being carried out on ACAI trials even before the crops were harvested.

"The basal fertilizer application leads to almost 98% crop establishment, we have robust crops from a very good canopy that prevents weeds. When farmers see these plots they want to know how it is done to adopt the method," Dr Olojede explained.

The recorded yield from harvest is only one of the steps in the process of evaluating how cassava has performed under different treatments. Comprehensive results from the analyses will form the basis for recommendation of optimum fertilizer blends and best agronomic practices to get the most out of cassava cultivation. In 2018,

ACAI together with development partners from Nigeria and Tanzania will be working on validation trials and dissemination of the decision support tools to the end users.

Breaking!!!

1) The Global Cassava Partnerships for the 21st Century (GCP21) will hold its fourth International Cassava Conference

Date: June 11-15, 2018

Venue: Cotonou, Benin

Pre-registration opens on 1st September, 2017

Please check out <http://www.gcp21.org/beninconference/index.html> for all other information

2) ACAI holds Annual Review & Work Planning meeting

Date: 11 – 15 December 2017

Venue: Mwanza, Tanzania

IITA-CWMP explores partnership with radio stations

Impact Business Radio, the first business radio station in southwestern Nigeria, and the IITA Cassava Weed Management Project (IITA-CWMP) are discussing areas of possible collaboration with the view to scaling out the knowledge being generated by the project.

This follows similar discussion with the team of Joy FM—a private radio station based in Benue State, north-central Nigeria.

The plan is to work with the radio stations in a collaborative manner, making the media part of the IITA-CWMP, according to Godwin Atser, Communication and Knowledge Exchange Expert at IITA.

The Chairman of Impact Business Radio, Mr Owolabi Oladejo welcomed the partnership, stressing that research not shared is a disservice to humanity.

“We are excited over this opportunity to work with you and share the vast knowledge being generated, not just on the Cassava Weed Management Project but also research in general,” Oladejo added.

The plan is that Impact Business Radio and IITA will create a program on agriculture with the participation of IITA-CWMP staff. The educational program would focus on, but not be limited to, cassava production, processing, weed control, and processing.

Training is also part of the strategy where both teams would organize trainings for prospective farmers and practising farmers

to share new knowledge and techniques on improved management practices.

Other areas of interest are joint proposal writing and programs targeting the achievement of the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 2, i.e. Zero Hunger.

Dr Alfred Dixon, Project Leader, IITA CWMP, described the relationship with the radio stations as a move in the right direction.

“We need to leverage on the mileage of the radio stations to scale out our technologies,” he noted, stressing that arrangements are also in place to bring radio stations in Ogun State and Abia State on board.

In the developing world, radio is the most common means of sharing information in

most rural communities, as poor electricity and internet networks eliminate other media channels.

Farmers in rural communities listen to radio to get information on politics, government policies and programs, and other educational programs.

Although radio has been a source channel for social mobilization and behavioral change especially in the health sector, its effect on agricultural transformation in Nigeria leaves much to be desired owing to factors such as lack of technical expertise to man agricultural programs and, in some cases, failure of radio stations to create agriculture-specific programs.



Mr Owolabi Oladejo (2nd from right), Godwin Atser (3rd from right), Toye Ayankanmi of IITA (left) and other officials of Impact Business Radio

Colleagues bid Dr Jalloh farewell

Colleagues working at IITA and national partners have bade Dr Abdulai Jalloh farewell, as he resigns from the IITA-managed African Cassava Agronomy Initiative project.

Dr Jalloh joined ACAI in March 2016, as the Project Coordinator, and he provided the overall program management support. He helped to develop a strong, coherent and technical vision, and initiated innovative strategies across the project, as well as managed partnerships with the diverse project stakeholders.

During his time, Dr Jalloh led the consolidation of partnerships and the implementation of a critical research stage that would lay the foundation for the development of decision support tools based on the project's core objectives. At the time of his departure, the ACAI

team of scientists, strategic research and development partners have developed prototypes of the decision support tools, and the project is moving into the validation and formative dissemination stage.

Before joining ACAI, Dr Jalloh was a program manager with CORAF in charge of natural resource management-- a position he held for six and half years based in Dakar, Senegal.

Colleagues in IITA have continued to celebrate Dr Jalloh. Many described him as an honest, sincere, goal getter, hardworking, and team player.

In an interview, Dr Jalloh said he was happy with the progress that the ACAI project team had achieved within a very short time and believed the team he was leaving behind was on the right track to, not only achieve project objectives but also reach

bigger goals of improving livelihoods of cassava farmers and related value chains. He pledged to continue to follow and support the project team from his home country Sierra Leone, and wherever he may be in the future.



Dr Abdulai Jalloh

Glyphosate gets five-year extension in Europe

The European Union (EU) has voted to extend the license of the herbicide glyphosate for a further five years, ending a concerted push to have the product banned.

A new licence is now set to be drawn up prior to the old one expiring on 15

December.

Australian farmers breathed a collective sigh of relief at the news, after weeks of concern regarding the impact an EU ban on glyphosate would have on the Australian grain trade to Europe.

“It is good news for agriculture as a whole and good news for Australian farmers,” said AgForce grains section president, Wayne Newton.

Culled from Farmonline

This newsletter is produced by the Cassava Weed Management Project in collaboration with the ACAI and the BASICS projects. **Advisers:** Drs Bernard Vanlauwe, Alfred Dixon, Abdulai Jalloh, Hemant Nitturkar, and Friday Ekeleme.

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