

## **Inter-project linkages to create cassava enterprises for expanded markets and utilization<sup>1</sup>**

P. Ntawuruhunga, James, B., Okechukwu, R., Sanni, L., Sandifolo V., Tarawali, G., A. Abass; and Legg J. P.

### **Abstract**

The historical view of cassava as “a poor man’s crop” in Africa has long limited efforts to fully exploit its commercial potential as a raw material in the production of food, feed and industrial products. This situation is changing as a new set of multi-country projects now promote cassava-based agricultural businesses especially in rural areas. In the mid 1990s, IITA with its partners focused on cassava crop improvement research for development activities within two sub-regional networks: EARRNET in East Africa and SARRNET in Southern Africa. In recent years, multi-country projects, triggered mainly by the global food price crisis, have focused on using previously developed (e.g. by IITA’s Integrated Cassava Project) best bet production, processing and marketing approaches and innovations to ensure sustainable cassava value chains and markets. These initiatives have included the USAID funded UPoCA project and Livelihood projects, CFC funded Cassava Value Chain Projects and the BMGF funded GLCI and C:AVA projects. These projects and other special initiatives are in line with NEPAD’s CAADP (Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme) and Pan African Cassava Initiative (NPACI). Whilst the projects’ implementation approaches tend to focus on small holder rural beneficiaries with primary concerns on food security and income generation, private sector participation is slowly being incorporated to underpin sustainable development. Major challenges to overcome include inter-project linkages to facilitate sharing of experiences and lessons to assure complementarities between multi-country and multi-institution projects. This paper, based on UPoCA experiences, discusses the role of the projects in catalyzing cassava enterprise development in sub-Saharan Africa and proposes options for closer linkages between the different cassava investments to enable the poor to benefit significantly from emerging trade opportunities for cassava and value added cassava products.

Key words: Cassava, multi-country, complementarities

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