

## SARD-SC project trains partners to boost cassava production

In order to increase cassava production by at least 20 percent in its implementation areas, the SARD-SC cassava sub-project organized a three-day Training of Trainers (ToTs) program on cassava production in each of the three project implementing provinces of DR Congo: Bas Congo in Kinzau-Mvuete, Bas Fleuve District from 18 to 20 September 2013; Orientale in Kisangani, Tshopo District from 19 to 21 September 2013; and Sud-Kivu, Kalambo from 23 to 25 September 2013.

The principal themes of the training were:

- Rapid multiplication of healthy cassava planting materials.
- Cassava diseases and pest management (identification and control techniques).
- Cassava agronomic practices.

The 147 participants were drawn from NGOs (project partners) operating in the project implementation sites, such as the Ministry of Agriculture (SENASA, Crop Production and Protection Department),



Participants at the open ceremony of the ToTs held at IITA Kalambo.

the private sector, Universities, and the youth. Resource persons were from IITA, INERA, Governments, and Universities. The training started with a theoretical session which dealt with the basics of cassava planting and nurturing, followed by a technical session.

At Kashusha, participants were taught how to use tractors for ploughing efficiently and also practiced manual ridging.

For cassava to be grown in commercial quantity and with ease, the use of the chain saw to cut stem pieces for

planting was demonstrated to the participants. They were also taught how to select good planting materials and plant in a straight line. At the end of the training, farmers became knowledgeable on the causes of cassava low yield and how to increase its production. They promised to put into practice what they have learnt in order to take cassava production to a higher level in DR Congo.

Some of the participants commented on the training. Nathalie Munkonzo Hatumu (Student 1re ingeniora UCB)

*Continued on page 2*

## Project team meets on implementation issues



Dr Chrys Akem making a presentation at the meeting.

The SARD-SC Project management team members of the cassava and maize value chains held a joint meeting in the Musa Training Room of IITA on Sunday, 24 November 2013.

The meeting, which was presided over by Dr Chrys Akem, the Coordinator of the SARD-SC Project, was attended by members of project teams from different IITA Hubs. The Coordinator made a presentation on project matters and issues from the last Project Steering Committee meeting, the African Development Bank Supervision mission, and other sundry issues

*Continued on page 3*



AfDB



AfricaRice





# SARD-SC

Support to Agricultural Research for  
Development of Strategic Crops in Africa

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## SARD-SC project trains partners... Cont'd from page 1

said: "Farmers used to think that the main problem affecting cassava in DRC is poor soil and all they needed to solve it was the use of fertilizer, but this training has taught me a lot of things, about the need for good planting materials and other agronomic practices. I have a strong belief that if we follow all what we are being taught here, we will be able to export cassava to other countries."

Mali Godelive (Coordinatrice ISANDA) said: "We need to change our mentality and our method in order to improve cassava cultivation. Many of us thought you can put cassava anywhere and anyhow and it will grow. But we learned from this training that cassava has its own requirements and



Participants practicing manual ridging in a straight line.

cultivating cassava anyhow will give anyhow yield."

Cassava is a staple food for nearly a billion people in 105 countries. Despite growing demand and its high production potential, it has not received sufficient attention for sustainable and intensified production. It is still grown mainly in areas that have little or no access to improved varieties, fertilizer, and other



Using chain saw to cut cassava materials.



Participants selecting good quality cassava material for planting.

production inputs, by resource-poor, small-scale, farmers, many of them women, often cut off from marketing channels and agroprocessing businesses. The objective of the SARD-SC Project is to enhance food security and contribute to poverty reduction in target countries through the introduction of new varieties of cassava with high nutritional value. It also hopes to transform cassava into an African cash crop playing a more versatile role in development.

This project is being implemented in four countries: DR Congo, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Zambia.



Demonstrating the use of herbicide for weed control.



From left: Drs Marie Yomeni, Ibrahim Dugje, Sam Ajala, Issaka Amadou.

affecting project implementation. Other presentations were also made at the meeting by the Project Accountant, the Procurement Specialist, and the Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist.

Dr Akem also spoke about the Project Steering Committee meeting held in IITA in March and the one in ICARDA, Tunis in September, this year. He said the March meeting reviewed and approved the Project Work Plan Report (WPR) and procurement plan while concerns on IFPRI and issues of hiring a consultant for nutritional security were raised. From the Bank's supervision mission, Dr Akem said some of the issues the Bank wanted resolved are: start up of students recruitment, baseline studies, and slow staff recruitment.

Full Course Recovery (FCR) issues and establishing a mechanism for capturing of counterpart funding were yet to be finalized with the Bank among others. He also intimated the house that a Project Management Team retreat will be held early in 2014 to work on a Work Plan, Budget, and Procurement plans for the year.

He emphasized the role of project communication as the vehicle to sell the project's output through various communication media such as quarterly, newsletter, and annual publications, and press releases.

The Project Accountant, Mr Seyi Fashokun gave an update on the Project Finance and current status of budget and expenditure of the two commodities—Cassava and Maize, partnership agreements and expenditure guidelines, and SOE.

Though maize and cassava recorded low expenditure, he attributed it to the fact that most equipment and goods were not yet in place and that the maize cold store in Ibadan was under a force account. The situation, he promised would improve with the recent bid openings of cassava processing centers in Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Zambia.

Monitoring and Evaluation is an important part of the SARD-SC Project. Dr Issaka Amadou, SARD-SC Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, who gave an update on Project Monitoring and Evaluation said: "It is a continuous function to provide early indicators of progress or lack in the achievements of results." He contended that monitoring and evaluation is not only the responsibility of the project management team but also that of everybody in the project.

In his presentation, he said monitoring can be done through internal technical meetings, which requires the Project Management Team to organize regular technical meetings

(online or physically) to monitor progress in the implementation process. It can also be used to brainstorm and review progress made towards the attainment of SARD-SC's objectives and purpose (including some of the pre-conditions elements in country counterpart funding). Another advantage is that it gives timely information regarding what was planned and what actually occurred.

Mrs Yahaya Zulfawu, the Procurement Specialist, made a presentation on procurement and its guiding rules and principles. She advised all members of the team to be guided by the rules and regulations in the Project's Par for their procurement requests and needs.

The joint meeting of the two commodity value chains was a very interactive one and the various presentations elicited comments and questions from the members on a lot of issues concerning project implementation and other issues of general interest. Team building and networking over drinks and cocktails followed at I-House.



Drs Ousmane Coulibaly and Edward Kanju.



Group photograph of members of the SARD-SC project team.

# Cassava

## Engaging cassava actors through innovation platforms

The key to the successful implementation of the SARD-SC project is the involvement of value chain stakeholders through Innovation Platform (IPs). The idea was initiated in Zambia after consultations with key partners culminating in the formation of IPs at the targeted districts levels.

Held at Mansa and Kaoma, the participants at the workshop were cassava actors, project partners, and non-project partners, farmers and farmer organizations, national researchers and extension systems, small-scale millers, traders, farmer-seed producers, and district-level financial institutions.

The event started with a group discussion to intimate local partners with the project activities. In addition, the group discussions also emphasized the diversity of active Cassava value chain players at the district level.

The participants said they had noticed the involvement of different categories of partners, and the roles played by each stakeholder along the value chain was clarified as well. Prior to this meeting, the participants complained that the previous projects benefited a few people but they applauded the project coordination staff for using the value-chain approach. They noted both key constraints and major achievements along the value chain and this enabled them to identify opportunities on how to work together and achieve great success.

The government policy on Cassava was also addressed. The representatives of farmers and farmer organizations initiated a discussion on the relatively uncertain policy of the government on cassava development and pointed out that the lack of support for the commodity by policy makers is a major drawback to cassava cultivation.

Through this innovation platform workshop, each actor was able to identify his or her role and prioritize for action.



Group picture of stakeholders in Mansa district.

## Baseline survey conducted in four countries of SARD-SC project

A Baseline survey has been conducted in DR Congo, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Zambia, the four implementing countries of the SARD-SC project on cassava. The information was intended to facilitate project monitoring and impact assessment in terms of technology adoption, yields, incomes, food security, and poverty. The survey was designed in such a way that information on targeted households as well as control villages would be available before and after the project.

Three data collection tools were developed targeting: Household, Cassava Processors, and Cassava Yield Assessment. These tools were used to gather baseline data on:

- Basic farm and household characteristics.

- Cropping pattern, input use, production, and yields.
- Non-farm employment and incomes.
- Food and non-food consumption.
- Vulnerability and coping strategies.
- Gender roles in food production and marketing.
- Cassava varietal adoption and trait preferences.
- Cassava processing and marketing.

Results from this survey will help to set plans on the evidence gathered. It will also indicate the prevailing situation before the implementation of the project while establishing the frame of reference for subsequent work on which the evaluation will be based.



Processor.



Assessing farm yield.

# Maize

## Improving maize varieties in Mali



Abdoulaye Traore displaying the new seed on his farm.



Oumar Diakite displaying an improved maize variety.

Enhancing the competitiveness of maize is the goal of the maize component of the SARD-SC Project. Consequently, improving productivity and marketing are central to the operations of Innovation Platforms (IPs) already created to serve as a coalition point for all maize actors in the maize producing areas of the participating countries.

Improving productivity starts with the use of quality seeds of improved and better performing varieties. With the exception of Zambia that had benefited significantly from improved hybrid seed production since the early 1950s, most of the other participating countries still depend on the use of self-saved seeds for planting. For example, a study in

Mali revealed that 48% of farmers interviewed depend on last year's reserve, mainly grains from previous harvest, as seed.

This presents the Maize component with both an opportunity and a challenge. The challenge is to ensure that quality seeds are made available to and used by producers within each platform. Therefore, the IPs were supported to demonstrate their best performing varieties and engage in seed production of such varieties for farmers use.

For the demonstration of best performing varieties, a minimum of two kilograms of the identified maize seed was supplied to the farmers to plant as

an island within their normal maize farms for comparison. At harvest, a grid of 5 m × 5 m was imposed on both the supplied variety and the farmer's grown seed to estimate yield. Such demonstrations were conducted in several localities within each IP. Simultaneously with the demonstration, the supplied seeds were multiplied on a minimum of one hectare of land to generate seeds for the following year if farmers find the demonstrated varieties acceptable.

Engagement of stakeholders was also considered highly important in ensuring that technologies that have a chance of being adopted are demonstrated. Thus, stakeholder participation in each of the identified IPs in Mali was essential to the formulation action plans for the IPs.

This led to the identification of farmers' priorities and choice of varieties to demonstrate. Continuous interactions with participating farmers ensured that appropriate feedback was generated to aid the production of identified varieties for future use.

Seeds of one white and one yellow variety have been produced and a seed company, Faso Kaba, is already engaged in the production of seeds for use by the IPs.

SARD-SC Maize Project team members in Mali concluded that "the results for this first year showed that there is room for an impact making project". This is indeed what the project is poised to achieve.



IP meeting is being conducted to identify actors' training needs.



Group visit to Faso Kaba seed production field at Tamala Mali.

# Wheat

## Nigerian team leads with improved wheat varieties

The Nigerian team in the West Africa hub, has achieved a major stride in establishing, managing, and reporting on the several research and dissemination experiments and demonstration fields in the wheat value chain. A large number of wheat trials originating from the national program and international research Centers (ICARDA and CIMMYT) were conducted during the main planting season (November 2012–March 2013) in six wheat growing states within the country: Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, and Sokoto.

Nineteen entries from advanced yield trials performed exceptionally well, with yields of over 5 t/ha, and are therefore retained for larger scale regional testing in the forthcoming season (2013–2014). Four advanced breeding lines were tested in on-farm demonstration plots in two wheat growing states, Borno and Kano, with realized yields of over 6 t/ha.

In particular, the entries “Reyna-28” from ICARDA and “Norman” from CIMMYT, performed exceptionally well. These two entries are being assessed for their end-use and industrial quality through collaboration with the Federal Institute of Industrial Research Oshodi



Researchers at a wheat farm.

(FIIRO), Lagos, and will be promoted for larger scale on-farm demonstration in 2014, in anticipation of their release. They will be also shared with the Project teams in Mali, Mauritania, and Niger for on-farm testing and demonstration.

The Project team in Nigeria organized a farmer field day in March 2013, at the Kadawa Research Station of the Institute of Agricultural Research (IAR) at Kano,

where these and many other wheat cultivars were displayed to participating farmers, researchers, extension officers, policy makers, and media, for awareness and support.

The Lake Chad Research Institute is also leading efforts to make available to farmers seeds of new and promising varieties through training and acquisition of needed equipment.

## Minister honors wheat farmers in Sudan for increased yield

The Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation in Sudan, Dr Addlehalim Elmutafie has honored outstanding farmers who participated in the recent large-scale demonstration and extension plots under the SARD-SC wheat project activities for the 2012–2013 season, last September.

The farmers were honored for the feat they achieved for having a very significant yield advantage, under very hot climatic conditions, over that realized by other farmers who did not take part in the project.

In the 2012–2013 season, the SARD-

SC Project team in Sudan conducted 20 yield trials originating from ARC-Sudan and from ICARDA and CIMMYT, with promising lines selected on the basis of high yielding ability and tolerance to heat and rust diseases, to form the yield trials for 2013–2014.

Furthermore, potential wheat cultivars were disseminated to farmers for the various wheat growing areas of Sudan, where 44 demonstration and extension plots were implemented on-farm in regions of Northern Sudan, River Nile, Gezira Scheme, New Halfa

Agricultural Corporation, and White Nile State.

The yield advantage realized by farmers participating in the SARD-SC project was over 70% in comparison to the yield of non-participating farmers. A number of farmers realized yields of over 5 t/ha in hot areas, an unexpected achievement in such climatic conditions.

Researchers’ efforts in Sudan have culminated into the release this year, of a heat-tolerant and disease-resistant wheat cultivar, derived from ICARDA germplasm, and named Goumria-3. Its cultivation is expected to expand over large areas in Sudan.

However, the first wheat heat tolerance observation nursery for 2012–2013 (with 150 entries) has been established in Sudan and will be shared with the SARD SC Project teams in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Niger, Mali, and Mauritania, from which selections will be made for yield testing in 2013–2014. A similar nursery (with 120 entries) has also been established and would be delivered to these participating countries.



The Minister congratulating one of the outstanding wheat farmers.

## Innovation platforms deployed to enhance wheat production

Based on successful experiences at the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and other institutions, the SARD-SC wheat project has adopted the “innovation platform” as an efficient framework for the Integrated Agricultural Research for Development (IAR4D) of the wheat value chain in participating countries.

Therefore, a training workshop was held at two of the three project hub countries; Nigeria, from 28 to 30 August 2013, with the Lake Chad Research Institute (LCRI) as the leading national workshop organizer and Ethiopia, from 3 to 5 October 2013, with the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) as the leading national workshop organizer. A similar workshop is to be conducted soon in Sudan.

The training workshop conducted on “IAR4D and Innovation Systems Approach for SARD SC -Wheat Value Chain” was to enable participants from project target countries to have a good grasp of how an innovation platform can be an effective forum for multi-stakeholder participation in diagnosing challenges and devising sustainable solutions along the wheat value chain.

The purpose of the workshop is to strengthen the capacity of SARD-SC stakeholders in the wheat value chain, in understanding the process and skills for the application of the IAR4D concept for generation of innovation and impact along the wheat value chain.

Expected outputs include:

- A better understanding of the IAR4D approach as applied through the innovation platform for the wheat value chain.



A training workshop for SARD-SC wheat value chain stakeholders in Nigeria.

- The stakeholders acquire the needed skills to work interactively on an innovation platform.
- Initiation of the set-up and operationalization of innovation platforms in participating countries.

In each of the organized workshops, the agenda included presentations by a senior facilitator from FARA, a question and answer session, working group sessions, and plenary discussions on wheat research for development, challenges and priorities in the target hub country, with some references to partner countries in general.

Participants included the various wheat stakeholders from the host hub-country (about 50 participants) and two invited participants from each of the partner countries, in addition to participants from ICARDA. The participants worked together as a team and they drew up a time-bound plan for the establishment

and operationalization of six IPs in each of the two hub countries covering the states of Kano and Borno in Nigeria and the states of Oromiya, Amhara, Tigray, and SNNR in Ethiopia.

The participants also discussed the details of the operationalization of the IPs, including the setup of IP governance and management framework; and the implementation of the business plan, along with a monitoring and evaluation process throughout the seasons. The plan was made for each of the target regions in Nigeria and Ethiopia.

The workshops held in the two countries were well attended by a good number of stakeholders. All participating stakeholders from both countries expressed their satisfaction on the organized IP workshops and vowed to establish and operationalize the innovation platforms in Ethiopia and Nigeria.



Closing ceremony of the training workshop.

# Rice

## AfricaRice begins construction of training center in Senegal

AfricaRice has begun the construction of a state-of-the-art training center at St. Louis, near the Gaston Berger University, Senegal. The facility will be used for providing numerous training programs for researchers, extension agents, and seed producers from West African countries and beyond. It is a most essential facility for AfricaRice which aims to contribute to poverty reduction and enhanced food security through the development of domestic rice value chains across Africa.

Built on a large expanse of land of 7000 sq. meters, the center will consist of classrooms, laboratories, a library, hostels, and cafeteria with a seating capacity of 100 people. Partly sponsored by the SARD-SC Project, two classrooms, a computer room, laboratory, two lounges, and 26 rooms have already been constructed. Work has started on the construction of the annex building consisting of the restaurant, library, and four offices.

The SARD-SC Project will finance the Center's electrical installation, air-conditioning, and the provision of furniture and scientific equipment. On completion, the center will be operated on a commercial basis.

The training center is paramount in the scheme of things of the SARD-SC



Construction is moving swiftly on AfricaRice's regional training center in Saint-Louis, Senegal.



AfricaRice's state-of-the-art training center at Saint-Louis, Senegal.

Project, this is because rice is rapidly becoming one of the main staples for many countries in sub-Saharan Africa. However, the domestic production rate of rice does not increase in tandem with the consumption rate. One of the objectives of the SARD-SC Project is to make the domestic value chain of rice competitive with the imported one.

Eleven countries are participating in the project: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Uganda.

## AfricaRice inaugurates Ricehub.org: A novel and interactive e-platform

In order to capture and enhance interactive information sharing among stakeholders of value chains of strategic crops and others, AfricaRice brought together information management experts from seven SARD-SC countries to kickstart [www.ricehub.org](http://www.ricehub.org), a novel and interactive e-platform.

Designed with an emphasis on co-creation with NARES, and sustainability across and beyond projects, the platform has decentralized content management that showcases what the countries are

doing and Rice Sector Development Hubs within countries. Through country and Hub pages, information about national partners is captured. Across countries and Hubs, management options are cross-linked, providing a unique setting for sharing knowledge among rice development communities.

For two days, 26–28 June 2013, information management experts from Benin Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Madagascar, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Uganda and scientists from all over the world converged in Benin to discuss fundamental principles of sharing information.

At the interactive meeting, experts brainstormed on the advantages and disadvantages of various modes of disseminating and sharing information. They also discussed several options on how best to capture lessons learned from the fields, but they all agreed that information has to be available, accessible, applicable, affordable, and appropriate. For example, the experts agreed that radio advisory programs are very appropriate in rural farming communities, for its accessibility which gives farmers the opportunity to ask experts questions on specific technologies.

However, several experts realized that

specific information about rice is often not available in local languages and expert rice knowledge on the radio is hard to find. Hence, information sharing in countries varies from one to another, what works for one country may not work for another. They all agreed on the unreliability of mobile phones in some rural communities.

Therefore, for each country, users, sources, and facilitators of agricultural information were mapped for effective and efficient dissemination. Because of the diverse ways countries disseminate information to farmer groups, tailoring specific information for a particular country and Hubs on [www.ricehub.org](http://www.ricehub.org) is therefore of paramount importance.

The website will be managed by a core group of content managers who will facilitate information sharing and exchange, and decide on which products are best suited for each country and Hub page.

The country pages will be launched on [www.ricehub.org](http://www.ricehub.org). These pages will comprise:

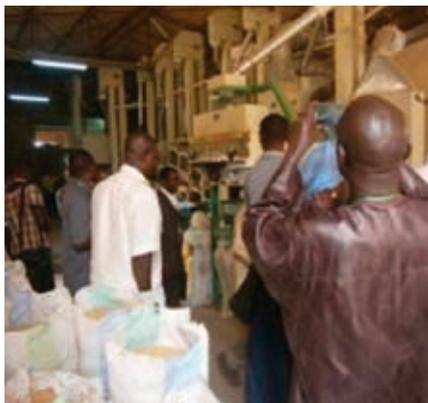
- The national rice development strategy.
- A list of partners.
- Farmer-to-farmer training videos.

The country pages will soon go live.



A rice farm.

## AfricaRice launches mechanization taskforce



Members of the Mechanization Taskforce inspect a rice transformation unit at Saint-Louis, Senegal.



The Mechanization Taskforce visits AfricaRice's semi-industrial farm at Saint-Louis, Senegal.

AfricaRice launched its sixth and newest Rice Mechanization Taskforce on the 31 July, at Saint-Louis, Senegal. The objective of the Taskforce is to focus on south-south collaboration, and its recent launch brought together 35 mechanization experts from NARES, AfricaRice, and the private sector from 16 countries, including all 11 SARD-SC countries. It was declared open by Dr Marco Wopereis, the Deputy Director-General of AfricaRice.

Taskforces are highlighted in AfricaRice's 2011–2020 Strategic Plan as one of the key mechanisms to achieve impact. They constitute a collaborative research effort, centered around six essential themes: breeding, agronomy, processing and value addition, policy, gender, and

mechanization. With the current launch of the Mechanization Taskforce, all Taskforces are now operational.

The level of mechanization in the rice value chains in sub-Saharan Africa is poor, and often characterized by ill-adapted equipment, and lack of training, information, and organization. During the launching, the need for simple and readily available equipment, such as rotary Weeders and easy-to-fabricate Line Markers, was highlighted. AfricaRice also emphasized that all its prototype equipment are for local adaptation by artisans for wide usage by farmer groups to enhance productivity and agrobusiness in the communities.

Three main activities were also identified:

1. An assessment of mechanization needs across the Hubs in the countries.
2. Introduced and locally fabricated mechanization tools.
3. A socioeconomic assessment of mechanization options.

Members of the newly established Mechanization Taskforce were also taken on a tour of AfricaRice's semi-industrial farm and to the site workshop of Agritech, a private company, to inspect shellers, seed separators, and several other types of newly available machinery.

At the end of the launch, concrete follow-up plans were made, using linkages with AfricaRice's five other Taskforces. Several productions were planned by the participants for each of the three main activities. The mechanization need assessment will lead to a priority list of technologies and equipment, and will be disseminated using videos and user manuals. It will also map all players linked to mechanization in each of the Hubs, from fabricators, importers, and traders to training and credit providers. Mechanization actors will be quantified in terms of skills, capacity, and size. The basket of mechanization tools will be diligently tested and used to train farmers, with the technical performance of each piece of equipment carefully established.

Ultimately, equipment that merits dissemination will be subjected to a thorough socioeconomic assessment, including business plans, the role of gender and cost-benefit analysis, and tailored to gender and enterprise size. Also, exchange visits will begin soon, with 15 African agricultural mechanization experts from the public and private sector visiting their counterparts in Latin America and Asia.

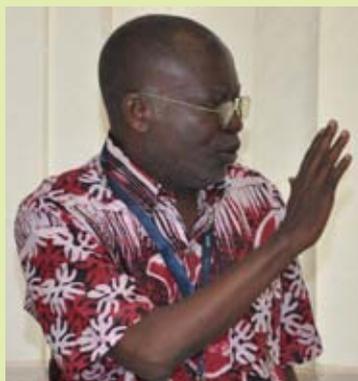


A group picture of the launch of the Rice Mechanization Taskforce at Saint-Louis, Senegal.

## Photo news



Seyi Fashokun and Ebenezer Adenekan at the cocktail party.



Dr Nzola Mahungu.



Yahaya Zulfawu.

# SARD-SC Events

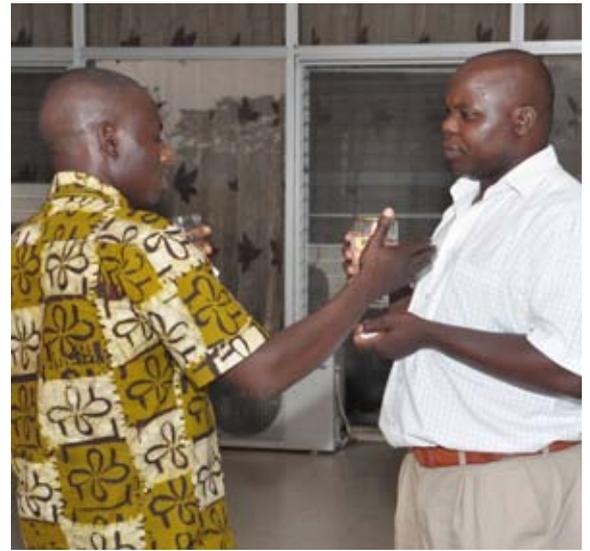
## Photo news of cocktail party held on Sunday 24 November 2013



Dr Menkir Abebe and Dr Chrys Akem.



Bola Adewole and Dr Veronica Uzokwe.



Dr Nhamo Nhamo and his team member.



Members of the SARD-SC team having a good time.



Dr Edward Kanju and Dr Joseph Rusike.

## At the project meeting



Dr Issaka Amadou making his presentation.



Seyi Fashokun speaking at the meeting.

## SARD-SC project, Israeli team conduct interview for AfDB scholarship award



From Left: Drs Adebayo Abass, Fen Beed, Eldad Sokolowski, Uri Yermiyahu, Nurit Agam, and Veronica Uzokwe.

The International Potash Institute (IPI), Ben Gurion University of the Negev, and the Ministry of Agricultural Research Organization, Israel, in conjunction with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Dar es Salam, Tanzania, have conducted an interview to select a candidate for the Africa Development Bank funded scholarship award for a doctorate degree in Agronomy. The interview was conducted on Tuesday, 12 November 2013.

Members of the team from Israel were: Mr Eldad Sokolowski (IPI Agronomist, Coordinator, sub-Saharan Africa), Dr Uri Yermiyahu (Soil Scientist), and Dr Nurit Agam. They arrived at IITA, Dar es Salam to conduct the interview and visit the facilities and environment in which the selected candidate would carry out his/her research work. The AfDB funded interview panel consisted of members of the team from Israel and Drs Adebayo Abass, Coordinator, Cassava Value chain;

Edward Kanju, IITA Cassava Breeder; and Veronica Uzokwe, SARD-SC Cassava Agronomist, Field Fellow.

The three shortlisted candidates for the PhD Agronomy course were: Mr Thomas Bwana (MSc Environmental Management, MSc Soil Science and Land Management), Mr Eliakira Kisetu (MSc Soil Science and Land Management), and Mr Reskpikius Martin (MSc Agricultural Education and Extension).

Giving an overview of the interview, Dr Veronica Uzokwe said: "Mr Martin was not appropriately qualified for the specialization (Agronomy) nor the proposed research to be carried out for the PhD degree." He objected to a PhD in Agronomy because it was not the course of choice he applied for. She added that the two other candidates, Mr Thomas Bwana and Mr Eliakira Kisetu did well both in their attitude, aptitude, and approach to tackling research questions and willingness to study abroad.

The panel members concluded that both candidates were "appointable" but they agreed to carry out background checks on them before making the final decision for the award of the PhD scholarship. Dr Uzokwe said the selected candidate would be requested to commence the application procedures of Ben Gurion University. Final approval for the candidate would also depend on acceptance of the documents and travel papers by the University.

On arrival of the team from Israel to Tanzania, they paid a courtesy visit to Dr Victor Manyong, the Director of IITA, Dar es Salam. He welcomed the team and expressed his happiness at the initiative taken by both institutes and country to foster this relationship and mission. The R4D Director of Eastern Africa, said the program would strengthen the collaboration between IPI and IITA as well as Africa and Israel and open more opportunities for future partnership.

The team also took a tour of the Institute's facilities at the end of the interview. On Wednesday, 13 November,



Dr Victor Manyong.

2013, the IPI-IITA team visited the IITA breeding trials at the substation of Mikocheni Agricultural Research Institute, Chambezi. They were introduced to the field by the officer in-charge, Mr Ambrose Nguru and the IITA Research Supervisor responsible for cassava breeding field activities, Mr Nsajigwa Mwakyusa. The trials visited included: the Cassava seedling nursery, National performance trial, Degeneration trial, and Food quality trial.

The IPI team expressed their delight at the research and facilities at IITA and hoped that the two institutes and country can identify common ground to work together for the progress and strengthening of partnership between them.



From middle left: Drs Nurit Agam, Eldad Sokolowski, Adebayo Abass, Mr Nsajigwa Mwakyusa, Drs. Uri Yermiyahu, and Veronica Uzokwe.

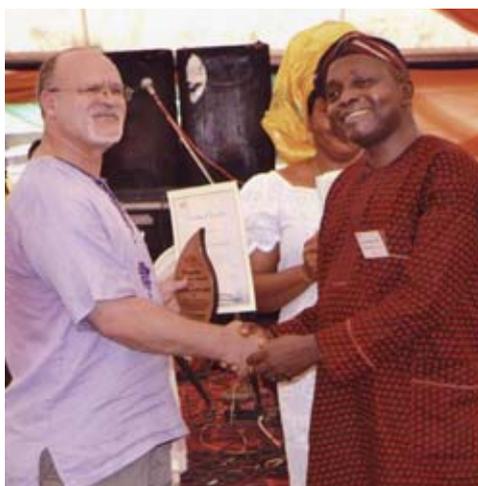
## IITA Open day: Project Accountant honored with long service award

Mr Seyi Fashokun, an Accountant with the SARD-SC Project was one of those who were honored and given a long service award during the last Open Day celebration. It was a special moment for Fashokun who was recognized for his 20 years meritorious service in IITA.

The Open Day program was organized to recognize employees who have served the Institute variously for 10 years, 20 years, and 30 years by presenting them with awards, certificates, and gifts. Employees who have retired within the year were also recognized by the management.

As one of the awardees, he could not hide his joy and appreciation to the Institute for giving him the opportunity to have served this long. Recalling his early years in the organization, Fashokun inferred that his experience has been both pleasant and challenging. He joined IITA in 1992 and it has been a rewarding experience for him, having been able to fulfill his dream of furthering his education to the highest level.

"When I joined IITA in 1992, I had the intention to further my education to the highest level, I thank God today that IITA allowed me to achieve all these. I have qualified as an Accountant, and have a Bachelor of Science Degree from Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State and Masters in Business Administration degree from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State. The free weekends in IITA afforded me the



Dr Kenton Dashiell congratulating Fashokun.

opportunity to pursue my education to this level," he said.

The challenging aspect, according to Mr Fashokun was that he was able to survive three regimes of different Director Generals in the Institute, which have come and gone with their different peculiarities.

The theme of this year's Open Day was: "It's IITA's Time." Held in an ambience of fun and conviviality, gaily dressed employees and their loved ones had a good time and enjoyed various cultural performances on display at the event. The event started with tree planting at the staff Garden followed by the Open House and Exhibits and exhibitions and displays of various

agricultural produce. Children were not left out of the fun, they took parts in several prograes designed for their maximum enjoyment.

In his speech at the occasion well attended by members of the management, the Deputy Director -General, Corporate Services, Dr Kwame Akuffo-Akoto said the Open Day program was "the management's way of appreciating everyone's contribution to boosting agricultural research and development." "It is time for families, spouses, and their children to visit where their partners, or fathers work to see how they are contributing to poverty alleviation and ensuring food security in Africa." He said IITA is a great place to work and commended the employees for their contribution but urged them to push their level of productivity higher from 88 percent to 98 percent for the development of the institute. Dr Akuffo-Akoto also spoke about the beauty of the diversity in the Institute, and said it gives him "great pleasure to see various humanities from all over the world with different religious inclinations working together peacefully and towards a common goal of alleviating poverty in Africa."

Mrs Kwame Akuffo-Akoto presented the IITA Women's Scholarship awards to the children. The Women's Scholarship Scheme was founded in 1993 to reward brilliant students with a token amount of money for their education.

## Project team displays posters at the R4D week

The just concluded R4D Week which began on Monday and ended on Friday 29 November was a good opportunity for members of the SARD-SC project team working in other IITA hubs to convene at the Institute headquarters to review what has been done, present plans for the coming year, and build networks among colleagues.

Over twenty members of the SARD-SC team attended R4D Week. It was a platform used to publicize the various success stories of the SARD-SC project in all the different hubs of the IITA. Seven posters were displayed and presented on varied topics on the four major commodities of the project.

Dr Marie Yomeni, presented two posters, one was *Effect of introduction of new farming knowledge on farm performance in major cassava growing states in Nigeria* while the second poster was *Building capacity for improving cassava systems in DR Congo through the SARD-SC Project*. Dr Pheneas Ntawuruhunga's poster was on *Assessment of farmers' selection criteria*

*and promotion of improved varieties through participatory variety selection in Zambia.*

Dr Nzola Mahungu presented two posters: *Occurrence of Sporadic dry roots caused by Phaeolus mannihotis Heim (Basidiomycete, Polyporaceae) on Cassava in the Bas Fleuvre district of DR Congo and attempts for its control.* The second one was titled, *The value of landraces and indigenous knowledge in cassava breeding in DR Congo.*

Other posters presented were on two of the four commodities of the SARD-SC project. Dr Akem presented two posters titled, *Raising Productivity of and income from Strategic Crops in Africa* and *Raising the Bar in Maize Research through Improved Technologies*. A contribution from Sierra Leone was a poster titled *SARD-SC cassava stem production for smallholder businesses in Sierra Leone.*



Some of the Posters displayed at R4D week.