

Newsletter



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Putting partners on the same page: Project organizes field visits for ADPs and researchers



IITA Community and visitors on field trial site in IITA

The IITA Cassava Weed Management Project has organized field visits to trial sites for staff of Oyo and Abia Agricultural Development Programs, and researchers in IITA and the National Root Crops Research Institute, Umudike. More than 60 people visited trial sites on the two stations.

The field visit gave an opportunity for the project to showcase firsthand the preliminary results of improved cassava weed management under different agronomic and herbicide regimes.

In IITA, the Project Leader Dr Alfred Dixon while taking the visitors on the

field tour stated that cassava is no longer considered a poor man's crop as everyone is now eating it in one way or the other. He however noted that the challenge to increase productivity of cassava was weed management. "Farmers cannot grow more than they can weed, and this is responsible for the small farm size which affects the total yield," he said.

Giving insights into the project, Prof Friday Ekeleme, Project's Principal

Investigator, explained that the project's trials were basically set up to identify measures to control weeds in cassava production. He emphasized that in any weed management control scheme, land preparation is a vital component as it helps reduce weed pressure.

The Communication and Knowledge Exchange Expert of the Project, Godwin Atser noted that plans were in top gear for disseminating results to farmers. He said that by addressing the weeds constraint, the project would reduce the drudgery faced by women farmers and attract youths to cassava farming. "We aim to bring back youth into agriculture by addressing the problem of weeds. Weeds are major disincentives for young people's interest in the field," he said.

In NRCRI, about 30 ADP staff visited the trial sites. Fields visited include: agronomic trial, mechanical weed control trial, and weed frequency trial. Dr Moses Okwusi, Communication Focal Person for the project, and Davison Korieocha (Research Associate) took the team round the trials.

The aim of the early engagement is to put the ADP staff and other stakeholders on the same page as the project progresses.



ADP staff and other visitors on field trial site in Umudike

Abia, Benue and Oyo ADPs sign MoU with Cassava Weed Management Project

As the IITA Cassava Weed Management Project prepares to enter the dissemination phase, the project has signed memorandum of understandings with the Agricultural Development Programs of Abia, Benue and Oyo state. The MoU with the Ogun State ADP will be signed later this year. The signing of the MoUs is part of preliminary extension activities aimed at effective and efficient technology and knowledge transfer.

"The MoUs formally bring on board the ADPs that are critical stakeholders to the project," says Dr Alfred Dixon, Project Leader for the IITA Cassava Weed Management Project.

Sixty separately on behalf of the three ADPs were the Program Managers of Abia ADP, Sir Enyinnaya Elekwachi; Benue ADP, James Ker; and Oyo ADP, Victor Atilola.

"We are glad to be involved in this project and we will do our best to ensure that it succeeds," says Mr Atilola.

For Sir Elekwachi the signing opens a new window of collaboration. "With this arrangement, our results will readily get to farmers and create impact," he says.

Yet for Mr Ker, the MoU is about partnership for impact.

"No one institution can do everything. We need to work together to serve the interest of the people," Mr Ker added.

Under the MoU, the ADPs in collaboration with IITA and implementing partner institutions across the states will:

- Conduct trainings on improved weed management practices in cassava farming systems.
- Conduct method and results demonstrations.



Second from left: Program Manager, Oyo ADP, Mr Atilola handing over signed MoU to Godwin Atser

- Establish link between weed management research team and farmers and other stakeholders (community leaders, opinion leaders etc).
- Disseminate findings on improved weed management practices to farmers and other stakeholders.
- Participate in surveys, data collection, and field days as may be required from time to time.
- Participate in studies that shall provide better understanding of constraints and available knowledge on weed management
- Participate in IITA Cassava Weed Management Project's annual work review and planning meetings.

Godwin Atser, Project's Communication & Knowledge Exchange Expert, said the signing of the MoUs was a step in the right direction.

"ADPs are critical partners in this project and we are happy all of them are excited to bring their expertise to the project so that we create impact at the farm level," Atser said.

The MoU were facilitated by the Project team and the IITA Project Administration Office.

Established in the early 1980s, the ADPs seek to among others: promote increased agricultural production; raise the income and standard of living of farmers; focus on agricultural potentials in effectively utilizing intensive programs of on-farm adaptive research; develop effective unified training and visit agricultural extension system; establish and operate a workable input procurement and distribution system capable of serving farmers at the right time, and provide rural infrastructure for sustainable development.

Purdue Professor helps IITA Cassava Weed Management Project to tackle weeds



L-R: Profs Ekeleme, Weller, and Dr Dashiell comparing notes

Steve Weller, a professor at Purdue University is assisting researchers in IITA and national partners working under the IITA Cassava Weed Management Project to fight weeds in

cassava farming systems in Nigeria.

Early this year, Prof Weller worked with Prof Friday Ekeleme to design and set up herbicides experiments across Nigeria. Recently, he was on a

monitoring visit which took him across the project sites.

In a chat with IITA Deputy Director General, Partnerships and Capacity Development, Dr Kenton Dashiell; Prof Weller commended the IITA Cassava Weed Management team for an excellent performance.

He noted that the project was making steady and good progress. He commended the progress made in the use of machines to control weeds, adding that the technology holds promise for Africa.

Dr Dashiell thanked Prof Weller for his support to the project. He reiterated that the aim of the project was to increase the productivity of cassava in Africa while eliminating the drudgery faced by farmers especially women and children in weed control.

Candel signs MoU with IITA Cassava weed Management Project

Candel , a company with interest in agrochemicals, has signed a memorandum of understanding with the IITA Cassava Weed Management Project. The MoU seeks to strengthen collaboration with the agrochemical company in the area of research and development. The agreement followed series of negotiations between the company and project partners.

Dr Alfred Dixon, Project Leader said the signing of the MoU with Candel was a significant milestone as the project aims to engage more private sector operators in weed management and control in cassava systems.

The MoU will see the Candel Company Limited and the Cassava Weed Management Project exchanging scientific information, research materials and publications among others.

There is also provision for building the capacities of students, researchers, industry staff, and farmers in weed management/science.

Candel said, “it is exciting working with IITA to address the problems of weed generally and in cassava farms particularly.”

“We are optimistic that working with IITA will be an added advantage for all especially the farmers that are daily confronted with the challenge of weeds on their farms,” says Dr Abdulahi



Candel's team with IITA Cassava Weed Management Project's team in Ibadan

Ndarubu, General Manager, Technical & Regulatory Affairs, Candel Company Limited.

Established 21 years ago, Candel Company Limited is one of the Nigeria based company with an arm involved in agrochemical production and marketing. The company operates in Nigeria and Ghana. Due to increasing demand for

its agrochemical products in recent times, the company has established an 80 million-liter per annum agrochemical formulation facility in Lagos. Apart from the production and marketing of herbicides, the company is also involved in the production and marketing of foliar fertilizers that address micronutrient imbalance, and also other pesticides.

IITA Cassava Weed Management Project signs MoU with SON



SON's Director General, Dr Joseph Odumodu (4th from left), SON's officials, and IITA Cassava Weed Management Project's team in Lagos

The Cassava Weed Management Project has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON), an agency of the Federal Government of Nigeria that ensures locally manufactured products in Nigeria give the required degree of satisfaction to consumers through compliance with government policies

on standardization and conformity assessment. The SON also ensures that goods imported into the country meet the minimum requirements of industrial standards or any other approved international standards.

The MoU seeks to establish a link to foster cooperation for the development and implementation of collaborative programs while

highlighting the framework for the partnership between both organizations. Areas covered in the MoU include exchange of scientific information and developing specific cooperative programs and projects, especially in the areas of standardization. Linkages between IITA and SON scientists were also listed.

Farmers' knowledge, attitudes and practices on weed management conducted ...Training Needs of Extension agents also captured

The IITA Cassava Weed Management Project has concluded the study on farmers' knowledge, attitudes and practices on weed management in cassava farming systems in Nigeria. The Project has also carried out a Training Needs Assessment for extension staff across Nigeria. The two studies covered the three agroecological zones in Nigeria where cassava grows best—Humid Rain Forest, Southern Guinea Savannah, and the Derived Savannah. In the three agroecological zones, four states and 11 communities were randomly selected for the study. 198 farmers participated in the KAP study while 112 Extension Officers participated in the TNA.

"The two studies give us better insights on how to target our technologies," says Dr Alfred Dixon, Project Leader for the Cassava Weed Management Project. The two studies were led by the Objective Team Leader, Godwin Atser working



IITA Cassava Weed Management Project's team conducting focus group discussions

with Prof Emmanuel Adekoya of the Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, University of

Ibadan; and Dr Mary Agada, University of Agriculture Makurdi; Dr Moses Okwusi, National Root Crops Research Institute, Umudike; and Prof Grace Sokoya, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. Results from the two studies are currently being analyzed.

"We don't want to make assumptions. Our intervention must be evidence based for sustainability," Atser said.

The study on farmers' KAP on weed management in Nigeria is probably the first of its kind covering a wide geographical region where cassava is a major food security crop.

Though weeds are a major constraint to cassava, not much attention is given to weed control as compared to other constraints such as insect pests and diseases. The Cassava Weed Management Project is seeking environmentally friendly and sustainable solutions to tackle the menace of weed in cassava farming systems.

The KAP and TNA studies would provide researchers information on how best to mainstream interventions into existing cultural practices and promote the adoption of improved weed management technologies.



IITA Cassava Weed Management Project's team conducting TNA for extension staff

Building national institutional capacity through "Learning by doing model"

A 3-day monitoring visit on 'learning by doing model' was conducted for the project administrative staff of the National Root Crops Research Institute, Umudike, Abia state, on 7–9 September. The learning by doing model offers partners the opportunity to undergo hands on training with colleagues at IITA for a week or more. A follow up monitoring visit is undertaken by IITA staff to evaluate knowledge gained, and how that knowledge is being applied in work place.

The evaluation visit which had Ezinne Ibe, Project Administrator; and Adeniyi

Obilade, Project Accountant, of the IITA Cassava Weed Management Project also focused on the necessary actions the NRCRI project team needed to put in place in preparation for its leadership role from year 4 of the project. Kayode Awobajo, Project Resource Manager, of the IITA Project Administration Office, who was also part of the team took time to explain the purpose of the visit and also highlighted the modalities for the 3-day meeting with the NRCRI project team. The IITA team met with the NRCRI Project Coordinator, Administrative officer and Account staff.

Cassava Weed Management Project Partners

