

Unleashing the Power of Cassava in Response to the Food Price Crisis in Africa (UPoCA): Malawi conducts Training of Trainers workshops to boost cassava production and farm gate processing.

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The Unleashing the Power of Cassava in Response to the Food Price Crisis in Africa (UPoCA) Malawi conducted Training of Trainers workshops to boost cassava production and farm gate processing. Cassava is a crop that is produced in most parts of Malawi but farmers lack knowledge on improved cassava production and processing techniques to improve production and utilisation. Implemented in six districts in Malawi; Mzimba, Kasungu, Dowa, Ntchisi, Lilongwe and Blantyre, the project aims at providing adequate supply of cassava products at economically affordable prices through availability of improved cassava varieties, production processes and farm gate processing. Three (3) short-term training courses were conducted in 1) cassava production 2) Cassava processing, product development and utilisation 3) Business planning, packaging and labelling to equip participants so as to empower producer groups, agro processors and entrepreneurs with specific cassava value chain knowledge and skills required to provide adequate supplies of diverse cassava products. A total of 83 participants (65men and 18 women) were trained who mainly comprised of field technicians, agro processors/entrepreneurs, and NGO and government officers who are in agribusiness, crop production and project management.

Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop on cassava production

Conducted at Kasungu Inn, Kasungu District from 12th to 15th October 2009, this TOT was organized to equip participants with knowledge and skills on cassava production, specifically, on cassava cultural practices, cassava pest and disease identification



Fig. 1 Participants at the TOT on Cassava Production at Kasungu Inn, posing with the Guest of Honor, Mr. M. Bodzalekani

and control, cassava seed multiplication and seed certification procedures, and general cassava post harvest handling issues. The TOT which lasted for 3 days drew 42 participants who mainly comprised of extension staff and crops officers from the Government partners (Mzimba, Dowa, Kasungu and Ntchisi district agricultural offices) and field coordinators from NGO partners (Total Land care and Evangelical Lutheran Development Services). These participants were trained so that they can now go and train the farmers.

The workshop was officially opened by the Programme Manager for Kasungu Agricultural Development Division (ADD), Mr Mandy Bodzalekani (fig. 1). In his opening remarks he indicated that his Ministry does not have adequate trained extension specialist in cassava. He commended IITA/SARRNET for organising such a TOT

which he hoped that it will make a difference to his staff but also in improving cassava production at farmer level. He urged participants to also train other members of staff and conduct demonstration plots where they can train more farmers on cassava production.

Resource persons for this TOT were drawn from the Department of Agricultural Research and IITA/SARRNET.

The workshop combined plenary presentations and practical demonstrations. During practical, participants were taken to Nkhotakota district to see Mrs Agness Wilford's field which had a mixture of cassava diseases and pests to practice on disease and pest identification. To have hands on experience on planting cassava (fig.2), participants were taken to Sopani settlement scheme in Kasungu where they practiced on seed selection, planting, and seed multiplication techniques.

In general the participants were happy with the organisation and conduct of the training and thanked the organisers (IITA/SARRNET) for organising the course which they described as an eye opener and that they expected that this training will boost cassava production in their area and regulate movement of planting materials.



Fig 2. A participant practicing how to plant cassava while others are watching.

TOT workshop on cassava processing, product development and utilisation

Cassava is primarily consumed as boiled or raw in most parts Malawi. Its leaves are at times also used as relish. In some communities, cassava is also processed into flour for making "nsima". Apart from these uses, cassava however still remains largely under-utilised despite the fact that it can be utilised in a number of ways both at home as well as industrial application. It is in the recent years that cassava has been seen penetrating the industry especially in the form of cassava starch and flour in the packaging and timber industries. Cassava flour can be used as a substitute for wheat in confectionery products. Previous research experiences by IITA had demonstrated wheat import substitution by High Quality Cassava Flour (HQCF) at up to 10% in bread and 100% for confectionary products, for example. A training of Trainers Workshop was thus organised to equip participants with knowledge and skills on cassava processing, utilisation, and



business planning in order to promote farm gate processing in UPoCA project impact areas. The TOT was conducted from 20th to 23rd October 2009 at IITA conference room, Chitedze Research Station, Lilongwe, Malawi.

The four day training drew 21 participants from UPoCA partners (Government and NGO) and private agro processors/entrepreneurs that comprised of processors, entrepreneurs, nutritionists, agribusiness officers, and project coordinators.

The TOT was officially opened by the deputy Director of Research; Dr. Mackson Banda. In his speech he indicated that this TOT was very important to ensure that the potential of cassava on income generation and food security in Malawi is exploited. He urged participants to pay particular attention to the training materials so that later on they should be able to empower cassava producer groups, agro processors and entrepreneurs with technical knowledge and business skills required to provide adequate supplies of cassava food and industrial products.

Resource persons for the course came from IITA-Nigeria. The course covered post-harvest issues, cassava processing (uses, processing purpose, equipment adding value and processing methods), Nutritional quality and safety (Fortified products, quality assurance, food legislations) new products (market research, new food products, food preservations, grades and standards) and hands on practical. During hands on practical, participants practiced on making fermented cassava flour, High quality unfermented cassava flour(HQCF), gari, and other developed products such as chinchin, tidbits, strips, egg rolls, doughnuts. The training focussed on how to produce high quality and competitive cassava products that can be marketed.

The workshop was arranged in such away that almost 70% of the training time was practical while only 30% was plenary to provide enough hands own experience to the participants. In her speech, Mrs Phiri, one of the participants, said "I have been involved in cassava processing for a long time but in the past I was making cassava flour the traditional way. Today I have learnt to make high quality cassava flour and I am amazed at its capabilities" Overall, the participants rated the facilitation and course content of the TOTs very high. They indicated that the workshops had come at the

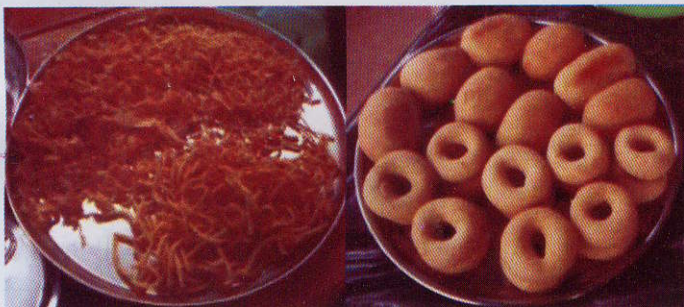


Fig.4 Some of the cassava products (Chinchin, tidbits, doughnuts & egg rolls) made by participants during the training

right time and promised to effectively use what they learnt. They thanked IITA/SARRNET for organising such a workshop which they described as an eye opener and that they expected that this training will lead to a creation of cassava businesses in their areas they come from.

TOT workshop on Business planning, packaging and labelling.

These courses were sequenced in a very meaningful manner in a way that the participants' learning during the processing courses was integrated during this business planning course. This TOT took place from 26th to 29th October 2009 at IITA conference room, Chitedze Research Station, Lilongwe with a total of 20 participants attending the course. The main objective of the TOT was to equip participants with knowledge and skills on cassava business planning in order to promote cassava based businesses.

Resource persons for the course came from IITA-Nigeria. The course covered importance of business planning; assessing the market; preparing a marketing plan; preparing a production plan; preparing an organizational plan; preparing a financial plan and basic business financial analysis tools; and record keeping. During the packaging and labeling, issues of packaging material, packaging and labeling cassava products for markets, product assessment and packaging design were covered.

Ninety percent of the time was group work where participants had a chance to develop business and financial plans. Participants were divided into three working groups where at the end of the course, each group produced a draft business plan containing a marketing plan, production plan, organizational plan, and financial plan and packaged their products in packages designed by the group.

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A New IRS joins CIP-Malawi

Dr. Putri Ernawati Abidin joined the International Potato Center (CIP) on 1 March 2010 to fill the Position of Sweetpotato Seed System Specialist based at the CIP's office at Bvumbwe Research Station in Southern Malawi. Before joining CIP, Dr. Putri, who comes from the Netherlands, was



Dr. Putri Ernawati Abidin

working as Visiting Professor at the KANSAS State University at Horticulture Research Station and Extension Center in Olathe State of Kansas in USA. She is to lead a sweetpotato project titled 'Rooting out Hunger in Malawi with Nutritious Orange-Fleshed Sweetpotato'. The project is funded by Irish Aid. She is also going to participate in the implementation of the SARRNET sweetpotato activities funded by USAID/Regional office for Southern Africa.