

## **Summary of IITA Board of Trustees Meeting**

**Cotonou, Republic of Benin**

**5 to 9 May, 2014**

### **Cotonou Station**

- The IITA Board was very pleased to hold its spring 2014 Board meeting at the IITA station and visit the facilities, to hear about its history and impact on the control of the cassava mealybug and see firsthand the work that is being done at the station. The Board was also pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the regional workshop “Biotic Stresses, Climate Change and Agricultural Production,” meet with a number of stakeholders from the region and dialog with the leadership of INRAB.
- The Board discussed the transformation of the Cotonou Station as the Biodiversity Center to provide sustainable solutions to biotic stresses linked to climate change and specializing in capacity development for Francophone countries in partnership with African universities and other CGIAR centers; it requested IITA management to prepare a strategic plan for the station looking at the next three to five years, with and without Africa Rice, the cost implications, the research and partnerships and their role in implementing IITA’s strategic plan as well as the potential for attracting support. The topic is to be tabled for discussion at the November Board meeting.

### **New Board Members**

- The IITA Board welcomed two new Board members, Lalitha Vaidyanathan, Managing Director of the Foundation Strategy Group, a non-profit consulting firm specializing in strategy, evaluation and research and Professor Olusola Oyewole, Vice Chancellor of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. A third new Board member, Josephine Okot, Managing Director of Victoria Seeds in Uganda was unable to attend due to problems with her visa.

### **DG’s Report**

- The Board congratulated DG on the excellent progress that had been made since November 2013. It made special mention of the \$12.43 m increase in the 2014 budget since November, the action being taken to mainstream gender in research, the youth in agriculture and the BIP initiatives. In their view the BIP initiatives are critical for getting IITA’s technologies out to its clients. They approved the business plans and appointed two Board members, Hans Jöhr and Lalitha Vaidyanathan to the supervisory board of the BIP for a one year period.

### **CGIAR Initiatives**

- The Board had wide ranging discussion on the ongoing initiatives in the CGIAR such as the Mid-Term Review, the Second Call for the CRPs, the strategy and results framework, and concluded that IITA should strive to maintain its CRP lead center role of the Humidtropics or relevant system CRP that would fit its comparative advantage and strive to position itself as a science leader with governance responsibility under the IITA Board. Evidence of IITA’s impact in Africa will be critical in these discussions. Three Board members were entrusted with the responsibility of working with IITA

management to provide advice and information on the three high priority system issues: (1) Mid-Term Review--Board Chair and the DDG-CS); (2) Resource Mobilization – John Griffith and Ken Dashiell; (3) Second Call for CRPs and Strategy and Results Framework—Ylva Hillbur and Roel Merckx.

### **International Status**

- The Board approved a request from the DG to apply for full international status for IITA granting it the same status as the UN and in this way facilitate its work across the continent.

### **Partnerships and Capacity Development**

The Board congratulated the directorate on its success rate with project proposals and was very pleased to see the emphasis being placed on 1) making group trainings available to all institutions and not just those in the project that is organizing the training and 2) training women in agriculture. It recommended IITA to pay special attention to training NARS partners to enable them to take on more responsibilities on the ground and to consider expanding its training programs to reach more BSc students.

### **External Audit**

- The Board approved the 2013 Audited Financial statements indicating a surplus of \$2.048 m and the unqualified audit opinion by Price Waterhouse Coopers.

### **2014 Budget**

It also approved the revised 2014 budget with income at \$115.294 m and expenditures at \$113.464 m.

### **Project Execution**

The Board was pleased to learn of the initiatives that management had taken to improve project execution at IITA and was cautiously optimistic that the improvement recorded so far will be maintained for the duration of 2014.

### **Development Committee**

- The newly formed development committee of the Board presented initial thoughts on a development strategy for IITA that expands IITA's current effort beyond aid donors and philanthropy and explores how IITA might leverage its unique position to identify new sources of funding. As a first effort, the Board agreed to give priority to exploring potential interest of corporations in strategic partnerships focused on IITA's business incubation platform and at the same time start to explore the other areas of potential support the committee identified.

### **Program Committee**

- The Program Committee approved the finalized Natural Resource Management strategy and the hub strategies noting it is crucial that the strategies are linked to the overall mission and vision of IITA. Hub specific identities are also important and could be highlighted hub specific identities through their strategic objectives.

## **Management of Risks**

- The Board noted the significant progress made in risk management at IITA and thanked all those staff who have actively participated in the process. The Board noted that IITA is working with the CGIAR wide security framework applicable to all locations; in the meantime, they advised management given the current situation, to undertake scenario planning for all locations in Nigeria and ensure clear procedures are in place that could be mobilized if needed.

## **Human Resources**

- The Board commended management for the progress made in human resources to establish equitable salaries and a job classification system based on a well-accepted approach and a positive work environment, addressing many of the issues raised in the staff satisfaction survey.

## **Board Committees**

The Board approved the reformulation of Board Committees effective November 2014: Audit and Finance (Chair: Tom Medlycott), Development (Chair: Lalitha Vaidyanathan); Program (Chair: Trine Hvoslef Eide, to be succeeded by Roel Merckx), Governance (Chair: John Griffith); Human Resources (Chair: Jill Findeis).

## **Next Board Meeting(s)**

The next Board meeting will be held in Ibadan in conjunction with R4D week November 24 to 28. It was agreed that as far as it is possible, the programs will be organized to ensure that there is minimum overlap between the Board and the R4D activities, except in the case of the science presentations and the Ferrari lecture.

2015 Meetings: 4 to 8 May in Lusaka and 23 to 27 November in Ibadan