

MAKERERE

P.O. Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda
Cables: "MAKUNIKA"
Email: principal@caes.mak.ac.ug



UNIVERSITY

Phone: 256 414 542277
Fax: 256 414 531641
TELEGRAM:

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Office of the Principal

DATE: 06-06-2011

PRESS RELEASE

Cowpea Growth Improvement Elevates Livelihood

In its mission to advance agricultural development through training, knowledge generation and service delivery in Uganda and the region, the Makerere University College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences embarked on a five year project to develop improved high yielding and pest resistant Cowpea varieties for Ugandan conditions.

The cowpea improvement project commenced in 2009 and is funded by the McKnight Foundation titled, *"Improving Food security through participatory Development of high yielding and pests resistant cowpea varieties in Uganda"*.

Dr. Jenipher Bisiku of the Department of Agricultural Production is spearheading the project as Principal Investigator.

"The goal of the project is to increase cowpea production, income and nutrition of poor farmers in Uganda through participatory development of improved high yielding, pest and disease resistant varieties", said Prof. Samuel Kyamanywa, Principal College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences.

This project will also strengthen the capacity for research and training in Uganda through training three graduate students at Masters and PhD levels. So far, three graduates, one at PhD and two at Masters Level have been recruited to the school of Agricultural Sciences and are currently being sponsored by this project.

Following the initial country-wide cowpea germplasm (land races and elite varieties) collection carried out in Uganda during 2010 and on-station cowpea variety evaluation done at Serere Research station, the project has identified five promising cow pea varieties that are preferred by farming communities in Eastern and Northern Uganda.

The promising varieties that have been assembled and tested for Ugandan conditions are ACCWC28, ACCWC35B, ACCWC35C, ACCWC39 and ACCNE44 but more work is

being done to establish their resistance to major pests and diseases before they can be disseminated back to the farmers for adoption.

Brief Background

Cowpea is one of the most important grain legumes in arid and semi arid regions of sub-Saharan Africa used as a nutritional source of protein for poor rural farmers and an essential component of the cropping systems.

In drier regions of East Africa especially in Eastern and Northern Uganda, where diets heavily rely on starchy foods such as sorghum, millet, maize and cassava, cowpea is consumed both as a grain and a vegetable and acts as a source of income for subsistence farmers

Compared to other grain legumes and vegetable crops, cowpea possesses multiple advantages for farmers including high yields on poor sandy soils unsuitable for other crops, high rate of nitrogen fixation, lower fertilizer requirement, and tolerance to drought and high temperatures.

Although cowpea yields potential in Uganda (1500 to 3000 kg per hectare), farmers' yields are constantly below 500kg per hectare due to pests and diseases, poor varieties, farming methods and market access.

Whereas preliminary research on cowpea in Uganda was initiated in 1990's, currently, there is no active national programme dedicated to this valuable crop due to lack of funding. Thus, low national research priority in cowpea makes it one of the orphan crops.

For any further Information contact

Prof. Samuel Kyamanywa, Principal College of Agricultural & Environmental science Tel, 0772220000, Email: principal@caes.mak.ac.ug

Jane Anyango, Communication Officer College of Agricultural & Environmental science Tel; 0712869143, Email: pr@caes.mak.ac.ug

Dr. Jenifer Bisikwa, Principal Investigator, Department of Agricultural Production Tel. 0782682334, Email: jbisikwa@agric.mak.ac.ug