

Promoting the use of drought tolerant maize in Nigeria

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The DTMA project of IITA-CIMMYT aims to develop and deploy drought tolerant varieties in 13 sub-Saharan African countries. In West Africa, the project, led by IITA and its national partners, is being implemented in Nigeria, Bénin, Mali, and Ghana. In Nigeria, the project covers all the maize-producing agroecologies.

As part of the promotion efforts, farmers' groups were formed in Kano and Katsina States in northern Nigeria to demonstrate the performance of these improved varieties but also to organize the farmers so that they could have access to the critical inputs needed in maize production.

IITA introduced the drought tolerant variety EVDT 99 to the community of Ruwan Kanya in Rano Local Government Area (LGA) of Kano State, in 2009. This was done as part of the efforts of the DTMA project to inform farmers about drought tolerant maize, both established and newly developed varieties.

A maize production innovation platform was organized around EVDT 99 in the village of Ruwan Kanya. Fourteen farmers initially participated in the production of seeds. For the first year, six farmers each planted 10 kg of the improved variety and eight farmers each planted 5 kg. Other



Alhaji Bako Monitor and another farmer in his DT maize field. Photo by T. Abdoulaye, IITA.

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farmers saw the maize fields during the growing season and requested seeds from the participating farmers; eventually the number of participants increased to 36 in 2010. They formed an association to enable them to obtain fertilizer from the State Government.

In the following season, more farmers planted the variety. Six were able to increase their farmland; others bought inputs that increased their production. For example, Alhaji Bako Monitor bought a pair of bullocks for his farm work and for the transportation of goods to the market.

Almost four years later, the DT variety EVDT 99 is now being called Ar Ashiru (named after the president of the farmers' group). It is grown in the 10 communities in Rano LGA, one community in Sumaila LGA, one community in Tudun Wada LGA, all in Kano State and in Soba/Risipa in Kaduna State. Other communities in Kano State that got EVDT 99 from Ruwan Kanya LGA include Gidan Zangi, Garabi, Doka, Zazaye, Takalafia, Gana, Kajorawa, Yelwa ciki, Tadesha, and Kundu.

Some farmers also planted EVDT 99 in the dry season after harvesting tomatoes between February/March. The dry season maize is harvested fresh and consumed after being roasted or boiled.

The farmers' association in Ruwan Kanya was linked to the Kano State Government in 2010. The members were able to purchase subsidized fertilizer at 1100 naira/bag (~US\$7) including transportation to the village. The following year, the government changed; the new government did not allocate fertilizer to the farmers' group. The farmers put their money together and the project helped by linking them with a dealer who provided good quality input. They bought the NPK fertilizer in bulk at 5000 naira (~\$31) and urea for 5200 naira and continued seed production.

The farmers say that they appreciate the productivity and earliness of the variety. EVDT 99 responds well to fertilizer and those growing it have had no problem in getting the fertilizer they need.

During the new phase of DTMA, the project team is focusing on getting these farmers linked to seed companies so they can renew their seed stock and continue to purchase quality certified seeds. The drought tolerant maize varieties and hybrids are now being produced and sold by some seed companies in Nigeria, thanks to the efforts of these farmers.

Farmers need to be made aware of the need to renew their seed stock regularly including seeds for open-pollinated varieties such as EVDT to maintain the purity and productivity level of their cultivars.

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