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Global gathering features leading authorities on cassava research

Presentations to address a wide variety of issues impacting production and food security

ST. LOUIS, MO, May 29, 2012—An impressive lineup of the leaders in cassava research and development from around the globe will present during the second scientific conference of The Global Cassava Partnership for the 21st Century (GCP21), June 18 – 22, 2012 at the [Speke Resort Conference Centre](#) in Kampala, Uganda. Topics include climate change, pests and diseases, genomics, breeding and biodiversity.

GCP21 consists of 45 member institutions working on research and development of cassava, a staple crop relied on by more than 700 million people worldwide. The ultimate goal of the partnership is to improve cassava productivity through scientific research and development. More than 300 leading cassava researchers and stakeholders from around the world will attend. Registration is available online at <http://www.danforthcenter.org/GCP21-II/>.

The Global Cassava Partnership serves as an advocate for cassava issues and leverages research and development by facilitating dialogue among farmers, stakeholders, producers, researchers and donor agencies via scientific and technical meetings, collectively seeking smart strategies, funding opportunities, and catalyzing solutions to technical challenges such as cassava genomics.

“The greatest reward during my life time will be to bring about a significant transformation in cassava to impact on many lives that depend on the crop,” said Dr. Yona Baguma, Scientist at NaCRRI, Chairman of GCP21-II.

The opening ceremony will feature remarks by The Honorable Minister of Agriculture, Uganda, as well as Dr. Emily Twinamasiko, director general of NARO and Dr. James Ogwang, director of NaCCRI.

Plenary and keynote speakers include:

Dr. Claude Fauquet, [Donald Danforth Plant Science Center](#) and co-chair of GCP21, will kick off the week-long conference with a presentation on the vision of GCP21.

Dr. Joe Tohme, [International Center for Tropical Agriculture](#) (CIAT) and co-chair of GCP21, will present a cassava genomic and breeding road map.

Dr. Anton Bua, Team Leader of National Cassava Program NaCCRI and Dr. Yona Baguma, Scientist at NaCCRI and chair of this year’s conference, will present on the vision for cassava research and development.

Dr. Eugene Terry, private consultant, will discuss cassava as a food security crop today and industrial product of tomorrow.

Dr. Martin Fregene, Special Advisor to Akin Adesina, the Honourable Minister for Agriculture and Natural Resources in Nigeria, will provide an overview of the cassava Green Revolution in Nigeria.

Dr. Nteranya Sanginga, Director General, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) will present “The cassava Brown Revolution in Africa”.

Dr. Mike Thresh, Honorary Professor -NRI (Natural Resources Institute), University of Greenwich, will discuss cassava pests diseases past and present.

Dr. James Kinyangi, regional program leader for East Africa for the CGIAR program on Climate Change Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), will discuss climate change actions.

Dr. Andy Jarvis, director of the decision and policy analysis area in the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), will discuss cassava and global climate change.

Dr. Don Ort, research leader of the USDA/ARS Global Change and Photosynthesis Research Unit in Urbana, IL will present “Response of cassava to high CO₂ levels”.

Dr. James Legg, scientist at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture will discuss cassava brown streak disease and cassava mosaic disease pandemics.

Dr. Antony Belloti, emeritus scientist/consultant with CIAT, will discuss insect pandemics and their effects on cassava production.

Dr. Valerie Verdier, Marie Curie Fellow (EU, People) based at the University of Colorado, will present “Cassava bacterial blight and bacterial resistance genes”.

Dr. Gengyun (George) Zhang, Vice Director of BGI, will present, “The example of rice genomics for cassava”.

Dr. Steve Rounsley, genomics leader, Dow AgroSciences, will present “High density SNP map for cassava”.

Dr. Martha Hamblin, senior research associate in the Department of Plant Breeding and Genetics at Cornell University, will discuss genome wide selection.

Dr. Pat Schnable, founding director of the Center for Plant Genomics at Iowa State University, will discuss genome analysis and heterosis.

For more [biographical information](http://www.danforthcenter.org/GCP21-II/speakers.asp) about the plenary speakers please visit, [www. http://www.danforthcenter.org/GCP21-II/speakers.asp](http://www.danforthcenter.org/GCP21-II/speakers.asp)

Throughout the week concurrent sessions will be held on a variety of topics such as biodiversity and genetic resources, physiology and abiotic stress, agronomy, modern breeding, metabolic engineering and cassava seed systems.

Since it was founded in 2003, GCP21 has developed a list of technologies and research themes to focus activities and promote investment in those priority areas. In the last year, several research projects totaling more than \$60 million in grants in the areas of cassava genomics, genetic engineering, biofortification, genetics and biology have been initiated and will be reported on during the five-day program.

Participants will exchange knowledge and experiences in the areas of socio-economics, biodiversity and genetic resources, post-harvest, starch modification, nutrition, genomics, molecular genetic markers and gene discovery, tissue culture and transformation, biotic and abiotic stresses, participatory research and technology transfer.

After reviewing advances made to date, members of GCP21 will present a synopsis identifying gaps in technical, capacity and funding as well as set additional priorities for R&D that will enable cassava production to withstand global changes in climate and related issues.

Participants will include representatives from NARS, international agricultural research centers, advanced laboratories and universities from developed and developing countries, United Nations' agencies, governmental and non-governmental organizations, donor and development organizations, businesses in the ag-biotechnology and food processing industries.

GCP21 is chaired by Dr. Claude Fauquet, Principal Investigator at the [Danforth Plant Science Center](#) and Director of [International Laboratory for Tropical Agricultural Biotechnology](#) (ILTAB) in St. Louis, MO and [Dr. Joe Tohme](#), Director of Agrobiodiversity Research of the [International Center for Tropical Agriculture](#) (CIAT) in Cali, Colombia.

"It is crucial for humanity to invest science and technology into cassava if we want the fourth source of calories in the developing world to feed more than one billion people by 2050," said Fauquet.

"This is an unprecedented opportunity for some of the world's leading crop scientists to join up to support smallholder farmers across the tropics in boosting production of one of their most important and promising food crops," said Tohme.

Local organizing committee:

Yona Baguma, Scientist at NaCRRI, Chairman of GCP21-II
Richard Okuti, Coordinator (ASILI)
Emily Twinamasiko, Director General of NARO
Robert Anguzu, Communication Officer of NARO
James A. Ogwang, Director of NaCRRI
Anton Bua, Team Leader of National Cassava Program, NaCRRI
Settumba Mukasa, Senior Lecturer, Makerere University
Ali Kabogoza, Senior Administrator of NaCRRI
Christopher Omongo, Scientist at NaCRRI
Titus Alicai, Scientist at NaCRRI
Robert Kawuki, Scientist at NaCRRI
Hellen Apio, Research Assistant at NaCRRI
Emmanuel Ogwok, Research Assistant at NaCRRI

International Committee:

Claude Fauquet, Donald Danforth Plant Science Center (DDPSC)
Joe Tohme, International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)
Paul Anderson, Donald Danforth Plant Science Center (DDPSC)
Alfred Dixon, Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI)
Morag Ferguson, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)
Wilhelm Gruissem, ETH-Zurich
Peter Kulakow, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)
Marc Van Montagu, IPBO
Luciano L. Nass, Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA)
Steve Rounsley, Dow AgroSciences
Nteranya Sanginga, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)
Motoaki Seki, RIKEN Yokohama Institute
Nigel Taylor, Donald Danforth Plant Science Center (DDPSC)
Eugene Terry, Private Consultant
Gary Toenniessen, The Rockefeller Foundation
Wenquan Wang, Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (CATAS)
Andrew Westby, Natural Resources Institute (NRI)

Event Sponsors:

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SLU-Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
Corn Products International
Government of Uganda
National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO)

About Cassava

Cassava is cultivated mainly by hundreds of millions of subsistence farmers, often on marginal lands and is vital for both food security and income generation. In Asia and Latin America, cassava serves as livestock feed, an industrial input, and a source of fuel and food. In Africa, it is the second most important source of calories after maize, an inexpensive and essential food for the poor, and an emerging cash crop. Tapioca, yucca, and manioc are other names for cassava. Although cassava has many properties that make it an important food across 105 countries in the world, it also has many limitations. Cassava lacks essential vitamins and nutrients and is susceptible to many pathogens, particularly in Africa, where one-third of the continental harvest is lost each year to viral diseases.

The Global Cassava Partnership (GCP21)

Founded in 2003, GCP21 is an alliance of 45 organizations from the global cassava research and development community that are working under the umbrella of the Global Cassava Development Strategy of IFAD/FAO to raise awareness of the importance of the crop in the developing world and to identify the major constraints to improving the productivity potential of cassava to benefit millions of people in the world. Cassava R&D has received support from the Rockefeller Foundation, USAID from the American people, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The Howard G. Buffett Foundation, the Monsanto Fund, SNP, U.S. Department of Energy and the Roche Company.

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