

# Quality & Yield

Supporting smallholder farmers' decisions on top quality commercial products

## IN THIS ISSUE...

4

### UGANDA

More private sector partners availing commercial products for screening

8

### NIGERIA

Film on soybean inoculation produced

12

### KENYA

KSTCIE: Acknowledging role of COMPRO II on regulatory environments



## A word from the project leader

“...We are seeing good progress with regulatory environment reforms...”



In these last three months, I have had the privilege of visiting most of our team leaders across the six countries. Talking to the teams, I got the sense that despite any existing challenges, there is movement across project objectives.

The changes we have implemented in the dissemination approach have begun to pay off, with the pace of activities picking up in Nigeria, Uganda and Tanzania. The arena for commercial products availability in the countries

is slowly improving, with key actors such as IITA making aggressive inroads in the rhizobium inoculant space with such new products as Nodumax in Nigeria.

This, without doubt is partly due to the increasingly supportive regulatory environments. It is quite exciting to see our private sector partners such as MEA fertilizers also reaching out to newer markets in West Africa with flagship products such as Biofix. This trend, sustained over the longer term will be a critical indicator of an improving regulatory space for commercial products.

We are seeing good progress with regulatory environment reforms in Kenya, where our key partners, Kenya Plant Health and Inspectorate Services (KEPHIS), is providing leadership in development of the draft Fertilizer and Soil Conditioners Bill, that will eventually form the main reference point for commercial products regulation as well. The lessons emerging from this process are invaluable for other countries where this process is still a few steps behind.

Importantly, we have begun to see actual sign-off of some project milestones. We signed off the project communications strategy in June 2014. It is envisaged the communications strategy will forge and maintain connections between partners, allowing the project to effectively communicate within and to stakeholder outside the project. This is not just exciting from a project implementation point of view, but demonstrates continued commitment of project partners.

A number of partners are reporting additional leverage of technical and even financial support in such areas as development of information and communications materials to support their field work. These include Notore in Nigeria, Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), Africa 2000 Network (A2N-Uganda) and Africa Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership (AFAP) that have worked closely with sister project, Africa Soil Health Consortium (a project co-ordinated by CABI) to develop extension support materials.

We are also more confident with our data collection and reporting needs in the project with the recruitment of a new member of staff to take charge of the project's M&E. Part of her immediate duties included completing the draft M&E framework which is currently under review by management. The completed framework will form the basis for tracking project progress.

As you read this issue of our newsletter, we urge you to share your story with the rest of the COMPROII stakeholders in the next issue.

**Dr. Cargele Masso (IITA) – Project Leader**

Microbiology training materials developed during COMPROI project are now being used as reading notes for a core course in soil microbiology that is taught to all the MSc Soil Science candidates at Makerere University in Uganda. The course, titled, SOS 7102 Advance Soil Microbiology is a course taught to Year I MSc soil Science students.

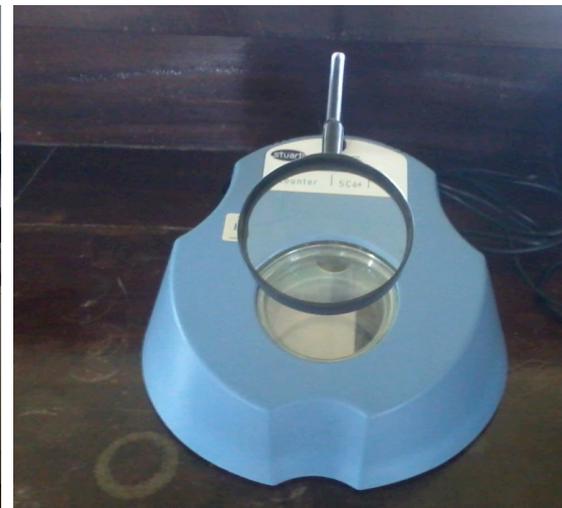
In addition some Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are also used as a laboratory guide for Microbiology practical's for final year BSc Agriculture students specializing in Soil Science and the Year I MSc Soil Science candidate.

Dr. John Baptiste Tumuhairwe, the country representative for the project in Uganda underscores this achievement. "This is a particularly exciting contribution of the COMPROII to enriching the training curriculum at the university level as some of the materials will be fully integrated in the curriculum during review soon."

One of the critical milestones of the COMPROII project is to facilitate processes in the different counties that will ensure that some of the universities are using information

## Impact on training curriculum for product screening

and approaches from COMPRO in their degree and short-course curricula and for trainees to apply the same information in their professions. "This is significant because influencing university training curriculum is a very arduous process in most instances. At one level we are enriching the curriculum, and at another, we are ensuring sustainability of these skills in future generations of scientists trained in these subject," he concludes.



High capacity automatic autoclave (L) and colony counter (R).



COMPROII's Dr. John Baptiste Tumuhairwe (L) and Moses Thuita (R) and Ruth Mukhongo, COMPROII PhD candidate (centre), at a trial plot in Uganda

## More private sector partners availing commercial products for screening

More private sector companies are enlisting their products for laboratory and field screening by the COMPROII team in Uganda this year:

Kinyara Sugar, availed a total of six commercial products which have been duly registered by the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries (MAAIF) in Uganda. The registered products range from bio-pesticides to bio-fertilizers and soil amendments formulations. Active agents include Rhizobium, Trichoderma, Metarrhizium, and Pseudomonas-based formulations. These products are currently used under the names; Kinyazoto, Kinyaspirillum, Kinyphos, Kinyderma, Kinymonas and Kinymet.

“This willingness by our private sector actors to collaboration in product screening is due to the recent agreements between IITA, Makerere University and MAAIF that we reached in 2013,” explains Dr. John Baptiste Tumuhairwe.

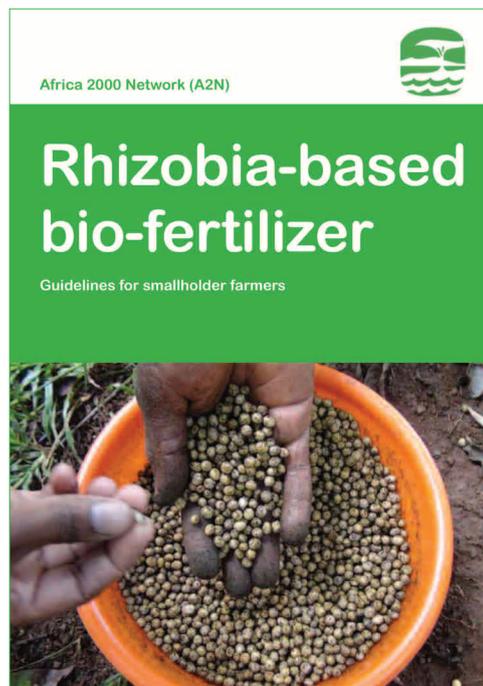
In the harmonized sub-agreement, Makerere University will now provide support to MAAIF, to facilitate objective 3 activities. Dr. Tumuhairwe hopes that this new arrangement will greatly improve the implementation of Objective 2 and 3 activities on screening and regulation respectively.

Other products from received for screening include five new commercial products five new ones from Mauritius and India. Screening for the new set of product begins once the greenhouse is completed later this year. The products include a number of rhizobium-based formulations and soil organic matter enhancers.

The prototype manual that was developed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in March 2014, now has a Uganda edition. The adapted version of the manual, will soon to be available for use in COMPROII dissemination and extension support work undertaken by key partners such as Africa 2000 Network (A2N) and their partner agencies. Combining key principles - accuracy of science and simplicity of messages - the manual is aimed at extension teams and lead farmers who work closely with small holder farmers in areas where rhizobium inoculant has been proven to show good results on target legumes. In Uganda, some of the target legumes for this technology have included soybean, groundnut, common bean and cowpea.

In order to ensure that simplicity of messages was validated the write-shop included the participation of two lead farmers from the A2N network of farmers. Mrs. Winnie Mukabwa, one of the lead farmers participating in the workshop was very excited about her role. "I feel that my opinion as a farmer has been taken into account when shaping the messages in these materials. This way even the other farmers will find it more useful and relevant," she explained.

## Africa 2000 Network adapt rhizobium inoculation manual



Another lead farmer, Koma Stevenson, was happy about the use of illustrations in the materials. "I think this will help address problems with understanding where the materials are used with farmers who cannot read well."

Dr. Christopher Kyesa, Executive Director at A2N, was optimistic that the manual and other support materials developed in the write-shop will equip A2N's cadre of extension teams known as Community Based Facilitators (CBFs) in all the key areas including Tororo, Kanungu, Bugiri, Kabale where the CBFs are interfacing with farmers. "We really needed these materials for the next season that starts in September 2014, so this is more than timely," he explained.

Stella Keihanga, Documentation Officer at A2N was happy to see the emergence of at least four new materials for her resource centre in Kampala, but also greatly improve the outreach work of the CBFs. "We will also share these materials with some of our partners in the areas we work in," she said.

The materials adaptation write-shop was organised by CABI as part of the technical support provided in Objective 4 on communications. Technical communications expertise was sourced from the Africa Soil Health Consortium project managed by CABI. Objective 4 aims to support increased sharing of information on commercial products, among stakeholders.

CABI's James Watiti leading a session at the A2N write-shop



Participants from A2N at the write-shop



CABI's James Watiti (L) and A2N staff discussing the rhizobia-based manual



Mango Tree's Kennet Christensen presenting illustration ideas for the manual





## Short film on inoculation of soybean to help dissemination work

An idea that started at the Addis Ababa write-shop in March 2014, has now become a short film to support farmer education and dissemination work for Notore and its partners in Nigeria.

Innocent Okuku, who is in charge of dissemination activities in Nigeria, feels vindicated. “In March we said that we would like to supplement other communication approaches with use of video. We knew that for our teams of Village Promoters, this medium was previously underutilised and yet it can really help them reach out to a large number of low literacy farmer audiences,” he explains.

Two short videos were produced with the active participation of communications specialists from Africa Soil Health Consortium, a knowledge and information dissemination project managed by CABI. The videos cover planting of soybean (land preparation, seed selection, and how to inoculate) and urea deep placement for rice. Filming was done in Niger state, north west of Abuja.

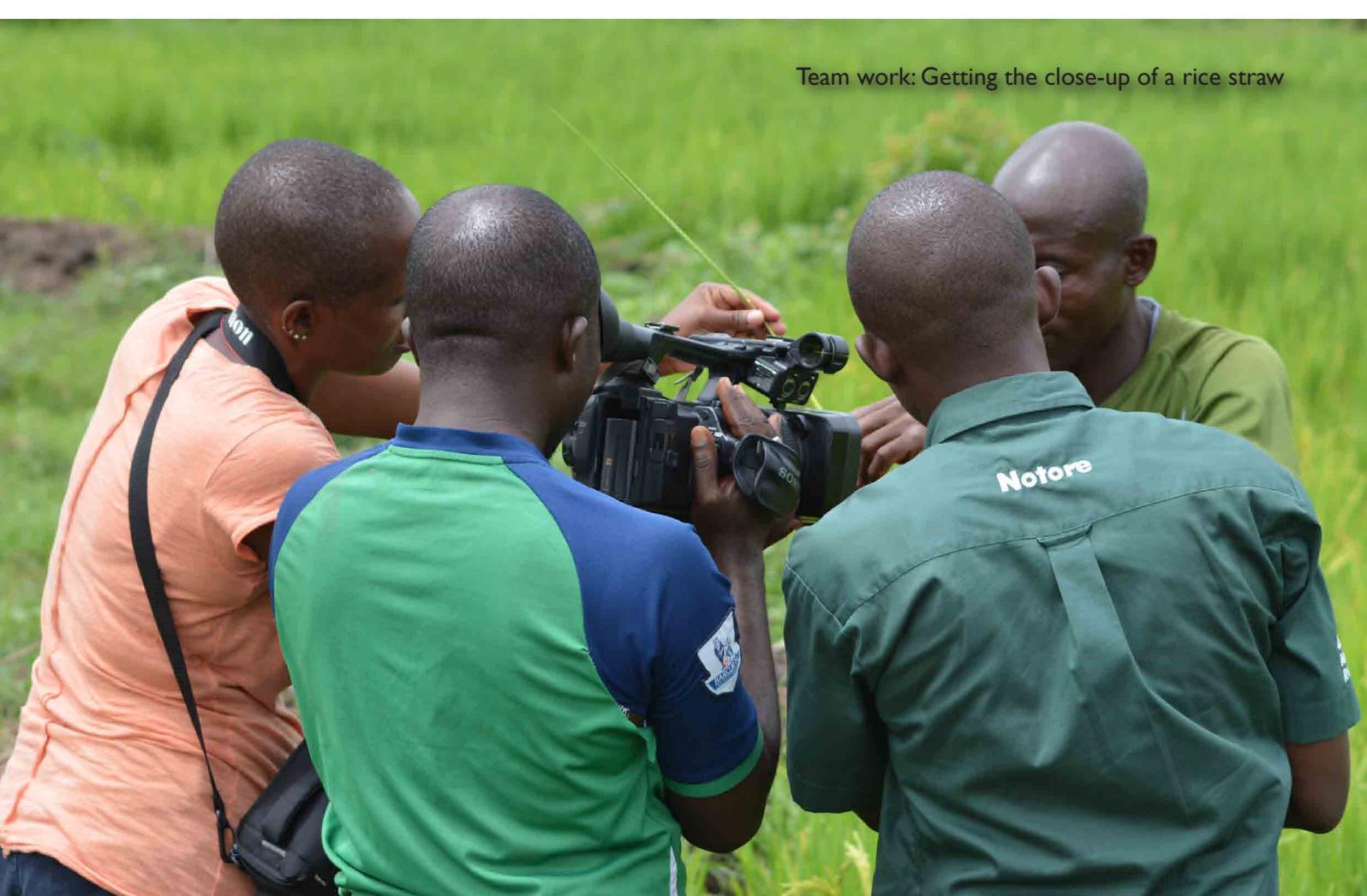
The finalised video was translated into four local languages, to increase utility.

“As an extension support tool, video overcomes quite a number of obstacles including literacy, and the need for practical demonstration. Once you introduce local language as well, you have a powerful channel that gets as close as possible to a real demonstration in the field,” says Grace Omondi, Communications Specialist with the Africa Soil Health Consortium, who acted as producer for the videos.

NOTORE and ASHC staff scouting the rice fields in Niger state, Nigeria



Team work: Getting the close-up of a rice straw





Participants at the KSTCIE meeting in March 2014

## KSTCIE: Acknowledging role of COMPROII on regulatory environments

The Kenya standing Technical Committee on Imports and Exports (KSTCIE) is a Risk Analysis Committee composed of various stakeholders in agriculture and is chaired by Ministry of Agriculture Livestock and Fisheries (MOALF), State Department of Agriculture. The committee evaluates imports and exports of biological materials to determine risks involved. These biological materials include live biological controls, bio-fertilizers, bio-stimulants, regulated articles and their products among others. KEPHIS is the secretariat to the KSTCIE.

A stakeholders meeting convened by the Kenya Standing Committee on Imports and Exports (KSTCIE) confirmed that the current work undertaken by the COMPROII project on strengthening regulatory environment for commercial products is crucial for future harmonization processes both in Kenya and the region. Kenya Plant Health and Inspectorate Services (KEPHIS), is the focal point for regulatory aspects in Kenya also the secretariat of the KSTCIE.

The meeting which was convened on 4 March 2014 in Nairobi brought together diverse players in Kenya with the objective of sensitizing key stakeholders including regulators, researchers and private sector on the activities of the committee. Speaking at the meeting, Dr. Esther Kimani, General Manager, for phytosanitary services at KEPHIS said the meeting was important as a part of the process of bringing all stakeholders to the same level of understanding about the role of regulation in commercial and other biological products.

"It is quite often the case that traders in some of these commercial products perceive restrictions and regulations imposed on the products as barriers to trade and therefore such a forum is important to bring all stakeholders to the same level of understanding" she explained.

Stella Simiyu, representing African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) and COMPROII project at the meeting observed that the bio-fertilizer and bio-pesticide environment in Kenya was currently guided by a set of laws and subsidiary legislation, including, The Pest Control Products Act, 1982 (PCPB), Draft Pest Control Products Bill 2013 (by PCPB), Plant protection Act (CAP 324); KEPHIS Act. No 54, 2012 and The Fertilizer and Animal Foodstuffs Act, Cap 345 of 1963 revised in 1977.

Dr. Cargele Masso, COMPROII project leader, commended Kenya in their efforts to harmonize the various laws that address commercial products. He specifically lauded the work done with the current draft law on fertilizer and soil conditioners spearheaded by the by Ministry of Agriculture Livestock and Fisheries as a critical component of the institutionalization process for commercial products quality in Kenya.



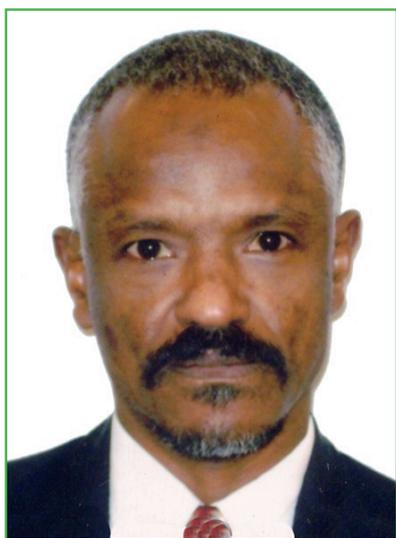
**Ms. Alote Ewinyu**

M&E role becomes invaluable.”

“I know that I will have to contribute to effective management and coordination of diverse aspects of data collection and compilation. Together with the COMPROII team, I hope to strengthen our collective M&E systems. Previously, I worked in a Regional PMER Unit of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement where I provided support to targeted National Societies covered by the Regional Office to apply participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation and reporting processes. As a result of my Movement experience, I see M&E not just as a principle, but a practice where a number of components work together including, capacity building, resource allocation, training, and technical guidance and support.”

Ms. Alote Ewinyu started work as the Data Management and Monitoring and Evaluation consultant for the COMPROII project in June 2014. “I know my work is well cut out for me. My first port of call will be to work with partners to build a shared understanding and making operational the COMPROII Monitoring and Evaluation framework,” she says.

The challenge of addressing the M&E issues in the project was a strong motivation. “I have talked to a number of project team members over the last one month. It is even clearer to me that indeed, progress tracking and documentation is as critical to the success of the project as actual implementation of the project work plans. It is also clear that as we move into the third and fourth years of implementation, our stakeholders will begin to demand to see tangible outcomes of our interventions. This is where a strengthened



**Dr. Aziz AbdelGadir**

Dr. Abdel Aziz AbdelGadir is the newest scientific oversight staff member for COMPROII. He holds a PhD in Soil Science, Plant Physiology and International Agriculture from Cornell University. Previously, he worked as a Research Fellow at Biosystems Engineering Dept., Auburn University, USA. Dr. AbdelGadir brings to COMPROII more than twenty years of professional experience in diverse agricultural research contexts in both developing country contexts and international research institutions.

“I’m excited by this position for a number of reasons. The first is that I will be supporting teams to realize the dream of making effective commercial products accessible to the smallholder farmer by getting the quality aspects right. Secondly, I see this as an opportunity to support the many students involved in research on commercial products, and therefore increasing the pool of skills in this area for Africa,” he explains.

Dr. AbdelGadir’s key duties will include supporting a number of work streams for the project including, assessing soil fertility aspects affecting crop responses to inoculants (limiting factors), the interface between ISFM and inoculant effectiveness, evaluation of highly effective inoculants in the context of ISFM, and assessment of native strains of inoculant with the main objective of improving the food crops productivity and the rural livelihoods of smallholder farmers in Africa. He will also strengthen collaboration with the partners at universities that can contribute to developing COMPROII content that could be used to upgrade the ISFM/soil microbiology programs at training institutions. He will also be instrumental in providing supervisory oversight for COMPROII graduate students.

## Meetings:

- September 2014 - Partners meeting in Nakuru, Kenya
- October 2014 - Partner follow-up on the updated M&E framework

## Partnerships within COMPROII

Partnership is a key principle and strength of the COMPROII project. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation provides the financial support to the project while four sub-Saharan-based organizations lead various objectives of the project (ILTA - objective 2 and 5, FIPS Africa - objective 1, CABI - objective 4, and AATF - objective 3). Other collaborating agencies bring in a rich mix of skills and field experience to ensure successful implementation.

Selected COMPROII partners are listed below (this is not a comprehensive list); for instance, partner collaborators are not listed:

- Plant protection and regulatory services directorate (Ghana)
- Institute of Agricultural Research of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria
- National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Nigeria
- Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate (KEPHIS)
- Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), Ethiopia
- Makerere University (Uganda)
- Egerton University (Kenya)
- Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana
- Tanzania Fertilizer Regulatory Authority
- CIAT-TSBF
- Department of Crop Protection - Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Uganda

Additional partners in each of the project countries will be considered shortly to facilitate and expedite implementation of dissemination activities.

*Photos: Cover and on pages 6, 7, 8 and 9 by Grace Omondi, CABI*

'Quality & Yield' is the newsletter of the COMPROII project. It is a quarterly publication that highlights key activities and experiences of the project. 'Quality & Yield' is produced and designed by CABI. We welcome short and medium length articles by project partners.

Send your comments and articles to [C.Masso@cgiar.org](mailto:C.Masso@cgiar.org) and [J.Watiti@cabi.org](mailto:J.Watiti@cabi.org)

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