

The Sweetpotato Community of Practice Celebrates Science & Biofortification

AUG 2017

The 7th Annual Sweetpotato for Profit and Health Initiative (SPHI) Technical meeting aligned with the 10th Triennial African Potato Association Conference in Addis Ababa and CIP's 45th Anniversary to maximize participation. SPHI membership continues to expand. Community of Practice (CoP) participants joined in celebrating the 2016 World Food Prize recognition of Biofortification.



Fig 1. Participants at 7th SPHI technical meeting in Ethiopia. (credit C. Bukania)

What is the problem?

The SPHI is now in its second five-year phase, with the ambitious goal of reaching 10 million households by 2020 with improved varieties of sweetpotato and their diversified use. By September 2016, 2.9 million households have been reached. While some governments recognize the potential role of sweetpotato to improve health and wealth across a range of agro-ecologies, the number of dedicated staff working on sweetpotato related research and dissemination is still limited. The diversified use of sweetpotato by private sector processors in SSA is still in its infancy.

What do we want to achieve?

We want to see a growing and vibrant CoP, with sweetpotato researchers, development agents, farmers, private sector processors and consumers able to obtain and apply sweetpotato knowledge effectively. We want to see an ever growing number of organizations and governments committed to the SPHI goals and sharing their strategies and lessons learned with others. Sweetpotato Support Platforms (SSPs) at the sub-regional level (East and Central Africa; Southern Africa; West Africa), started in 2010, continue to support breeding and germplasm exchange.

Where are we working?

SSPs have been established within each major sub-region of SSA. For East and Central Africa,

the SSP is hosted at the National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI) in Uganda and the Kenyan Plant Health Inspection Service (KEPHIS). For Southern Africa, the SSP is based at the Agrarian Research Institute of Mozambique (IIAM) in Maputo. The West Africa platform is located at the Crops Research Institute (CRI) in Kumasi, Ghana. CoP groups are currently targeting the 17 SPHI countries¹.

How are we making it happen?

The SPHI Steering Committee (SSC) comprises five donor organizations and 11 other research and development organizations committed to achieving the SPHI goal. Development organizations share the number of direct and indirect beneficiaries reached annually, which are reported in the annual Status of Sweetpotato in sub-Saharan Africa report.

Knowledge and best practice is shared through the Sweetpotato Knowledge Portal, which anyone can register and contribute to, the development of tools and toolkits to facilitate standardized data collection across projects and countries, the annual production of update progress briefs on research achievements and projects, and support to four CoP technical

¹ Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, DR Congo, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Angola, Madagascar, South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Benin.

The Sweetpotato for Profit and Health Initiative (SPHI), launched in 2009, seeks to improve the lives of 10 million African households in 17 SSA countries by 2020 through providing access to improved varieties of sweetpotato and their diversified use.

Support for the establishment of the Platforms and the holding of CoP meetings is provided by the Sweetpotato Action for Security and Health in Africa (SASHA) Project, led by the International Potato Center with over 26 collaborating partners.



Led by CIP, the ten-year Sweetpotato Action for Security and Health in Africa (SASHA) project is designed to improve the food security and health of poor families in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) by exploiting the untapped potential of sweetpotato.



Fig 2. CIP scientist Kwame Ogero with visitor at SPHI booth at the ISTRC Africa Branch meeting. (credit J. Low)

working groups. The four CoP groups are: 1) Breeding and Genomics, 2) Seed Systems and Crop Management, 3) Marketing, Processing, and Utilization, and 4) Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation (MLE). Each group meets annually and a sub-group of the Seed Systems CoP focused on pre-basic seed has one additional meeting.

What have we achieved since June 2016?

- Ninety-four participants, representing 21 different organizations attended the 1.5-day 7th Annual SPHI Technical Meetings in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (Fig. 1). Annual briefs prepared include: 15 for SASHA project updates and 24 for other sweetpotato projects plus the second Status of Sweetpotato in SSA report.
- The SPHI meeting was aligned with two key events also held in Addis Ababa: the 10th Triennial African Potato Association (APA) Conference, held on 9–12 October (with 300 participants), and a cocktail celebrating the International Potato Center's 45th Anniversary as an organization and the awarding of the World Food Prize for biofortification. Not surprisingly, the theme of the meeting was A Time of Celebration.
- SASHA sponsored 20 participants at the subsequent APA meeting, all of whom had abstracts accepted for oral or poster presentations. Papers associated with the presentations have been submitted to Open Agriculture, who agreed to publish all outputs from the APA meeting.



Fig 4. Discussing root quality for processing and storage during COP field trip in Kenya. (credit C. Bukania)

- The MLE team finalized developing nine modules of the Tools and Techniques for Monitoring Key Indicators of Sweetpotato Interventions in SSA: A Practitioner's Guide. The tools were tested in Rwanda and training was conducted on its use at the MLE CoP meeting.
- The revamped Sweetpotato Knowledge Portal is in full operation, with 496 users and 2,067 files. A monthly E-digest is sent out highlighting recent content to over 1,500 contact addresses.
- Table 1 summarizes the dates, venues, and gender of participants attending the CoP meetings during the past year. Minutes of these meetings and the associated presentations are available on the Portal. At each meeting, there is a field trip, which is a learning opportunity for all (Fig. 2).
- The major event for the SPHI this year was having three CIP scientists, Jan Low, Maria Andrade, Robert Mwanga and Howdy Bouis of HarvestPlus selected as co-laureates for the 2016 World Food Prize for their work on biofortification. The award was presented on 13th October 2016 in Des Moines, Iowa, the home of the World Food Prize Foundation. A separate brief highlights media coverage associated with the award. There have been over 200 media outputs and the awardees have spoken at more than 20 events since winning the prize.
- The SPHI supported exhibition booths at 7 conferences or symposiums (Fig. 3).

Table 1. Dates and attendance at SPHI Community of Practice meetings in 2016

CoP Meeting	Co-lead* by	Date	No. of Women	No. of Men	No. of Organizations	Venue
Sweetpotato Seed Systems: 6th Consultation- Sustainable Pre-basic Seed Production	Jean Ndirigue (RAB, Rwanda), Gorrettie Ssemakula (NaCRRI, Uganda), Jude Njoku (NRCRI, Nigeria)	6–8 Dec. 2016	16	37	15	Nairobi, Kenya (Pride Inn, Rhapta Road)
3rd Monitoring, Learning & Evaluation	Julius Okello (CIP), Ibrahim Koara (IDE)	30 Jan–2 Feb 2017	4	26	7	Maputo, Mozambique
4th Marketing, Processing & Utilization	Tawanda Muzhingi (CIP), Francis Amagloh (UDS), Madjaliwa Nzamwita (RAB)	1–3 Mar 2017	20	27	23	Kisumu, Kenya, Sovereign Hotel
16th Sweetpotato Speedbreeders and Genomics	Robert Mwanga (CIP) and Craig Yencho (NCSU)	15–18 May 2017	13	30	17	Kigali, Rwanda, Golden.
7th Sweetpotato Seed Systems: 7th Consultation- Sustainable Pre-basic Seed Production	Jean Ndirigue (RAB, Rwanda), Gorrettie Ssemakula (NaCRRI), Jude Njoku (NRCRI), Srini Rajendran (CIP)	12 May 2017	8	16	15	Mukono, Uganda
7th Seed Systems and Crop Management	Jean Ndirigue (RAB), Gorrettie Ssemakula (NaCRRI)	13–14 May 2017	17	45	27	Mukono, Uganda

2 The organizations are CIP, FARA, the CGIAR Roots, Tubers and Banana Program (RTB), HarvestPlus, the Natural Resources Institute, PATH, Farm Concern International, Helen Keller international, and North Carolina State University (NCSU), Catholic Relief Services, and Farm Africa. The five donors are: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, UKAid, USAID, Irish Aid, and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA).

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