Train-the-Trainer Extension Workshops in the Middle Belt and Northern Regions of Nigeria

Dr. James Lowenberg-DeBoer, Dr. Tahirou Abdoulaye, and James Murren

Purdue Extension Educators Adrienne Held, Maria Restrepo, Bill Horan and Jeremy Weber, and International Extension Program Coordinator, Jim Murren, traveled to Nigeria from August 5-21, 2009 to assist in conducting a “Train-the-Trainer” program with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Kano Station, as part of the Purdue Improved Cowpea Storage (PICS) project, which is facilitated by Purdue's International Programs in Agriculture (IPIA).

For two weeks, they traveled in separate teams with IITA staff throughout northern and central Nigeria to carry out more than 23 training workshops in state capitals and surrounding villages of 14 states and the Federal Capital Territory. A typical workshop involved a day or a day and half of working with Nigerian Extension Agents (EAs) and officials from each state’s Agricultural Development Program, getting started somewhere around 9:00 in the morning and lasting until around 6:00 p.m. A follow-up session occurred the next morning with the final components of the training, if needed.

The purpose of the workshops was to train the EAs on the use of the PICS hermetic, triple-bag storage technology, providing instruction on how to properly use the plastic bags, as well as socioeconomic implications, entomological aspects/pest problems, surveying, and ethical research processes. At the end of the trainings, the EAs then traveled back to their communities where they met with village chiefs, seeking permission to hold a demonstration program for the farmers living in the village.

While in Nigeria, the Purdue team heard several stories of “killer beans,” cowpeas that were stored with improper use of pesticides. The “killer beans” cause entire villages to become seriously ill and sometimes lead to multiple deaths. Such stories served as an important reminder to the team of why they were doing the work they were doing.

Overall, IITA and PICS considered the program a great success. Purdue Extension directly participated in training some 650 Nigerian EAs. The EAs trained some 10,000 villages on the PICS technology.