International Plant Diagnostic Network - Stakeholder Training

Dr. Pete Vergot III
District Extension Director
University of Florida IFAS Extension
Extension Administration
155 Research Road
Quincy, FL 32351
Phone: (850) 875-7137
Fax: (850) 875-7189
e-mail: pvergot@ufl.edu

Dr. Tim Momol
University of Florida IFAS Extension

Introduction
The International Plant Diagnostic Network (IPDN) was developed to assist in food safety and the protection of crops for citizens of the United States of America. IPDN used the model of a system of diagnosing plant problems and information sharing of the National Plant Diagnostic Network (NPDN). IPDN expands on this model to include other areas of the world in an attempt to solve the problems of plant diseases at the source of the problem in selected areas of the world by collaboration and assisting others with diagnostic training, information and tools to combat plant diseases by the transfer of knowledge of the U.S. Land Grant system. Early activities of the IPDN plan included a stakeholder meeting and training session of communications and plant pathogen diagnostic tools in West Africa.

Purpose
The impact of plant disease on the agriculture of West Africa, the most poverty-stricken region of the world, is immense. The lack of technical ability to diagnose the causal agents of disease and disseminate this information through a network of stakeholders prevents the adoption of appropriate IPM solutions (Waller et al 2002). Two objectives of the IPDN workshop held in West Africa were to increase communications of the stakeholders of the area and to introduce and develop new diagnostic techniques to increase the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices for farmers of West Africa.

Methods
To train the stakeholders on communications and digital diagnostics a four-day hands-on training was offered in collaboration with the West African Plant Diagnostic Network (WAPDN) at the center of International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) located in Benin, a country of West Africa. To accomplish the goals of the project two web-based technologies were introduced to the stakeholders, one being the use of web-based interactive video and the other a web-based digital diagnostic tool of the University of Florida IFAS Distance Diagnostic and Identification System (DDIS), a tool for assisting in the timely diagnosis of plant pathogens.
Results
The first objective of increasing communications among the West African region was accomplished by introducing and training the participants to use web-based interactive video software tools. These software tools allow individuals and groups to communicate with both voice and video without the costs of long distance travel or cost.

The second objective of developing new diagnostic techniques was accomplished by introducing the University of Florida IFAS - Distance Diagnostic and Identification System (DDIS), a tool for assisting in the timely diagnosis of plant pathogens. The participants of the training observed how DDIS provides for an environment for agricultural extension workers and scientists to share information on plant diseases and how problems can be quickly communicated and assessed.

Educational Importance
The successes of this stakeholder meeting and training session allowed for an increased knowledge of all participants. The use of stakeholder meeting continues to be an important tool for Extension. Extension workers worldwide can effectively utilize many tools that U.S. Extension faculty currently use. By providing information and training of web-based communications and by sharing plant pathogen diagnostic tools and methods, the farmers of West Africa and the United States will have an opportunity to work together with the world struggle of keeping the food supply safe for human consumption.

Keywords: Extension, stakeholder, communications