

## PRESS RELEASE

Productivity & Stress Management; PBR Cowpea

### Ghanaian smallholder farmers to benefit from PBR Cowpea



(Accra, Nov. 12, 2020) A team of Ghanaian scientists working to ensure that cowpea, one of the staples in the country, is protected against *Maruca vitrata* (the notorious legume pod borer that gives farmers nightmare) say the aim of their research that has taken them over 10 years is to lift Ghanaian cowpea farmers out of poverty.

The team, based at the Savanna Agricultural Research Institute, Nyakapaka, edsaid cowpea farmers in the country were at the mercy of insects and pests, a situation they said was discouraging farmers from planting cowpea and instead is increasing the country's annual import bills.

Currently, Ghanaian cowpea farmers harvest about 0.5 tons per hectare even with the highest performing varieties that have the potential of producing 2 tons per hectare. A farmer who is determined to make a good harvest will have to spray insecticides up to 10 times in a cropping season for better



results. The farmers spend an average of 400 Cedis (\$70) for chemicals that can spray one hectare of land for one farming season.

“The aim of this project from all sense of humility is to reward farmers for their hardwork,” said Dr Jerry Nboyine, the lead scientist and Principal Investigator (PI) for the Pod Borer Resistant Cowpea Project in Ghana. ‘We as scientists have the obligation of setting free the farmer who works daily on borrowed money to plough, buy seeds, and engage labour which in most cases are family labourers who help to weed and maintain the farm, and at the end of the season has nothing to show because insects of various types have ravaged the farm,” added Dr Jerry Nboyine.

Dr. Nboyine noted that the only way farmers in Ghana can plant cowpea and get a good harvest currently was to continue to apply chemicals.

“A farmer has to acquire the insecticides at 40 Cedis (\$7) per hectare per week; he will then apply this almost every other week and at the end of the season, he may have spent over 400 Cedis (\$70) before harvest. How many farmers can afford that?’ he asked.

According to the PI, the country stands to lose if deliberate efforts are not invested in research capable of addressing the challenges that farmers in the country face.

“Nigeria has released the same crop; research has advanced in Burkina Faso and these are countries we trade freely with. Ghana has to step up; otherwise in the next few years, what we couldn’t produce as a country, we will start importing,’ he added.

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**About AATF: (<https://www.aatf-africa.org/about-us/>):**

AATF is an African-led not-for-profit organization that is working towards agricultural transformation to address food and nutrition security and generate health and wealth for smallholder farmers through access and delivery of innovative and fitting agricultural technologies. AATF believes that farmers in Africa will become globally competitive through use of the best technology, optimal agricultural practices, strategic product value addition and boosted access to efficient markets within and outside Africa.

**About: Savanna Agricultural Research Institute (<https://www.sari.csir.org.gh/>)**

Savanna Agricultural Research Institute (SARI) is one of the thirteen (13) research institutes of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research Institute (CSIR). It was originally known as the Nyankpala Agricultural Experimental Station (NAES) and operated as an outpost of the Crop Research Institute (CRI), Kumasi. In 1994, it gained autonomy and was upgraded to a fully-fledged research institute and thus renamed Savanna Agricultural Research Institute-SARI for short. SARI is located 16 kilometres west of Tamale in the Tolon District of the Northern Region of Ghana.