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October-December 2018 Newsletter

Dear NextGen Cassava community,

Hello, and happy new year! We hope you have had a nice holiday break, and are ready to dive back into the world of cassava improvement with us.

We are already off to an exciting start in 2019, as we plan the first annual meeting of our new project phase. This February, we will gather in Kampala, Uganda, to review our progress and make plans for the coming year. Amy Maxmen's article in Nature highlights how NextGen's momentum is already having an impact beyond the project. We also take the opportunity to meet with many collaborators and our external advisory team, so our activities can be informed by their expertise and shared knowledge. This year, for the first time, we will be inviting some cassava breeders from other breeding programs in sub-Saharan Africa, the next step in the efforts to promote a community of practice partnership (CoPP) that we described in our last issue. I look forward to growing our CoPP collaborations during one of my favorite events of the year.

As the new year begins, it's also a time to reflect on our accomplishments in 2018. You will see below some of our new publications this year, as well as some new media released by our communications team, highlighting the work NextGen is currently undertaking in Tanzania to fight devastating cassava diseases. We also review NextGen's participation in conferences this October, and honor Hernán Ceballos from CIAT and Eric Danquah of WACCI for the important awards they have won this year.

Wishing you all our best for a happy and healthy 2019, and looking forward to seeing many of you in Kampala.

Chiedozi Egesi
NextGen Project Manager



Chiedozi Egesi (L) with Eric Yirenkyi Danquah, founder of the West Africa Centre for Crop Improvement (WACCI) at the University of Ghana and winner of the [2018 GCHERA World Agriculture Prize](#). WACCI partners with NextGen Cassava to train Africa's future cassava breeders.

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NextGen presentations at WACCI and ISTRC2018

NextGen presentations at WACCI and ISTRC2018

This October, NextGen partners presented their work at two major conferences.



Chiedozie Egesi



Peter Kulakow

From 3-4 October 2018, the West African Centre for Crop Improvement (WACCI) at the University of Ghana hosted the [International Conference on Food and Nutrition Security in Africa](#). Under the theme "The March Towards A Hunger-Free Africa," IITA lead cassava breeder [Peter Kulakow](#) and NextGen project manager [Chiedozie Egesi](#) presented on identifying variety preferences of smallholder farmers, product profiling, and quality management.

From 22-25 October 2018, NextGen team members also participated in the [18th Triennial Symposium of the International Society for Tropical Root Crops](#) held in Cali, Colombia.

How African scientists are improving cassava to help feed the world

Researchers have long attempted to improve cassava for African farmers, but cassava has proven a difficult crop to breed. Yet gradually, through the activities of the NextGen Cassava project and its partners, the momentum is building to turn this situation around.

"We aren't just sitting in a room and making sure a plant works perfectly," says Egesi. "We are bringing it to the places where problems arise, and always asking how we can make our science helpful."

[Read the full article in Nature.](#)



A farmer transports cassava roots to Iwo, a small town in Nigeria's Osun state, for processing.

Photo by Amy Maxmen

NextGen partners recognized for international awards

The NextGen community congratulates Hernán Ceballos, International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) Cassava Program Breeder, on receiving the [Lifetime Achievement Award](#) at the



Hernán Ceballos receives his award at ISTRC2018.
Photo by CIAT.

Sciences at the University of Ghana and Director of the West Africa Centre for Crop Improvement (WACCI), on receiving the **2018 Global Confederation of Higher Education Associations for Agricultural and Life Sciences (GCHERA) World Agriculture Prize**. He was co-awarded the prize with Rattan Lal, Director of the Carbon Management and Sequestration Center at Ohio State University, USA.

18th Triennial Symposium of the International Society of Tropical Root Crops! Earlier this year, at the Global Cassava Partnership for the 21st Century (GCP21) held in Benin, he was co-awarded the **Golden Cassava Prize** with Alfred Dixon, Director of the Development and Delivery Office at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture.

NextGen also congratulates Eric Yirenkyi Danquah, Professor of Plant Genetics in the College of Basic and Applied



Eric Danquah receives his award at the Nanjing Agricultural University, People's Republic of China.

Multimedia Spotlight: Cassava in Tanzania



Chris Knight (center) filmed farmer Rosemary Francis (right) on location in Tanzania with Heneriko Kulembeka (left) of the Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute. Photo provided.

"Cassava Improvement in Tanzania: Plant Breeding to Protect Cassava Farmers' Livelihoods"

is a short documentary that highlights the efforts to combat viruses affecting cassava in Tanzania through plant breeding. The documentary features Tanzanian farmers and researchers sharing their on-the-ground experiences.

It was produced by Cornell Science Media Production Center, in collaboration with Heneriko Kulembeka, plant breeder and NextGen cassava coordinator at the Ukiriguru Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute center in Mwanza.

"We wanted a film that sheds light on farmers' challenges in overcoming the crop disease in their cassava fields, and how NextGen's efforts to develop new varieties are benefitting their families' livelihoods," said Kulembeka.

[WATCH NOW: "Cassava Improvement in Tanzania: Plant Breeding to Protect Cassava Farmers' Livelihoods"](#)

[Read more about the documentary on the Cornell Chronicle.](#)

Cassava Research Highlights



Cassava Trait Preferences of Men and Women Farmers in Nigeria: Implications for Breeding

[\[LINK\]](#)

Training Population Optimization for Prediction of Cassava Brown Streak Disease Resistance in West African Clones

[\[LINK\]](#)

Identification of FT family genes that respond to photoperiod, temperature and genotype in relation to flowering in cassava

[\[LINK\]](#)

A statistical framework for detecting mislabeled and contaminated samples using shallow-depth sequence data

[\[LINK\]](#)

Upcoming Events & Opportunities

Plant and Animal Genome Conference XXVII

12-16 January 2019 (*San Diego, CA, USA*)

NextGen Cassava Annual Meeting

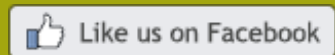
18-22 February 2018 (*Kampala, Uganda*)

Contribute to the NextGen Newsletter

Contact newsletter editor [Samantha Hautea](#) or respond to this email to submit items for the next issue of the NextGen newsletter.

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The Next Generation Cassava Breeding project is led by International Programs in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University, in collaboration with International Institute of Tropical Agriculture and National Root Crops Research Institute breeding centers in Nigeria, National Crops Resources Research Institute in Uganda,

Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute, West African Centre for Crop Improvement in Ghana, Makerere University in Uganda, and the Boyce Thompson Institute and US Department of Agricultural Research Services in the United States. Supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and UK aid from the UK government.