



## **Preliminary results of NARITA hybrids trials show high yield potential to increase banana production**

**Kampala/Dar es Salaam, 03 November 2014.** The Ugandan National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) have released the first report on the preliminary performance trials of the first ever hybrid varieties of the East Africa highland banana, jointly developed by the two organizations for food and juice.

From the trial results, these hybrid varieties known as NARITA (NARO-IITA), performed better than the local check across all traits being evaluated. For example, 96% of the hybrids had a bunch weight greater than that of the local check. The bunch weight varied up to 28.4 kg, with an overall mean of 18.3 kg.

The hybrids were developed from over 20 years of research to address the major threats to the crop's production in East and Central Africa including pests (banana weevils and nematodes) and diseases (Fusarium wilt and black Sigatoka) that resulted in the currently low yield in smallholder farmers' fields. This in turn has had a negative impact on food security and the income of millions of smallholder farmers. In Uganda, for example, banana occupies the largest cultivated area among staple food crops with more than 75% of farmers growing it.

The evaluation of 25 out of 27 existing NARITA hybrids (18 for food and seven for juice), was conducted at Namulonge in central Uganda. The hybrids were evaluated for performance, adaptability, and stability against local East Africa highland bananas.

The preliminary results therefore show that these hybrids have potential to increase banana production in Uganda, Tanzania, and the highlands of East Africa. Further testing is now planned in Uganda and Tanzania across multiple locations and involving farmers to assess performance on farmers' fields.

The report is available on the website of both institutions.

###

For more information:

NARO

Dr Robooni Tumuhimbise, Banana Breeder, NARO, E-mail: [rtumuhimbise@hotmail.com](mailto:rtumuhimbise@hotmail.com);

Tel. +256778455710

Dr Jerome Kubiriba, Programme Leader, National Banana Research Programme, NARO; E-mail: [jkubiriba2012@gmail.com](mailto:jkubiriba2012@gmail.com); Tel. +256 773 155 760.

Professor Wilberforce Tushemereirwe, Director of Research-NARL, NARO, E-mail: [wktush@kari.go.ug](mailto:wktush@kari.go.ug), [banana@imul.com](mailto:banana@imul.com); Tel. +256 414567649.

IITA

Professor Rony Swennen, Banana breeder, IITA – Tanzania, Tel: +32 16 32 14 20, email: mail to: [r.swennen@cgiar.org](mailto:r.swennen@cgiar.org)