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50-8 - The state of plant virology research in West and Central Africa

The state of plant virology research in West and Central Africa

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Two million smallholder farmers and 10 million people in West and Central Africa relying on cocoa as their main source of income or part of their livelihoods. The recent outbreak of cocoa swollen shoot virus disease (CSSVD) affected already 16.5% of Ghana's cocoa areas (more than 300,000 ha) and prompted governmental actions and financial support in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire (<https://www.worldcocoafoundation.org/blog/early-detection-can-eradicate-cocoa-disease-in-west-africa/>). The involved countries announced a concerted, joint control effort to combat CSSVD and to avoid further spreading to neighboring countries like Cameroon. CSSVD was first described in 1936 in Ghana and has been also reported from Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Togo since then. The cacao swollen shoot virus (CSSV), a pararetrovirus out of the family of *Caulimoviridae*, is transmitted by mealybugs. CSSV is endemic to West Africa and some forest tree species may serve as CSSV reservoir. No resistant cocoa cultivars are currently available. Understanding pararetrovirus replication is a prerequisite for developing robust diagnostic tools and to design strategies fighting the viral disease using the plant inherent immune system. An actual report on The Pan-African Virology Conference, which is scheduled from 25-27 March 2020, in Ghana's capital city, Accra will be provided. This conference will bring together African virologists all over the world who are researching into various aspects of virology, representatives from industry, and clinical virologists. As part of the conference, there will displaying of works and contributions of Africans to the field, foster collaboration and eventually establish the African Virology Society (AVS) through an inception meeting.

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