Management of Fall Armyworm (FAW) in Maize for Smallholder Farmers in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Quarterly Report: January 1, 2020 - March 31, 2020

Final updates, submitted on May 25, 2020
## AWARD SUMMARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Program Name:</strong></th>
<th>Management of Fall Armyworm in Maize for Smallholder Farmers in the Republic Democratic of the Congo</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity Start Date and End Date:</strong></td>
<td>October 18, 2019 to October 17, 2024</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Name of Prime Implementing Partner:</strong></td>
<td>Land O’Lakes Venture37</td>
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<td><strong>Cooperative Agreement Number:</strong></td>
<td>72066019LA00002</td>
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<td><strong>Name of Subcontractors/Subawardees:</strong></td>
<td>International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and Villa Crop Protection</td>
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<td><strong>Major Collaborating Organizations:</strong></td>
<td>INERA, Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI) departments: SENASEM, SNV. United Nation Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); FFP/Development Food Security Activity (DFSA) implementors</td>
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<td><strong>Geographic Coverage:</strong></td>
<td>The former provincial areas in DO2 (Corridor 1: southern Katanga (Haut-Katanga) and Corridor 2: Kasai Occidental and Kasai Oriental/Lomami) and the majority of TO3 (South Kivu and Tanganyika, formerly northern Katanga).</td>
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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AET</td>
<td>Agriculture Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>AO</td>
<td>Agreement Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>AOR</td>
<td>Agreement Officer's Representative</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCC</td>
<td>Behavior Change Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>CARG</td>
<td>Conseil Agricole Rural de Gestion</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBSP</td>
<td>Community Based Service Providers</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDCS</td>
<td>Country Development Cooperation Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>CGIAR</td>
<td>Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAA</td>
<td>Coordinated Activity Areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIAT</td>
<td>Centre International d’Agriculture Tropicale</td>
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<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>Chief of Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRS</td>
<td>Catholic Relief Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAI-IGA</td>
<td>Development Alternative International-Integrated Governance Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCOP</td>
<td>Deputy Chief of Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPV</td>
<td>Direction de la Protection des Végétaux</td>
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<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
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<td>DSAA</td>
<td>Development Food Security Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAS</td>
<td>Extension and Advisory Services</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization</td>
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<td>FAW</td>
<td>Fall Armyworm</td>
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<td>FEWSNET</td>
<td>Famine Early Warning Systems Network</td>
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<td>GAP</td>
<td>Good Agricultural Practices</td>
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<td>GMEL</td>
<td>Global Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>GoDRC</td>
<td>Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
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<td>HQ MEL</td>
<td>Headquarters Manager Evaluation and Learning</td>
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<td>IFPRI</td>
<td>International Food Policy Research Institute</td>
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<td>IITA</td>
<td>International Institute of Tropical Agriculture</td>
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<td>ITAPEL</td>
<td>Inspection Territoriale de l’Agriculture, Pêche et Elevage</td>
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<tr>
<td>INERA</td>
<td>National Institute for Research and Agronomic Studies</td>
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<td>IPAPEL</td>
<td>Provincial Inspections of Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock</td>
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<td>IPM</td>
<td>Integrated Pest Management</td>
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<td>IRS</td>
<td>International Research Specialist</td>
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<td>LWA</td>
<td>Leader with Associates</td>
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<td>MECC</td>
<td>Monitoring Evaluation and Coordination Contract</td>
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<td>MEL</td>
<td>Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning</td>
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<td>MINAGRI</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>PERSUAP</td>
<td>Pesticide Evaluation Report (PER) and Safer Use Action Plan (SUAP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Program Director</td>
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<td>PI</td>
<td>Principal Investigator</td>
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<td>RATL</td>
<td>Research and Adaptation Team Leader</td>
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<td>RISD</td>
<td>Research Initiative for Social Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>SENAFIC</td>
<td>National Service of Fertilizers and Related Inputs</td>
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<td>SENASEM</td>
<td>Service National des Semences</td>
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<td>SUAP</td>
<td>Safer Use Action Plan</td>
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<td>SNV</td>
<td>National Extension Service</td>
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<td>STTA</td>
<td>Short Term Technical Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>WFH</td>
<td>Working from Home</td>
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<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DRC-M-FAW-Q2 Final-Progress Report 3
TABLE OF CONTENTS

AWARD SUMMARY .................................................................................................................. 2
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS ...................................................................................... 3
TABLE OF CONTENTS ............................................................................................................ 4
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .................................................................................................... 6
2. MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW ............................................................................................... 7
   2.1 Global Security and Security Planning ................................................................. 7
   2.2 Country registration of Venture37 ........................................................................... 7
   2.3 In-country visits of HQ Management and MEL ................................................. 8
   2.4 Selection of the Project Office ............................................................................. 8
   2.5 Signature of agreements with IITA ..................................................................... 8
   2.6 Recruitment and Human Resources Management ............................................. 9
   2.7 Other start-up managerial activities .................................................................. 10
   2.8 Project Factsheet ................................................................................................. 10
3. IMPLEMENTATION OF KEY TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES ............................................ 11
   3.1. Maize value chain analysis .......................................................................... 11
   3.2. Project Baseline ......................................................................................... 12
   3.3. Revised Year 1 Activity Work Plan ............................................................... 13
   3.4. Activity Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan (AMELP) ........................ 13
   3.5. Development of the Safe Use Action Plan (SUAP) ......................................... 13
   3.6. Training of project staff .................................................................................. 14
4. IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT COMPONENTS .................................................. 14
   5.1. Pursuit of administrative, legal, and financial activities ............................ 17
   5.2. Pursuit of managerial and technical activities ............................................. 17
   5.3. Pursuit of Component 1 activities .................................................................. 18
   5.4. Pursuit of Component 2 activities .................................................................. 22
   5.5. Pursuit of Component 3 activities .................................................................. 23
   5.6. Pursuit of Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning activities ........ 24
5. LESSONS LEARNED ........................................................................................................ 25
6. ANNEXES .......................................................................................................................... 26
   ANNEX 1: Agenda of Year 1 WP review .............................................................. 26
   ANNEX 2: Training Agenda of VC Analysis .......................................................... 26
   ANNEX 3: SOW of the Maize VC Analysis ............................................................ 26
ANNEX 4: Revised Gantt Chart .................................................................................................................26
ANNEX 5: INERA/ IITA’s Protocol ..............................................................................................................26
ANNEX 6: INERA/IITA’s list of technologies ..............................................................................................26
ANNEX 7: Summary Table of Research and Studies ..................................................................................26
ANNEX 8: SOW of IMC’s gender analysis ....................................................................................................26
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This quarterly report covers the project’s second reporting period from January 1 to March 31, 2020. The report will focus on the pursuit of project startup activities including Venture37’s updates on final stages of registration, meetings with USAID DRC and anticipated stakeholders, and signature of the subaward agreement with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA).

During this second quarter, Venture37 accomplished not only administrative, legal, human resources and monitoring/evaluation tasks, but also technical activities such as preparation of field work for the baseline, and start-up of the maize value chain analysis conducted by project staff.

In Q2, sub-partner IITA was involved mainly with the preparatory phase including the signature of the subaward agreement with Venture37, onboarding of project key personnel, meetings with partners like INERA and DPV, desk review, and the development of protocols.

Besides the pursuit of human resources and operational tasks, this second quarterly report includes the narrative of achievements against the revised Year 1 Work Plan, and a summary of monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities.

Toward the end of the quarter, the global pandemic of COVID-19 emerged as a serious concern affecting the DRC and project implantation. In response, the project implemented a work from home approach and began to adjust activities appropriately. There were also indications mid-March of verbal or physical altercations between communities and foreigners, as well as the representation of COVID-19 as a virus brought by foreigners1. As a result, from March 25, 2020, Venture37 implemented a work from home (WFH) policy to the entire project team. This will be reviewed as the situation evolves.

Right before that date, the COP prepared a “working from home plan” (WFH Plan), that the Team developed during a March 24 brainstorming session. Since then, the Team has shown important resilience while working from home. The Team’s immediate adjustment is demonstrated by their pursuit of the maize value chain analysis from home instead of the planned field surveys. To this aim, from March 25, they started collecting data through remote key informant interviews (KIIs) that they entered on the cell phone platform Kobotool Box2.

Remote qualitative information will be complementary to the data to be collected during the maize value chain survey work in the Provinces of Haut Katanga, Tanganyika, Kasai Oriental, La Lomami, and Sud Kivu.

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1 On a weekly basis, Land O’ Lakes Global Security at HQ publishes a report that is mapping risk factors countries in relation to their vulnerability to COVID-19. The report’s analysis ranks the African countries most at risk to least at risk for the spread of the virus. Since the end of March, DRC has been ranked second after South Africa for the number of COVID 19 cases.

2 Kobo Toolbox is a platform, developed by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, and includes an open source suite of tools for data collection and analysis in humanitarian emergencies and other challenging environments that was built to address this gap. At the end of March, DCOP, EASTTL and M&E Specialist started conducting remote KIIs of representatives of support organizations like INERA, SENASEM, SNV, SENAFIC, Harvest Plus, CRS/USAID Budikadidi etc.).
Another example of project’s resilience is IMC’s development of an alternative plan to the original baseline, which involves local enumerators’ remote data collection for the performance of a deeper gender analysis than the one originally planned as part of the baseline. Since Youth is also a cross-cutting theme like Gender, youth will be included in this alternative analysis.

From mid-March, Venture37 intensified remote HQ training for project staff that includes sessions on leadership, procurement, Devlink\(^3\), WorkDay\(^4\) and finances.

### 2. MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

During Q2, Management concluded some important start-up tasks, such as “basic” country registration that now permit Venture37 to operate in the DRC as an NGO, hiring most key personnel and the Administrative and Financial Manager (AFM), opening a bank account at Equity Bank, and selection of the project office, and of the COP’s residence in the Gombe Commune.

#### 2.1 Global Security and Security Planning

Since the breakout of COVID 19, the Land O’ Lakes Global Security Team has been closely monitoring the evolution of COVID 19 and provides regular global security reports on key developments in Africa. HQ Global Security Center’s main sources of information are the following:

- COVID-19 FAQS International SOS
- CDC.GOV - How COVID-19 Spreads
- WHO Guidance for Coronavirus
- John Hopkins University Covid-19 Dashboard
- IATA Travel Restriction
- World Meter COVID19 Dashboard
- Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS)

Due to international travel restrictions, the HQ Global Security team did not come to the DRC as planned, and thus were unable to perform an in-country assessment of operations in Kinshasa, and in the project zones of Haut Katanga, Tanganyika, and Sud Kivu. Nevertheless, the DRC Team refined Land O’Lakes Venture37’s Global Security Plan with local and site-specific information and procedures, essential knowledge for project staff and external visitors.

In mid-March, both the US Embassy in Kinshasa and Venture37 HQ gave the COP the option to return to her permanent residence in the United States. This option will be envisioned only if the sanitary and/or security situation really deteriorates.

#### 2.2 Country registration of Venture37

In Quarter 1 Venture37 completed the “first stage” of registration that provides the basic ability to operate: basic entity registration and recognition and a tax ID number. USAID tax

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\(^3\) Devlink is an internal Sharepoint platforms for Venture37

\(^4\) WorkDay is a HR platform for Venture37
exoneration letter seems effective at obtaining tax free goods and services, but the next stage, resulting in the complete process is lengthier and may take up to three additional months depending on the end of COVID 19 confinement.

Following Management’s meetings on February 27 and March 2, 2020 with the MINAGRI’s Minister, Venture37 was expecting the provision of certification and the “avis favorable” from MINAGRI, and “Accord Cadre” with the Ministry of Planning. The inspectors’ visits from MINAGRI and MINIPLAN may not be required after MINAGRI’s Minister’s personal intervention. The COP will continue to apprise USAID’s AOR of progress during Fridays’ weekly updates.

2.3 In-country visits of HQ Management and MEL

Between February 26 and March 6, 2020, Alan Isaac, Venture37 Program Director (PD), conducted his second in-country visit. This trip’s main purpose was to meet and orient the newly hired DRC staff, and support the COP on project start up. The PD attended Year 1 Work Plan review, that the COP presented and moderated on March 4 and 5, 2020 (see Annex 1 - Agenda of Year 1 WP Review). The PD helped capture comments from this collaborative workshop, which facilitated that review. In addition, IITA’s Principal Investigator (PI) made a presentation on IITA’s role in the project, and IITA’s Research and Adaptation Team Leader (RATL), actively participated into the review.

On March 2, 2020, thanks to IITA’s DRC Representative, the PD and the COP met with MINAGRI’s Minister to request his facilitation of Venture37 registration process.

The Global Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Manager (GMEL) made her first country visit, March 3-6. This short visit included providing initial technical onboarding to the M&E Specialist, meeting with IBTCI for AMELP review, and developing drafts of MEL data collection tools for the project. She attended the Team’s review of Year 1 Work Plan and, with the M&E Specialist’s assistance, made a detailed presentation on Venture37’s MEL system and processes.

2.4 Selection of the Project Office.

Until completion of installation and move to the project office, which was planned for April 1, 2020, Venture37 staff used a temporary space in IITA’s existing office. Simultaneously, between January 1 and mid-March, the COP continued to visit several project options in the Gombe area. Finally, the COP and the PD selected a “right sized” space (not too large), at a competitive and reasonable cost that met the project’s security requirements. This office is very well located, on the 6th floor of Quantum Building on Avenue du 30 Juin.

2.5 Signature of sub agreements with IITA

Venture37 and IITA developed and signed the “pre-award Spending Authorization Letter” on January 9, allowing IITA to be reimbursed for costs related to project activities from December 1, 2019 to February 29, 2020. During this period, both institutions discussed and agreed on a final “Cost Reimbursement Sub-Award Agreement” effective from February 1, 2020 to April 30, 2023.


2.6 Recruitment and Human Resources Management

In February 2020, Venture37 completed on-boarding of two key personnel (the Deputy Chief of Party and the Extension and Advisory Services Team Leader), the Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist (M&E) and the Finance and Administration Manager (FAM). The three of them had to be relocated from Goma, North Kivu, found residence in Kinshasa within two weeks, and started work as planned mid-February 2020. Unfortunately, the Agricultural Education and Training Team Leader (AETTL) backed out from his position as a result of a promotion from his current employer.

For IITA, recruitment was their most time-consuming activity and consisted of the selection of the Research and Adaptation Team Leader (RATL), two Agronomic Specialists (AS), one Administrative Assistant (AA) and one Extension Specialist (ES). The RATL arrived from Togo to join the Team on March 6, 2020. The two ASs and the AA are expected to start on May 1, the ES on July 1, while the Institutional Development Specialist (IDS) should be recruited by IITA in August, for a start date of September 1, 2020. But the start dates, and final offers are on hold until the situation become clearer.

At the end of March, while working from home, Venture37 DRC staff reviewed an important number of CVs and cover letters of candidates for the two positions of extension specialists (one to be based in Kinshasa and the other one in Bukavu), and for the position of Institutional Development Specialist to be located in Lubumbashi.

Both Venture37 and IITA look to fill all personnel positions when the project can resume and accomplish more regular activities in a safe manner.

As pointed out several times by the USAID AOR, and as shown below on DRC FAW Management organizational chart, project staff of Venture37 and IITA belong to one team under. Both Venture37 and IITA are effectively working as a team, general project coordination is provided by the COP who also directly supervise Venture37 staff while the IITA staff report to Venture37 through the IITA project PI. Staff from Venture37 and IITA regularly attend teleconferences and work jointly on documents of the projects.

Staff of IITA's sub partner work from IITA office but in strong partnership with Venture37 staff under the COP's overall management. They however report through their institutional reporting line mainly IITA's Principal Investigator (PI) who is based at IITA's office in Cameroon as well as the IITA-DRC Country Representative (CR) who oversees all IITA activities in DRC.

When the project can resume field activities and in-country travel, the project expects to use IITA's small office space in Kalemie (Tanganyka Province area) and Kalambo, Sud, Kivu (17 kms of Bukavu). The RATL and the two AAs will start conducting research work respectively at INERA research stations of Kipopo and Mulungu, as well as from IITA's station in Kalambo. Off-season validation trials are also planned, and which require irrigation or lowlands, INERA Kipopo has facilities for off-season trials while in Sud Kivu lowlands will be obtained outside Mulungu station to ensure water availability off season. INERA is already doing some research on FAW and IITA has extensively discussed with their Director General, Scientific Director, and Head of
the Maize Program and the two station heads, to find ways to do it complementarily and avoid replications. Technologies to be validated have been discussed with INERA and the Direction de la Protection des Vegetaux (DPV) and will be conducted in partnership with SENAFIC to increase potential use of the validation data in future registrations.

Neither Venture37 nor IITA has a project office in Haut Katanga, while this Province is one of the priority zones of intervention in year 1. The Team will work from INERA Kipopo station and partner with the University of Lubumbashi where interns are expected to be recruited for research experiments. Working in collaboration with INERA will not only be considered as part of the exit strategy for the project but also the main delivery path to build capacity throughout the project lifetime.

**2.7 Other start-up managerial activities**

Due to COVID 19, the project faced delays in the procurement of the two project vehicles and the office furniture. However, other operational tasks were completed. These are:

- Collection and review of an important number of CVs posted on Venture37’s website and on Media Congo, and selection of the best candidate for the AETTL position.
- Collection and review of CVs posted on websites of Venture37 and on Media Congo, for the positions of Accountant, the two Extension Specialists, and the Institutional Development Specialist.
- Finalization of the pre-authorization letter with IITA
- Finalization and signature of the sub-award agreement with IITA.
- The opening of the project bank account at Equity Bank.
- Purchases of cell phones and internet modems for project staff.
- Set-up of a mobile phone credit system of the staff cell phones and modems; and
- Purchase of a small HP printer/scanner.

**2.8 Project Factsheet**

Venture37 prepared two factsheets for emailing purposes, which respected the requirements of the project’s Branding and Marking Plan approved by AO last December 2019, after AOR’s concurrence. The Team will finalize the French version them after receipt of AOR’s comments.

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5 CVs of the 5 best candidates and minutes of the selection committee for the AETTL position will be sent for information to AOR in April.

6 CVs of the 5 best candidates, and minutes of the 2 committees for the selection of the 2 extension specialists and the institutional Development Specialists will be sent to AOR for information at the end of April.

DRC-M-FAW-Q2 Final-Progress Report 10
3. IMPLEMENTATION OF KEY TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES

During the second quarter, the Year 1 Work Plan, AMELP and Q1 report were all revised by the team on board.

Venture37 Technical staff started the maize value chain analysis, after the COP’s Value Chain (VC) training March 18-19, 2020 (see Training Agenda in Annex 2).

IMC pursued the desk review for the baseline and submitted the fourth inception report and will submit the final version at the beginning of April. As noted earlier, due to COVID 19, IMC had to modify their data collection plans and will be implementing a Gender and Youth Analysis via remote data collection until they are able to conduct in-person surveys and interviews to complete the full baseline work.

As required in the Cooperative Agreement with USAID, the DRC Team prepared a draft Safer-Use Action Plan (SUAP) to be revised with input from the IITA project Team. The COP intends to submit a near final version to AOR in Q3. USAID’s Environmental Specialist is to review this SUAP draft before finalization.

3.1. Maize value chain analysis

The maize VC Analysis is geared to facilitate the identification of key actors and representatives of support organizations already engaged in control and mitigation of FAW’s impact, in the project target zones of Haut Katanga, Tanganyika, Lomami, Kasai-Oriental, and South Kivu.

As per the Scope of Work (SOW in Annex 3), the main objectives of this initial maize VC analysis to be conducted essentially by Venture37 technical team are the following:

- In each survey zone (Haut Katanga, Tanganyika, Kasai Oriental, La Lomami and Sud Kivu), collect qualitative information on maize value chain and market system actors (like agro-dealers, smallholder farmers and producer organizations in maize, small maize processors, youth entrepreneurs, traders) who will be critical for sustainability of project activities, financing opportunities for maize smallholder farmers, and impact on women and vulnerable households;

- Identify main support organizations located in each target zone (provincial government institutions, NGOs, projects etc.), either currently engaged or interested in contributing in FAW management.

- Identify key stakeholders in each target zone, willing to lead and collaborate in the combat against FAW; these are maize value chain “champions” ranging not only within input supply, but also lead farmers, maize processors, aggregators, farmer groups, and other large buyers or out-growers some of which are located near INERA research stations of Kanyameshi and Kisanga (Haut Katanga), Ngandajika (Lomami), and Mulungu (Sud Kivu); and
• Conduct quantitative market surveys to understand FAW’s impact on distribution and sales.

Following VC training (March 18-19), and finalization of the methodology and the six (6) interview tools, the three sub teams were planning to travel to their respective survey zones on March 28. However, due to in-country travel restrictions because of COVID 19, the survey team started data collection using remote methods (e.g., emailed surveys, remote key information interviews by phone), under the COP’s guidance and supervision. Following M&E Specialist’s remote training, each team member became capable of collecting qualitative data from home, using the Kobo toolbox application on their mobile phones.

The VC analysis team is composed entirely of Venture37 technical team. Team A (led by the DCOP) is to survey Haut-Katanga, and Tanganyika Provinces, while Team B (led by the EASTL) oversees Kasai Oriental and Lomami Provinces, and Team C (conducted by the M&E specialist), is to cover Sud Kivu Province.

While working from home, the Team demonstrated immediate resilience. Their work plan indicates initial contacts and a good preparation of their remote Key Informant Interviews (KII) of support organizations working at national or provincial levels including but not limited to representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture and of Science & Technology, government agencies (INERA, SNV, SENASEM, DPV, IPAPEL, SENAFIC), university members, and of NGOs managing Agricultural development projects. The Team intends to conduct KII of VC actors like individual farmers, members of producer organizations and/or private agro-dealers at the end of April-beginning of May.

3.2. Project Baseline

In December 2019, Venture37 signed a contract with IMC Worldwide, an international consulting firm selected to conduct the project baseline, mid-term evaluation, and final evaluation. At the beginning of March, IMC completed the desk review, the methodology and interview tools after receiving feedback from project and HQ staff. The COP will share the final version of the inception report with AOR at the beginning of April.

So far, IMC has completed the following tasks:

• Made recommendations on the first AMELP version submitted last December to USAID.
• Contracted Research Initiative for Social Development (RISD) to conduct field work with experienced DRC enumerators.

Because of in-country travel restrictions due to COVID 19, IMC had to indefinitely postpone in-person data collection. On March 23, 2020, Venture37 notified the AO to this effect.

7 As stated earlier, Venture37 have adopted to use Kobo toolbox, an online platform, that will serve for remote data collection for the maize VC analysis.
As noted earlier, IMC has adapted their plans to conduct remote KIIIs for the gender and youth analysis and is gathering secondary data to attempt to set baseline values for key indicators.

### 3.3. Revised Year 1 Activity Work Plan

As required in the Cooperative Agreement, Venture37 submitted Year 1 Work Plan to USAID/DRC, on December 20, 2019. To ensure complementarity and ownership, the entire project technical team and IITA revisited and revised the plan during a collaborative workshop that COP moderated on March 4 and 5, with the participation of PD and GMEL. **Annex I provides the Agenda** on the two-day brainstorming session, and information on the presentations made to facilitate the collaborative process. At the end of March, the COP shared with AOR the revised Year 1 Activity Work Plan, together with the revised Gantt Chart (Annex 4).

The Project will consider this Year 1 Work Plan as final, only after consulting with USAID, IITA and relevant collaborators like FAO, INERA, MINAGRI and its agencies like SNV, SENASEM and SENAFIC. A workshop will therefore be organized to get feedback from these and other stakeholders.

### 3.4. Activity Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan (AMELP)

As planned, GMEL came to Kinshasa (March 3-6) to train the newly hired project M&E Specialist and help in AMELP finalization. After the March 6 meeting with IBTCI (USAID’s evaluation contractor in Kinshasa), GMEL and the M&E Specialist are working on addressing IBTCI’s comments, in order to finalize the revised AMELP by the end of April.

### 3.5. Development of the Safe Use Action Plan (SUAP).

Project implementation will need to comply with USAID’s Pesticide Procedures for the use, procurement, or promotion of pesticides during all Integrated Pest Management Activities (IPMs).

During implementation of future research and field activities against FAW, Venture37 and its two sub-partners, (IITA) and Villa Crop Protection (Villa), may find that project beneficiaries involved in crop and post-harvest activities, may procure pesticides (even if the project does not intend to directly procure them).

At the end of March, Venture37 DRC Team developed a first SUAP draft that the project can use to fully comply not only with DRC laws on environmental protection, but also with USAID/DRC 2017 Mission-wide PERSUAP.

The project’s SUAP covers only maize and has for main purpose to demonstrate that project activities will not promote the use of toxic pesticides, as part of its research and implementation of IPM activities. This SUAP must address the use of pesticide active ingredients regulated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and require compliance with Regulation 216.3(b).
At the end of March, the team started an increasingly close collaboration with SENAFIC, the DRC’s service in charge of compliance in the procurement, use, handling, storage, and natural resources protection when using pesticides. This collaboration should ensure that both USAID and DRC regulations and policies are considered in project implementation. Through phone conservations, SENAFIC provided guidance and information for the development of the SUAP draft.

If the need for the promotion of pesticides for research and pest management activities becomes necessary, the Team will develop a Pest Management Plan (PMs) in order to monitor non-toxic pesticides, as part of the SUAP tracking.

### 3.6. Training of project staff

From the beginning of March 2020, Venture37 HQ intensified training for the entire project staff which included remote sessions on leadership, procurement, Devlink, WorkDay, administration, and finance. Most specifically, From March 4 to March 6, GMEL oriented the M&E Specialist on IMPACTS, Venture37’s electronic data collection and management system. Then, the COP conducted a training for the DCOP, the EASTL and the M&E Specialist on Agricultural Value Chain before data collection for the maize VC analysis. In order to ensure that tools for data collection were well understood, the 3 sub-teams conducted interviews in Kinshasa suburbs with maize producers. This was an opportunity to test the interview guides, and to learn about value chain “while doing”.

On March 31, during confinement, the M&E Specialist designed and trained the project team on the Kobo toolbox, which is a platform that they will use to enter data on their work cell phones for VC analysis.

As required by the cooperative agreement, the M&E Specialist will become familiar with TraiNet. Following MECC’s training at the beginning of May, he will record all training data using the web based TraiNet reporting system and will start entering participant training information on a quarterly basis.

### 4. IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECT COMPONENTS

#### 4.1. Component 1: Technology research and validation

In FY 2020, two (2) coordinated activity areas (CAAs) will be established and operational for participant research, testing, and validation. To this aim, IITA Project Team took the lead of Component 1, and started concertation on FAW IPM practices, with some CGIAR members including CIMMYT, ICIPE and other IITA programs. In FY 2020, it is planned that there will be ten (12) technologies, practices, and approaches under various groups (biopesticides, botanicals, chemical pesticides, attractants, local innovations, mobile application).

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8 Mid- March, the COP shared to USAID/DRC, the SOW, methodology and the 6 interview tools for the maize value chain analysis that is to be conducted by the project team only (DCOP, EASTL and M&E Specialist).
During Year 1 Work Plan review on March 4 and 5, IITA’s Principal Investigator (PI) presented the overall IPM and GAP concept around which research will be conducted (see details on Section 5).

Five major pillars were presented for research: (1) monitoring and early warning, (2) environmentally friendly pesticides, (3) biological control, (4) cultural methods including GAP, and (5) seed systems and host plant resistance. To this aim, the PI and the RATL developed and submitted the draft protocol for INERA’s internal review and followed up discussions with national partners regarding key technologies to be agreed upon by different parties for validation during the first season. The protocol is expected to be finalized in next reporting period (Annex 5). Technologies proposed (Annex 6) in the protocol by the PI and the RATL are being selected through a close collaboration and consultations with INERA, DPV and SENAFIC. This will ensure a buy-in of the outcomes of the project and the continuity of the activities at the end. This also implies technical skill reinforcement of national staff on specific activities such the rearing and releases of parasitoid amongst others. A proper and responsible take-over by INERA, DPV and SENAFIC is already envisioned. In that line, INERA through its Director General and Scientific Director designed their Maize Program Leader based at Mvuazi research center as collaborator with whom IITA will be working in addition with the two station heads and their tea in Kipopo and Mulungu. DPV is represented by its Director. A contact person will also be identified in SENAFIC.

4.2. Component 2: System adoption

4.2.1. Establishment of a working relationship with public sector partners

The Team will pursue close collaboration with INERA both at national and provincial levels. The RATL and the two agronomic experts will pursue research at INERA’s regional research stations to explore research components further and compare variance in the different agro-ecological zones and predominant cultural practices. Priority collaboration has already been established with the maize research program leader based at Mvuazi research center, who coordinates maize research for the institute and who has been also appointed by INERA national directorate as the main contact person of IITA.

Through attendance at meetings in Kinshasa before confinement, and thanks to remote KII’s for the maize VC analysis, the Team will pursue the development of technical collaboration both at national and provincial levels with DPV, SENAFIC, SENASEM, IPAPEL, SNV9.

Right after confinement, the Team will join the National and Provincial FAW Task Forces and will actively participate in working sessions with other members (e.g. INERA, DPV, SENASEM, SNV).

As stated in Venture37’s Cooperative Agreement, the project will establish advisory committees who will deal with programmatic or technical issues, but not routine administrative matters.

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9 DPV oversees pesticides control, and SENASEM of seeds control.
4.2.2. **Collaboration with USAID Mission Staff.**

Project Management has been coordinating and collaborating closely with AOR. Since early January, the COP has been attending Friday’s weekly meetings with AOR, to openly share, progress and programmatic information. These regular documented meetings create good collaboration with the Donor and facilitate Donor’s guidance. This collaboration is further documented by the “Work from Home Plan (WFHP)” and Weekly Progress Reports (WPRs).

4.2.3. **Collaboration with FAO**

Before March 25 confinement, Venture37 started the development of a good collaboration with FAO. But while working from home, the Team reviewed in-depth both FAO and USAID FAW IPM guides, from which they selected some interesting approaches worth pursuing. From Q3, Management intends to pursue this collaboration when involved in “early warning” through active membership of MINAGRI’s Task Force.

4.2.4. **Preparation of the elaboration of a communication strategy**

Before confinement, the EASTL conducted an in-depth desk review on media and communication agencies available both at national and provincial levels. In April, he plans to conduct remote KII to collect information on media actors, national and community radio stations, and media agencies located in Kinshasa, and in each target province. When rendered possible, EASTL’s field surveys will facilitate the collection of complementary information and the design of an appropriate communication strategy and communication materials for the awareness campaign, which was to start at the end of March and last until the end of year 1 (see revised Work Plan Gantt Chart of Annex 4).

4.3. **Component 3: Improvement of an enabling environment for GAP IPM deployment.**

Strengthening the enabling environment will be necessary to coordinate systemic approaches to FAW responses, including lowering the barriers to sustainable smallholder adaptation of GAP IPM. To this aim, sub-partner Villa Crop will conduct remote FAW related training, first for project staff, and then, for collaborators and stakeholders. The project is in discussion with Villa Crop Protection on how their training expertise and materials can be best used to train DRC stakeholders

Once on board, the entire technical project staff based either in Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and or Bukavu, will be particularly active in searching field support and stakeholders’ involvement. The maize value chain analysis would have identified key actors, leaders of support organizations, and Community Based Service Providers (CBSPs) capable of contributing to information sharing.

In March, the RATL had several working meetings at MINAGRI and particularly at DPV regarding the respective roles of the ministry and its institutions, and how IITA Project's activities, will fit under this component. Various follow up discussions were held to plan for engagements on policy, and particularly on alignment of validation trials to prevailing homologation protocols.
5. NEXT STEPS FORWARD: Q3 PLANNED ACTIVITIES

5.1. Pursuit of administrative, legal, and financial activities

Venture37 anticipates reduction in spending due to COVID-19. However, it was found critically important to discuss with AOR how COVID-19 restrictions may prevent regular project implementation and how those restrictions may reduce the project’s monthly spending. Considering this, the project has already started adaptations and discussed these with the AOR.

The COVID pandemic is now expected to have far-reaching impacts on the DRC, the lives of smallholder producers, and the national economy. The project must adapt and seek operational and technical innovations for the foreseeable future. Though it is unclear with how long government restrictions resulting from COVID-19 will stay in place, the Team intends to pursue following activities:

- Prepare the completion of project staffing (the AETTL, the accountant, the institutional development specialist and the two extension specialists,).
- Ensure that IITA complete staffing in a safe manner
- Pursue project staff remote HQ’s training on administrative, financial, IT and procurement procedures.
- Continue to pursue MINAGRI’s certification, “Avis Favorable” and “accord cadre” to further assist with tax exoneration.
- Continue the process to obtain the COP’s DRC working permit.
- Refine the project’s budget considering COVID restrictions.
- Complete vehicle procurement.
- Ensure the purchase of furniture and office equipment for the completion of the project office installation
- Complete the organization of a “remote” project launch with attendance of key personalities like USAID Mission Director, the Minister of Agriculture, Venture37 HQ Management, IITA Country Representative and all Project Personnel. However, this event may be delayed pending the evolution of the pandemic in the DRC.

Pursuit of managerial and technical activities

- Perform SWOTs with the DRC Team to help define future activities and add clarity to project staff.
- Pursue building strategic alliances with stakeholders at the national, provincial, and international levels.
- Ensure the good completion of the maize VC analysis that will be shared and discussed in a workshop in Kinshasa with USAID, government partners and stakeholders; this could be done remotely, if this cannot be held in person
- Ensure good completion of the project’s gender analysis.
- Ensure good completion of the project baseline that will be shared and discussed during a workshop in Kinshasa, with USAID, government partners and stakeholders.
• Hold a remote presentation of FAW training materials to project staff and test run of distance training tools (first phase) and organize training for partners and stakeholders (second phase) in collaboration with Villa Crop Protection.
• Follow-up with the establishment of the 2 CAAs in Haut Katanga and Sud Kivu Provinces.
• Provide remote support, if Management’s attendance at all working sessions of FAW Task Force in Kinshasa cannot be held in person.

5.2. Pursuit of Component 1 activities

IITA partner’s main objective in Q3 is to establish validation trials in the two INERA stations, taking into consideration existing practices and recommendations. Key activities are described as follows.

5.2.1. Establishment of the two Coordinated Activity Areas (CAAs)

CAAs correspond to the Validation trial sites and are located within INERA stations or its vicinities (off season validation in Mulungu). All activities related to validation are carried out there with establishment of maize fields where various technologies will be tested. Resource related to this is mainly the technologies and the human resources in charge of the trials. Office space and land will be secured with INERA for the entire time of the project implementation.

In Q3, IITA project staff, will establish the two Coordinated Activity Areas (CAAs) at INERA research station of Kipopo (Haut Katanga) and INERA Mulungu (Sud Kivu). IITA – Kalambo research station will be used for laboratory activities while in Lubumbashi partnership will be obtained with the University of Lubumbashi for laboratory facilities.

In collaboration with INERA, IITA project staff will focus on on-site as well as participatory field tests, pilot, and adapt preventive and curative methods that need more rigorous scientific and economic analysis to align with the project’s do no harm principle, while also ensuring efficacy and sustainability. In total, seven specific activities will be undertaken under Component 1: (i) Adaptation and validation of a monitoring and early warning system that should be operational to local conditions, (ii) Inventory and validation of pesticides registered or recommended against FAW in DRC, (iii) Assessment of biological control options available (iv) Cultural and mechanical control of FAW, (v) Seed system and host plant resistance, (vi) Good Agricultural practices and (vii) Biophysical FAW infestation, damage and severity and actual yield.

Biophysical data on actual FAW damage and yield loss collected through this study will complement the socio-economic data being conducted by IMC through questionnaires.

These 2 CAAs will allow the Project to establish a collaborative learning system where the private sector, farmers, agricultural professionals, and research scientists work together to develop an economically viable FAW solutions.
To achieve this, the (RATL) and the 2 Agronomic Specialists will conduct validations trials at the 2 CAAs. One Agronomic specialist will be based in Bukavu (Sud Kivu) while the second will be based in Lubumbashi (Haut Katanga).

The RATL receives technical guidance and supervision from IITA's Senior Entomologist (or Principal Investigator) while benefitting support from the IITA Country Representative in relation to engagements with national institutions.

Both Venture37 and IITA discussed and agreed that the current project organigram indicates partnership between both institutions and is mostly on activities but not on reporting line for staff from IITA. IITA staff will then report through their institute project PI to the COP.

5.2.2. Biophysical field data collection

IITA Project staff will collect biophysical data that will complement socio-economic baseline and midterm evaluations. Two main specific activities, as explained further will be conducted: (i) Baseline and progress of FAW status and smallholder farmer practice (ii) conservative and augmentative biological control.

i. Baseline and progress of pest status and smallholder farmer practice: In Q3, the baseline biophysical field data will be conducted from May to July. Follow up biophysical data will be conducted throughout the year to assess progress in the pest’s status over time in smallholder farming condition. IITA will carry out this activity mainly in farmers’ fields in the vicinities of the validation trial sites. However, additional biophysical data will be conducted in La Lomami Province. The farmers will be selected based on a preliminary field visit in partnership with local authorities and provincial institutions. FAW incidence, abundance, damage, and action threshold will be regularly assessed using FAMEWS and regular sampling. The IITA Project staff will record farmers’ practices, collect regular samples, and identify products used in smallholder farmers’ set ups whether approved or not at provincial and national levels. Record source of products, costs and create linkages with value chain actors.

As already mentioned earlier, the biophysical data gathered through this approach will complement the IMC’ socio-economic baseline data collected from a high number of farmers as well as a household survey using questionnaires. IITA, on the other hand, will collect biophysical data like yields, pest damage on a limited number of farmer fields in the 2 Provinces where the 2 CAAs are.

ii. Survey for FAW indigenous natural enemies: In Q3, starting May, the IITA Project team will conduct regular surveys in maize production areas to collect samples and identify indigenous natural enemies present in the system as well as effect of farming practices on
abundance and incidence of natural enemies. They will also establish colonies of parasitoids and assess their performance.

5.2.3. Research and adaptation

In collaboration with INERA, IITA Project staff will run project technology research, adaptation, validation, and system adoption from the 2 CAAs. Research will focus on inventory of current technologies and testing of new ones like biopesticides, nontoxic and low toxicity chemical pesticides, soil fertility, maize varieties. etc.

IITA Project staff will finalize its validation protocol in partnership with national institutions in April. INERA, DPV and SENAFIC will contribute to protocol development. Such participation in the design and implementation of the validation trial can serve as platform to inform policy that could lead to products or technologies’ registration by SENAFIC using results from these validation trials. For this purpose and since registration is driven by private sectors, various institutions with potential technologies for validation including seed producers, universities, private companies etc will be involved in project implementation. The team will place priority on the following activities:

i. **Adaptation and validation of a monitoring and early warning system that should be operational in local conditions:** The IITA Project staff will consider 2 technologies: FAMEWS which is FAO Technology and readily available even in DRC, will be used starting Q3, and FIA which is IITA and NIBIO technology, that has a forecasting element incorporated but not yet fully ready will be used from Q4. Both technologies are coupled with pheromone-based traps and scouting to monitor FAW distribution, incidence, and severity.

ii. **Appropriate tools and equipment to enhance monitoring, screening and early warning** of the Fall Armyworm are known. These include: (i) pheromone traps, (ii) mobile phone applications, (iii) programs for pest recognition and damage determination and thresholds to initiate actions and/or frequency of intervention. However, most of these existing tools have been developed for use regardless of local contexts. To this end, IITA in collaboration with INERA will need to validate these tools in the local context. IITA/INERA’s activity will also include the implementation of standardized sampling and technical and economic assessment of the damages caused by FAW in the 2 CAAs. Purchase of pheromone and traps will be initiated in May (after securing all necessary authorizations), and field testing of these technologies will be conducted in both experimental stations and farmers’ fields in areas surrounding the CAAs.
iii. **Inventory and validation of the best and environmentally friendly pesticides:** IITA project staff will select and validate low toxicity and non-toxic pesticides, botanicals and microbial-based biopesticides under local conditions in the 2 CAAs. Based on available documents on pesticides and registered and/or recommended reports from DPV, the national FAW task force, USAID, CABI, CIMMYT, FAO, IITA etc., the team will compile, in a participatory approach, a restricted list of most critical pesticides with INERA, DPV and other international institutions in Q3, and protocols for their efficacy trials developed. This list will further benefit from baseline results from IMC and biophysical data in both Haut-Katanga and Sud Kivu. IITA and INERA team will conduct trials during normal maize growing seasons and off seasons where irrigation is available. Local practices like sand and ash that are reported from various smallholder farming systems will also be validated. The full methodology will be finalized in April 2020 and discussed with regulatory bodies in May 2020. The team will then establish an off-season validation trials from May in lowland or where irrigation facilities exist. Products that are proven efficient under water stress will even perform better under rain. A second validation trial will follow during the normal maize production season expected to start from September/October. These two seasons combined will constitute the year validation trials. This activity will provide farmers with scientifically validated, evidence-based choices on how to mitigate FAW damage effectively and safely while minimizing the use of toxic pesticides and non-target effects on beneficial organisms.

iv. **Assessment of biological control options available:** In addition to the survey for natural enemies that will be in farmers' fields, IITA Project staff will assess biological control options in validation trials as well as through laboratory performance assessments. In the validation trial fields, the team will collect biweekly data to identify natural enemies in the maize plots as well as effect of different treatments on their abundance and efficacy. Efficacy trials will be conducted in the laboratory for biological control agents most frequently found in fields following their colonies establishment. Since invasion of FAW in Africa, various local natural enemies have been found in various countries to form new association with the pest and provide natural control alternative against FAW. For instance, in Ghana, *Coccygidium luteum* and *Chelonus bifoveolatus* caused an average of 19.3% and 18.9% parasitism respectively in farm, while in Ethiopia, *Cotesia icipe* was the dominant larval parasitoid with parasitism ranging from 33.8% to 45.3%. In Kenya, the tachinid fly, *Palexorista zonata*, was the primary parasitoid with 12.5% parasitism. In Cameroon the tachinid fly, *Palexorista zonata*, was the primary parasitoid with 12.5% parasitism. In Cameroon the egg parasitoid *Telonomus remus* also known as the best parasitoid in the Americas has been found to be the best parasitoid sometimes attacking 100% egg masses in some farmer fields. Parasitism rates of below 5% are also reported for *C. icipe*, *Charops* sp. and *C. luteum* in Cameroon, but with a wide distribution countrywide. In DRC, their complex is totally unknown. Most pesticides are more detrimental to such natural enemies which contribute to keep pest under check than they are for the pest itself. The result from this study will
prevent non-target effects of different technologies on parasitoids, predators of FAW and other maize pests. This activity will start from May and will be conducted whenever validations trials are set.

i. **Cultural and mechanical control of FAW:** The team will assess effect of various cropping systems on FAW damage and severity. This will be conducted from May with validation trials in the 2 CAAs. Existing cropping systems and priority crops used in intercropping with maize will be assessed and type of crops suitable for this farming system at local level shortlisted during participatory protocol development in April and field established in May. The team will evaluate in later stages (Q4 onward), push pull technique involving the intercropping of maize with a repellent intercrop such as disodium (push), with an attractive trap plant such as Napier grass (pull) planted as a border crop around this intercrop. IITA and partners will also assess local practices like hand picking, farming calendar modification and adaptation practiced at local levels for their efficacy and cost effectiveness. Hand picking is reported in USAID IPM guide (2018), as one of FAW management options. The project is planning to validate that practice in the DRC context with smallholder farmers.

ii. **Seed system and host plant resistance:** In Q3 only one (1) maize variety recommended by INERA will be used in the validation trials. While host plant resistance is the cheapest and simplest technology for smallholder farmers in their fight against pests, this require many years of fundamental and applied research be identified. The project is not conducting varieties identification but rather validating those that will be reported as resistant to the pest. Currently, no resistant variety is reported, and thus the project is using only one, susceptible one. However, in following quarters, and based on progress in research with potential new varieties approved in the country or recommended in the regions, the team will select most promising varieties for validation. These will be incorporated into the validation trials to be conducted in partnership with INERA at the 2 CAAs in Kipopo and Mulungu/Kalambo.

iii. **Good Agricultural practices:** Prior to FAW invasion in DRC, extremely low yields were already being reported in smallholder farmer fields. The team will therefore assess the effect of adequate integrated soil fertility practices, high yielding varieties, suitable crop density, good soil preparation, and proper weeding on FAW infestation, damage, and yield. These parameters will be considered in validation trial starting from May in the 2 CAAs. IITA’s team plans to have off season validation trials to quickly assess the first group of products

5.3. **Pursuit of Component 2 activities**

Due to COVID 19, Project activities on FAW and GAP IPM advocacy, had to be postponed until the end of Q3, and should continue over the project life. At the beginning of May, the Team will elaborate a proper communication strategy and implementation plan, to be validated by USAID, and MINAGRI before starting the awareness campaign.
In addition, the Team will email the project Fact Sheet to all known contacts, and will start the process of documentation development, and translation into the main languages for use by local partners and beneficiaries.

At the end of Q3, the Team should be able to implement the communication campaign to raise awareness among users of the options for possible FAW management through radio, television, national mobile media, and the distribution of printed material through internet and SMS networks, extension agents and resellers.

The “fast track” set out for outreach and information on FAW identification, damage, and management, could also not be produced during this quarter. But on Q3, Component 2’s main objective will consist in updating technologies being recommended for fast-track extension during the first maize production season. To this aim, key project activities will need to include:

- **The Compilation and update recommendations against FAW in the DRC** all together with IITA, Venture37 and the project extension specialists (the RATL, the 2 agronomic experts, the Extension Expert and Institutional Development Expert will participate in the development of dissemination materials to support Venture37’s extension, advisory and training services).
- **The Review and update of the list of technologies recommended for the DRC** to be used by the extension specialists for proper design and dissemination of training materials; and
- **The hiring of by both IITA and Venture37 of all project extensions specialists and institutional development specialists.**

### 5.4. Pursuit of Component 3 activities

On Q3, Component 3’s key objective will be mainly to align project implementation with the national “Plan de Riposte”, USAID’s FAW guidelines and DRC government’s agricultural development strategy. Once confinement lifted, the Project will specifically:

- **Participate in role definition of public services through:**
  - Actively participate in discussions between Venture37, IITA and MINAGRI and MINRESEARCH regarding the respective roles of institutions involved in FAW control, agriculture related extension services and policy, to create a favorable enabling environment to maize farmers, as well as in adoption of project recommendations.

- **Participate in project alignment initiatives to improve coordination of FAW at national level through:**
  - Actively following DRC’s national strategy for revamping the agricultural sector at a national level; both Venture37 and IITA will join in discussions enabling perfect fitting of the DRC M-FAW project activities into national and provincial agricultural development strategies.
5.5. Pursuit of Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning activities

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, some activities had to be postponed including field work for the baseline, the maize value chain analysis and IITA’s surveys. Despite confinement, all these activities will be pursued while working from home. But after confinement, field surveys in project zones of intervention will be necessary.

As shown on the Table of Annex 7, the Project will pursue its Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning activities.

Last February, USAID submitted IBTCI’s comments on the AMELP submitted to USAID on December 20, 2020. After meeting on March 6 with IBTCI’s MECC Team in Kinshasa, GME and the M&E specialist reviewed the checklist of eighteen (18) indicators and will address all their comments for the finalization of the updated AMELP by the end of April.

The revised AMELP will be submitted to the AOR at the end of April and the M&E Specialist will work with IBTCI’s MECC Team in order to configure the approved indicators into the online data portal. The project will then receive an orientation from IBTCI on how to use the online data portal and will start using it after approval of all project indicators and their successful configuration.

The baseline assessment, conducted by IMC, will be the reference point that will allow the project to track progress against key outcomes and will facilitate the evaluation of project impact at mid-term and end-line.

IMC planned to begin field data collection for the baseline in mid-March. But due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Venture37 decided to consider a remote activity since data collection could not be held in person.

In the meantime, IMC will conduct remote data collection based on an approved alternative plan, so as: a) to obtain estimates for baseline values for key indicators, and b) to conduct the gender and youth analysis (which was already included in the baseline SOW). These activities will provide the project with some interim data that can be used until the remaining pieces of the baseline (namely the household survey and focus group discussions with farmers) can be safely completed in-person (see SOW of the Gender Analysis in Annex 8).

Venture37 expects also to receive IMC’s report on the gender and youth analysis and baseline values for key indicators by June 2020.

In Q3, the main MEL activities will consist of establishing a sound and robust M&E system for the project. This will involve finalizing the M&E tools, many of which have been drafted, as shown on AMELP’s M&E matrix geared to capture data on all the project indicators. These tools will be configured onto IMPACTS, which is a Venture37’s internal customized electronic data collection system that allows real time data collection and analysis.
The maize VC Analysis Team anticipates that most key informants located in each of the target locations will be interviewed remotely during confinement, but the provincial field surveys in person will take place subsequently during Q3, when it is safe to do so.

IITA’s field work and surveys are also to be pursued immediately when in-country travels permit.

**CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS**

COVID-19 imposed serious in-country travel restrictions, including access to the project office in Kinshasa, and it is most likely that the DRC will continue to be affected.

Despite frequent electricity shortages, DRC project staff working from home have been able to move forward on several activities: desk review of materials for the maize VC analysis, regular online team meetings, reporting, preselection of candidates for Venture37’s opened positions, remote HQ training, and remote KIIIs for the Maize VC analysis. But the project experienced delays on procurement of the office equipment and furniture, and of project vehicles due to supplier availability and restrictions on travel within the Gombe commune and Kinshasa.

Management will need to continue to monitor progress on Venture37 certification, obtention of accord cadre and tax exoneration, which is taking more time because of the absence from work of most government officials from their posts in the Gombe area.

The RATL was planning a trip to assess and compare INERA stations in Haut Katanga, La Lomami and Kasai Oriental Provinces to select the most appropriate research station. However, COVID-19 travel bans delayed these prospection efforts. Both IITA and Venture37 agreed to conduct farmer field related activities (FAW spread and damage assessment, natural enemy collection, and biophysical data collection in farmer fields), rather than validation trials in the additional site of Kasai Oriental. The team has also discussed with INERA station Heads, INERA Researchers as well as recently recruited Agronomic Experts in order to identify areas that are suitable for the present study even though COVID-19 prevented field visit by the RATL.

The project’s third challenge, yet to be resolved, is the research engagement of INERA because Component I activities will be mainly conducted in INERA stations, and the type of agreement with INERA still needs to be agreed upon by both institutions. The inability to provide funds to INERA—is the issue. In Q3, IITA will propose a working protocol and collaboration agreement with INERA, that Venture37 must review and approve.

**6. LESSONS LEARNED**

Despite COVID-19, the Team demonstrated important resilience through the intensification of remote work from home and for the pursuit of the maize value chain analysis as noted in section 5.6.

While in Q2, both IITA and Venture37 teams showed eagerness for intense collaboration, there seems to have some difference in appreciation of Management’s respective roles and reporting.
The institutes have discussed and agreed that the staff will report through their institutional lines while still working as a strong team, sharing progress, and discussing joint activities.

7. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Agenda of Year 1 WP review
ANNEX 2: Training Agenda of VC Analysis
ANNEX 3: SOW of the Maize VC Analysis
ANNEX 4: Revised Gantt Chart
ANNEX 5: INERA/IITA’s Protocol
ANNEX 6: INERA/IITA’s list of technologies
ANNEX 7: Summary Table of Research and Studies
ANNEX 8: SOW of IMC’s gender analysis