

Message from the Director General and the Chairman of the Board of Trustees



Yet another dramatic 12 months of progress and change in the history of the Africa Rice Center has underlined the true value of WARDA's cornerstone philosophy – partnership.

How else to explain another remarkable achievement for the Africa Rice Center. That's how most people outside the center saw the transition from a geographically-divided organization in Mali and war-torn Côte d'Ivoire at the end of 2004 to a fully-functioning research and development nexus for sub-Saharan Africa just a few weeks later in Cotonou, Benin.

The deep and underlying layers of partnership that bind the Africa Rice Center (WARDA) with the administrators of its member countries, with national research and extension organizations, with universities and other academic establishments, with the private sector companies involved in agriculture, with NGOs, with farmer organizations and with fellow international centers more than responded to the test of shifting center operations swiftly to Cotonou.

The successful research days staged in Cotonou less than three months into 2005 are just one testament to the smooth way in which the move took place. Present at those Research Days were just a few of the partners whose facilitation and intervention meant that WARDA was fully operational without there ever having been any real threat of disruption to the research program working on the next generation of NERICAs, to the center's networks or to its smooth administration. It is thanks to the exceptional response of the Republic of Benin to WARDA's search for a temporary headquarters that within a few weeks of the exploratory visit to the buildings offered by IITA in Cotonou, an agreement had been signed with the Government and modification work had started on-site. Particular thanks go to the Director General of INRAB, Dr David Arodokoum, whose personal intervention on several occasions ensured that the importance of bringing WARDA to Benin was not lost on the State's official departments.



WARDA's arrival and progress in Benin has been featured many times on local television and in the press.

INRAB also welcomed WARDA to its Niaouli trials site where, within a few weeks of arrival in Benin, WARDA scientists in a number of disciplines were already planning and implementing new trials programs. All now look forward to a fruitful and mutually beneficial relationship with our Beninois and IITA partners who responded so swiftly and warmly when WARDA called on them. By their actions they demonstrated that partnerships work when based on true commitment. This Annual Report takes partnership as its theme in the knowledge that old alliances work and new relationships are being built in the same spirit as WARDA embraces all of sub-Saharan Africa.

Two Center-commissioned External Reviews were carried out during 2004–2005, one on partnerships and the other on the second phase of the Inland Valley Consortium (IVC), and both of which commended WARDA's efforts in these areas. The continuing relevance of the IVC to improving agricultural production and fighting poverty in the inland valleys was confirmed by the review mission, which also made useful recommendations for the consortium's third phase which has now started.

The CCER on partnerships was carried out by a multinational team from Nigeria, Uganda and France. Their report described the quality and relevance of science and technologies developed and promoted through WARDA-NARES partnerships as "impressive" with useful outcomes and visible impacts. This partnership model should be maintained for developing 'Lowland NERICAs' towards more efficient use of irrigated lowlands and inland valleys for expanded production and increased productivity of rice, the team declared.

On the scientific level, 2004 will, of course, be remembered for the singular honor awarded as a result of a breakthrough at WARDA – the World Food Prize presented in October to Dr Monty Jones, former senior rice breeder with WARDA, in recognition of the development of the NERICA. This joint award, with another rice scientist from China, is particularly fitting as it fell during the International Year of Rice.

Two donor-commissioned evaluations were also carried out: on ROCARIZ as part of USAID WARP's review of Networks and on the MTP 2004–2006 project 1.4 "Creating Low Management Plant Types". ROCARIZ was adjudged the best of the four cereal networks reviewed by USAID WARP. Three major recommendations

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made by the review panel stress the desirability of forging closer linkages with universities, addressing post-harvest issues and paying greater attention to the seed sector.

An EU evaluation team undertook the Project 1.4 review in 2004 and produced a number of recommendations and conclusions after visiting Mali and Burkina Faso. We are confident this important project will confirm WARDA's strategic approach to the development of promising new plant material and its field assessment through PVS methodology.

The Director General took the chair of the prestigious Center Directors Committee (CDC) during 2004 at a time when the CGIAR was being increasingly reflective and minded towards constructive and effective change. The dynamic of collaboration is a key force in meeting real world challenges. One of the highlights of his stewardship of the CDC was a successful retreat during which it was agreed the thrust of collaboration will be collective programs around common goals with national partners, regional and sub-regional organizations, etc. This will allow the deployment of collective Center resources more strategically and efficiently and meet the articulated demands of our partners, as well as emerging opportunities and responsibilities. A key step taken by the CDC along the path to improved collaboration for impact was the decision to create a formal Future Harvest Alliance of all 15 CGIAR Centers.

Sub-Saharan Africa came very much to the fore during Dr Nwanze's chairmanship. The concept of 'Quick Wins' was developed, particularly with SSA in mind. To this end, Africa is piloting the sub-regional Medium Term Plans which will incorporate key elements from all the CGIAR Centers operating in SSA but also take heed of the strategies and goals of sub-regional organizations such as FARA, CORAF/WECARD and ASARECA, as well as the NARS and advanced research institutions. WARDA is leading the process of building a West and Central Africa integrated sub-regional MTP.

The extension of WARDA's rice development strategies from West Africa to Eastern and Central Africa continues to roll out. Later in this report, the ongoing collaboration with partners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is featured. A further collaboration with the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) led to the development of a joint proposal for a rice research network in East and Central Africa (ECARRN). A memorandum of understanding signed in April 2004 by WARDA and ASARECA paved the way for the recruitment of the coordinator and hosting of the Secretariat at the Mikocheni Agricultural Research Institute, near Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Thanks to the support of the European Union and the Canada Fund for Africa for this project, the Coordinator, Dr Ashura Luzi-Kihupi reported on January 2005.

Private sector companies and organizations were particularly influential in the introduction and rapid spread of NERICAs in Uganda (WARDA Annual Report, 2003–2004), and WARDA is actively pursuing further potential partnerships with appropriate private sector contacts in several countries. An innovator in Sierra Leone, Marika Farm, was one of the winners of the 2004 ROCARIZ Awards; in this case for an 'Outstanding contribution to the rice private sector filière'. In Benin, strong links are being forged with the Songhaï organization, which is fostering a mode of development based on a thoroughly scientific approach to agriculture and small-scale industry but one grounded in advanced ecological principles.

Africa Rice Center continued to attract high-caliber scientists and support staff, mostly young and dynamic individuals, with the overall profile reflecting a diversity of nationalities. Mr Long T. Nguyen took up his

duties as ADG Corporate services in June 2004. Other June arrivals were Annemarie Kormawa, HIV/AIDS Focal Point, Mr Randrihamahonina Victorien, UN Volunteer, who joined WARDA/ARI, and Mr David Millar, science writer. Five Dutch-sponsored APOs joined in 2004: Mr Marcel Meijs, GIS Specialist; Mr Jonne Rodenberg, Agronomist/IVC; Mr Tia Dro, Germplasm Specialist; Ms Bianca Beks, French editor; and Mr Michiel de Vries, Agronomist/Irrigated Rice, who joined WARDA Sahel Station. Dr Ryoichi Ikeda, Plant Breeder, and Dr Yoshimi Sokei, Agronomist, both from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), joined the African Rice Initiative (ARI) in October, 2004. Dr Attiogbevi-Somado Eklou, Post-doctoral Fellow (PDF), Genetic Resources Unit (GRU), joined WARDA in September and Dr Vincent Boubié Bado, Sahel Agronomist, joined WARDA Sahel team in November.

The most recent arrivals in 2005 were: Dr Paul Van Mele, Technology Transfer Agronomist; Dr Lawrence Narteh, ROCARIZ Coordinator; Dr Ashura Luzi-Kihupi, Coordinator for ECARRN, based in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; and Dr Mande Semon, PDF Molecular Biologist.

Among the departures were: Dr Olaf Erenstein, Production Economist; Dr Sidi Sanyang, ROCARIZ Coordinator; Dr Robert Guei, Head of GRU; and Mr Frank Abamu, GRU germplasm specialist.

Dr Robert J. Carsky, Cropping Services Agronomist, died in the Ivorian crisis on November 6, 2004.

The departure of many GSS precipitated by the Ivorian crisis is regretted. However, the essential support staff complement is being rebuilt in accordance with the prevailing host country agreement.

Now firmly established in Cotonou, WARDA is fully participating with other CGIAR centers operating in Africa in identifying a general framework for collective action towards programmatic integration. Steps are also being taken to achieve greater programmatic and operational alignments of both WARDA and IITA as recommended by the CGIAR. It should be emphasized, however, that WARDA's member States have resolved that the Association should remain as an independently functioning research center and the focal point for rice research in Africa.



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