

The period under review May 2005 – April 2006

May

West and Central Africa MTP

Africa Rice Center (WARDA) began detailed discussions in a meeting (2 May) with CGIAR partners at IITA Ibadan, Nigeria on development of a regional MTP for West Africa. WARDA is in charge of coordinating the West Africa MTP exercise being undertaken in close consultation with CORAF and all the CGIAR Centers based in and operating in West Africa.

FARA/NEPAD

WARDA participated in a meeting on the role of agricultural research for development, organized by FARA and the CGIAR in Accra, Ghana (4 May). A panel discussion was convened to discuss what FARA and the CGIAR can do to support NEPAD. The ADG-RD Dr Shellemiah Keya represented the WARDA DG Dr Kanayo Nwanze at the G8/NEPAD Summit (5-6 May) on the implementation of the CAADP, also held in Accra.

USAID MAS Project against RYMV

A planning workshop for a major USAID-funded biotechnology project on the use of marker-assisted selection in the improvement of rice resistant to RYMV was held in Bamako (11-13 May). The project focuses on four key countries – Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and The Gambia – and will greatly enhance their biotechnology capacity through supporting the establishment of functioning biotechnology laboratories in each case. Two popular varieties of rice from each country have been identified for improvement by the addition of a gene conferring resistance to rice yellow mottle virus.

June

FARA General Assembly

Four WARDA scientists participated in the 2nd FARA General Assembly in Entebbe, Uganda (6–12 June). WARDA hosted a side event on “Boosting Rice research in Eastern Africa”. The Center participated in the CGIAR and NARS consultation at which the sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Program (SSA CP) and development of MTPs for East and West Africa were discussed.

ECOWAS

The Ministerial Conference of ECOWAS States on biotechnology was held in Bamako, Mali (20-24 June).

July

SWIHA Workshop

A regional workshop (18-20 July) on mainstreaming HIV/AIDS prevention programs in agriculture was organized by SWIHA, which is hosted by WARDA, and attracted over 70 international participants from various backgrounds. This improved partnerships for research and development on HIV/AIDS with research and non-research organizations. Participants identified priority research areas in the agricultural sector, and decided to form the Africa Network on HIV/AIDS & Agriculture (ANEHA).

PADS Steering Committee

A meeting (26–28 July) of the PADS Steering Committee was held at WARDA’s temporary headquarters in Cotonou, Benin.

September

British Association for the Advancement of Science

SWIHA Coordinator Mrs Annemarie Kormawa was invited to present at the prestigious British Association for the Advancement of Science annual meeting held in Dublin, Republic of Ireland. Taking part in the debate on prospects for a ‘Green Revolution’ in Africa, she outlined the toll being taken on Africans and African agriculture by HIV/AIDS. Her presentation received widespread international press coverage. Also taking part was former WARDA plant breeder and 2004 World Food Prize winner Dr Monty P. Jones of FARA.

WARDA Council of Ministers

The 25th Session of the WARDA Council of Ministers was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (22-23 September) under the Chairmanship of His Excellency Laya Sawadogo, Minister for Secondary and Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Government of Burkina Faso.

The Council passed a number of resolutions relating to the future of WARDA. It emphasized that, as “the basic principles and philosophy which underpin the Center’s operations conform with the expectations of member countries, WARDA should keep its identity and autonomy while increasing its relations with the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) Centers, such as the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)”. Putting its force solidly behind the Center, the Council further resolved to take necessary steps to make WARDA a Center of Excellence of the African Union

because the technologies and knowledge generated by the Center were powerful tools to fight poverty and hunger in Africa.

It resolved that WARDA should retain its official headquarters in Bouaké, Côte d’Ivoire, and endorsed the process for recruitment of the next Director General while thanking the outgoing Director General Dr Kanayo F. Nwanze for his dedicated service to the cause of rice research and development in sub-Saharan Africa during his mandate.

The Council welcomed the initiative to combine the regional cereals networks in West Africa around six themes and recommended that, based on its exemplary work and mechanism, the ROCARIZ rice network hosted by WARDA, should be the coordinator of the thematic group on rice. WARDA member states were invited by the Council to make judicious use of biotechnology to increase rice productivity and it decided that WARDA should take a leading role in rice policy research for the benefit of sub-Saharan Africa, with focus on West Africa. The CoM encouraged the expansion of WARDA’s geographical mandate in conformity with its deed of partnership.

Crop Science Society of Japan

WARDA scientist Dr Koichi Futakuchi attended the 220th meeting (28-29 September) of the Crop Society of Japan in Tokyo where he made three presentations: Yield performance of upland interspecific *Oryza sativa* x *O. glaberrima* progenies under different growing

ecologies; Comparison of several agronomic and grain quality traits between conventional back cross and anther culture derived interspecific *Oryza sativa* x *O. glaberrima* progenies; and Vegetative growth characteristics related to weed competitiveness in interspecific *Oryza sativa* x *O. glaberrima* progenies in lowland.

A WARDA collaborator from Nihon University also presented on studies on acidity tolerance in NERICA.

October

IHP Evaluation Review

A team appointed by the UNDP and WARDA spent four weeks in a major evaluation of the Africa-Asia joint research project on Interspecific Hybridization between African and Asian rice species. A number of recommendations were made to enable the smooth functioning of phase III of this important project aimed at impacting on farmers' livelihoods and at reducing poverty.

November

Rice policy workshop, Cotonou, Benin

In taking stock on rice policy and its effects in SSA countries, a regional rice policy and food security workshop was organized (7-9 November) which attracted 80 participants from 20 countries. Workshop participants identified regional research and development priority areas for promoting rice policy impact in SSA.

Research Days

WARDA Research Days form part of the Center's research planning and monitoring mechanism. Outputs and results

from 2005 activities and proposals and workplans for 2006 were presented by the WARDA team from Cotonou and the satellite stations at the 2005 Research Days meeting held in Cotonou (14-18 November). About 80 scientists, researchers, NARS and NGO representatives, together with invited guests from other organizations with an active interest in riziculture were present at the meeting. Outside participants included INRAB (Benin), IRRI (Philippines), JICA (Japan), IITA (Benin) and Sasakawa Global 2000.

December

Fact-finding in Mozambique

ECARRN regional coordinator Dr Ashura Luzi-Kihupi carried out a fact-finding mission to Mozambique to discuss rice sector potential with a number of public and private organizations with an interest in rice. Development of the rice sector could be an important element of a strategy aiming at closing the gap between imports and exports of agricultural products. It is estimated that the total value of current rice production is \$31 million and imports are estimated at about \$70 million. The total value of the rice sector is therefore over \$100 million. The potential area for rice production is estimated at about 900,000 ha.

Eastern and Central Africa Rice Research Network

A Stakeholders' Workshop on priority setting was organized in Nairobi by ECARRN which produced priority themes based on:

- 1 Human and institutional capacity development
- 2 Enhanced information and knowledge-sharing mechanisms,

- 3 Increased production and productivity of rice-based production systems in the ECA region,
- 4 Enabling policies and improved rice marketing systems,
- 5 Enhanced information and knowledge-sharing mechanisms.

March

The Africa Rice Center Board at its March meeting praised the Center for its dynamism, excellence of leadership and staff, and its unique partnership model with national programs; all achievements attained with a relatively small budget in comparison to other international research centers.

April

Science Council Meeting, Cotonou

The Togoudo Station was selected by the Science Council of the CGIAR as venue for its business meeting (6-12 April)

with WARDA as host. By permitting WARDA and IITA staff to attend as observers, awareness of the work of the Science Council was greatly increased, and the opportunity taken to demonstrate WARDA research activities.

2006 Fukui International Koshihikari Rice Prize of Japan

Lowland rice breeder Dr Moussa Sié was chosen as one of the two laureates of the 2006 Fukui International Koshihikari Rice Prize of Japan in recognition of his significant contributions to rice production in sub-Saharan Africa. Dr Sié, a Burkinabe national, is the first African to receive this important prize at the award ceremony (15 April) in Fukui city, Japan. He has over 20 years experience in the selection and improvement of rice varieties, with particular emphasis on rainfed systems. The prize is shared with Dr Akihiiko Ando from Brazil, who has contributed to rice breeding by using radiation-induced mutations. The prize was instituted in 1997 to commemorate the development of Koshihikari, one of the most popular Japanese rice varieties.



Dr Moussa Sié (seated left) after receiving the prestigious Fukui International Koshihikari Rice Prize of Japan to mark his significant contribution to rice production in sub-Saharan Africa.