

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

PARTNERSHIPS ARE one of the mainstays of WARDA's success, and one of our most profitable has been that with our national partners (NARS) through the Task Forces. The past year has seen major steps in the evolution of the Task Forces. The First WARDA/NARS Experts Committee Meeting in January included discussion of the recommendations of the 1997 USAID review of the Task Forces. The meeting recommended that the Task Forces be given a new focus on technology transfer, that the three breeding Task Forces be merged into one, and that the Cropping Systems and Problem Soils Task Forces be combined into a single Natural Resource Management Task Force. The Committee also recommended that steps be taken to harmonize the Task Forces with the CORAF Rice Network, especially since the composition of the WARDA National Experts Committee was almost identical to that of the CORAF Executive Committee. A subsequent meeting between CORAF and WARDA in August led to a proposal that the two networks be merged into a single rice research network for West and Central Africa. The modalities of this new network are being discussed even as we write this report. We take this opportunity to look back over the evolution of the Task Force mechanism, as well as into the future (page 9).

The last year saw the departure of Interim Director of Programs, Willem Stoop, and the arrival of Amir Kassam to take up post as Deputy Director General for Programs—thus completing the new WARDA management team. Before joining WARDA, Dr Kassam was at the TAC Secretariat for nine years. He brings a wealth of CGIAR programmatic and strategic experience to WARDA. Brent Simpson arrived to head the Technology Transfer Program, and the Program Committee was strengthened in its role of research planning and review. Additional new faces at WARDA are George Maina (Head of Finance), Olumuyiwa Osiname (WARDA's Interim Coordinator in Nigeria, based at Ibadan, Nigeria), Guy Manners (Information Officer), Thierry Cadalen (Molecular Biologist, Post-Doctoral Fellow), Satoshi Tobita (Physiologist/Molecular Biologist, JIRCAS), and Wilfried Hundertmark (Water Management Specialist, IWMI).

Another caliber of staff joined WARDA in 1998, when we introduced a Visiting Scientist Scheme, whereby NARS scientists can be posted to work as part of the WARDA team at one of our stations. The positions are open to full-time national scientists nominated by their respective institutions. During the secondment, of up to one year, visiting scientists are full members of WARDA's inter-disciplinary teams and are involved in the day-to-day activities of the Association.



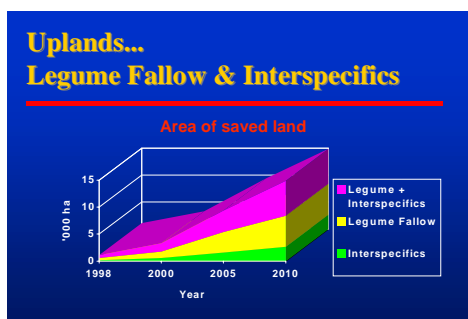
WARDA's new Deputy Director General for Programs, Amir Kassam, with Director General, Kanayo F. Nwanze

The first year has been an encouraging success, with an Agronomist/Breeder from Senegal and an Entomologist from Nigeria working at Headquarters, and a Breeder from Burkina Faso working at the Sahel Station. The work of the Agronomist/Breeder, Amadou Moustapha Bèye is featured in this report (page 40).

Obtaining relevant and up-to-date information has been a problem throughout much of West and Central Africa for many years. We are pleased to have been the instrument by which many of our NARS and extension partners have been able to cash-in on the benefits of global communications through the Internet. As the first phase of the AfricaLink project draws to a close, we summarize the progress to date, and look forward to improved interaction with our partners through electronic-mail, Web-based discussion fora, and rapid information dissemination (see page 45).

The year also saw an expansion of our partnerships with regional and national development agencies, such as ANADER and Projet riz nord in our host country Côte d'Ivoire (see page 40), and SAED and AGETA in the Sahel (see page 16). Such partnerships are often only part of broader linkages encompassing farmers' groups, NGOs and the private sector—several of which are highlighted in this report. Our pivotal role in fostering partnerships throughout Sub-Saharan Africa was demonstrated when the Director General was asked to chair a joint Task Force of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) and the World Bank's Special Program for African Agricultural Research (SPAAR). This Task Force was mandated to develop a vision (document) on Agricultural Research in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Natural resources are often viewed in very narrow terms, principally as soil, water and biodiversity. In recent discussion arising from the Third System Review, the CGIAR Centers have provided a more accurate, and broader,



definition of natural resources to encompass all those elements generated by natural processes; that is, soil, water, the atmosphere, animal and plant life. In this context, crop improvement has a valuable role to play in the conservation of natural resources, especially land (soil) and water. The graph illustrates the amount of land projected to be saved by the use of WARDA's 'new rice for Africa' and legume-rice crop rotations to the year 2010—that is, the amount of extra land that would have to be brought under production if these options are not adopted. This is just one aspect of natural-resource management; others are illustrated in the following features, especially our work on soil fertility and fertilizer management in the Sahel (page 16) and weed management (page 32).

This year sees the introduction of a new feature, a *Donor Country Profile*. The first profile focuses on Japan as an example of a donor with strong collaborative research activities, including the posting of scientists to work with us at our Headquarters (page 48). Other donors highlighted in this report are France and the Netherlands (IVC, page 23), the UK (weed research, page 32), and the USA (Task Forces, page 9).

The past year saw further evolution of WARDA's mission in line with the revised mission of the CGIAR as a group, and in preparation for a revised Medium-Term Plan for the period 2000–2002. Our redefined mission is:

“to contribute to food security and poverty eradication in poor rural and urban populations, particularly in West and Central Africa, through research, partnerships, capacity strengthening and policy support on rice-based systems, and in ways that

promote sustainable agricultural development based on environmentally sound management of natural resources.”

Highlights of the year at WARDA included the release of a video, in English and French, on our successful development of a new, robust and resilient plant type from our Interspecific Hybridization Project (IHP), entitled *Bintu and Her New African Rice*. It describes the advantages of the new rice for Africa, and tells the story of a typical West African woman farmer participating in WARDA’s Participatory Varietal Selection scheme and her appreciation of the interspecific lines. The work in Guinea progressed with the NARS establishing and operating their own Participatory Varietal Selection following the WARDA model. Progress in Benin, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo has been more modest, but has confirmed the many advantages of Participatory Varietal Selection approach in generating and disseminating technologies as a fast-track to responding to farmers’ own identified needs and opportunities. Côte d’Ivoire demonstrated its confidence in us by releasing no less than eight WARDA-generated rice varieties in 1998. Meanwhile, the impact of the IHP spread beyond Africa, as IRRI started screening some of the new lines in Asian toxic soils in savanna ecosystems and developing other progenies for rainfed upland systems in South and Southeast Asia.

Looking ahead, the biggest single challenge that we may have to face in the near future is the major transformation of the agricultural agenda in many Sub-Saharan African countries. Are we well balanced and poised to face the challenge of increasing the competitiveness of locally produced rice against cheap imports? Increased rice production alone will not result in food security. An integrated approach which considers all capital assets—social, physical, financial, commercial, human and natural resources—in a dynamic and multi-functional system will be required. WARDA’s work is only one facet of this system and the drive for agricultural and socio-political security. We believe that today we are strategically positioned to contribute to the process of achieving this goal.

Lastly, a few words to our stakeholders. WARDA continues to enjoy its unique institutional context as an association of member states, while also being a part of the international network known as the CGIAR. The Association was created by the political will of its member states, and has developed into a shining example of regional integration. By its international nature (in part through the CGIAR), WARDA is also a good example of South–South and North–South collaboration in global agricultural research and development. The success of much of our research and development work in recent years has led to increased demands on our resources, not only from West Africa, but from throughout Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. These demands require adequate support. We believe that WARDA’s role in the global context is multifaceted within our overall mission to increase rice production in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way for the benefit of rice producers and consumers throughout Africa in the drive for regional food security and poverty eradication.

Kanayo F. Nwanze
Director General

Just Faaland
Chairman, Board of Trustees