

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

**W**ARDA'S PAST Annual Reports were written to reflect a calendar year of events. Over the years, we have realized that this approach was a limitation to what research topics and events were reported, particularly as it meant that exciting themes, research results or events that occurred in the early part of the year of publication became 'stale' news in the following year when they were reported. The present report therefore covers a 'biennial' period from January 2001 through April 2002 and attempts to capture events and features that are the hallmark of our Association. Future reports will cover a 12-month period, but not a calendar year; in this respect, the present report forms a bridge to the new reporting period. We hope that you will enjoy reading our feature stories with as much pleasure as we have experienced in the process of preparing them.

Our highest oversight body, the Council of Ministers, held its regular biennial meeting at Dakar, Senegal, on 23 and 24 August 2001. In particular, this year, the Council expressed its strong political support for the Association, stressing the fact that WARDA is in fact 'owned' by its Member States, and therefore worthy of full support from the national governments. The resolution encouraging Member States to meet their financial obligations to the Association in regular and timely manner refers to "the importance of the contributions being made by WARDA-developed technologies in reducing dependency on rice imports in Member States."

In relation to rice research and development, the Council passed the following resolution.

"Considering the importance of mineral fertilization, improved seed, mechanization and conservation of plant genetic resources on sustainable high levels of rice production in the region;

    "[The Council of Ministers] Endorses:

- "(i) Continued research on rock-phosphate with the view to determining the long-term effect of rock-phosphate application on the accumulation of heavy metals in soils (e.g. cadmium);
- "(ii) Timely seed release in each Member State in order to maintain the momentum and spread of improved varieties in the subregion;
- "(iii) Further development of activities in mechanization and to continue to develop, disseminate and encourage the use of appropriate machinery such as ASI [thresher-cleaner] in the sub-region;
- "(iv) The liaison of Member States with the African Union to utilize the OAU [Organization of African Unity] Model Law in their efforts to formulate laws protecting their nations' plant genetic resources."

The year 2001 also marked the 30th Anniversary of the Association, which was formed in 1971 by 11 founding Member States. We have come a long way in 30 years, and held a modest celebration at Headquarters in September. The celebration was attended by representatives of Member State Governments, research and development partners,

the diplomatic community in Côte d'Ivoire, local village chiefs, and donors. The Prime Minister of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, HE Mr Pascal Affi N'Guéssan, attended on behalf of the President of the Republic, HE Mr Laurent Gbagbo. HE the Prime Minister honored several WARDA staff, saying "Côte d'Ivoire, WARDA's host country, feels it a duty to express its recognition on behalf of all the Member States." The Director General was conferred with the title of "*Commandeur dans l'ordre du mérite ivoirien*" ("Commander in the Ivorian Order of Merit") for services to West and Central Africa through his leadership of WARDA since 1996. Additional details are provided in 'The Year in Review: 2001' (page 71).

We now have new faces in the management team at WARDA. In July 2001, Michel P. Dubé took up post as Director of Administration and Finance (DAF). A Canadian national from Quebec, Michel joined WARDA with over 20 years multidisciplinary experience in finance and operations management, including a strong private-sector perspective for 'small business.' He is no stranger to Côte d'Ivoire, having worked in Abidjan between 1993 and 1994. Highly comfortable in both English and French, Michel's past international experience includes Africa, Asia, South America and Eastern Europe. Then, in November 2001, Günther Hahne arrived to take up the post of Director of Research. A German national, Günther lived in France from 1987 to 2001, where he was last employed by the *Centre national de la recherche scientifique* (CNRS) as Group Head at the *Institut de biologie moléculaire des plantes* in Strasbourg. He comes to WARDA with strong connections in the European research community and funding institutions, and a rare perspective to research, research opportunities and research management.



New men near the top: Günther Hahne (Director of Research, left) and Michel Dubé (Director of Administration and Finance, right)



Director General Kanayo F. Nwanze was made "*Commandeur dans l'ordre du mérite ivoirien*," receiving his award from the hand of Amani N'Guéssan Michel, Minister of National Education, on behalf of HE Pascal Affi N'Guéssan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire at WARDA's 30th Anniversary celebration

The reporting period also saw the arrival of: Emmanuel Abo (Virologist, Visiting Scientist), Enoch Boateng (GIS Specialist, Visiting Scientist), Péfery Coulibaly (Information and Communications Technology Manager), Toon Defoer (Technology Transfer Agronomist), Howard Gridley (Lowland Rice Breeder), Nurdin S. Katuli (Head of Operations), Harouna Koré (Vegetable Economist, Visiting Scientist), Aline Lisette-Vidal (Head of Training, Information and Library Services), Andreas Oswald (Cropping Systems Agronomist), Sidi Sanyang (ROCARIZ Coordinator) and Aïssata Sobia Camara (Agricultural Economist, Visiting Scientist).

It is appropriate that the start of the new millennium sees the NERICA rices launched onto a new plane. First, in April

2001, WARDA hosted an international conference on the role of NERICAs in Africa's food security that led to agreement for the establishment of a Consortium for NERICA-based Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa. Then in March 2002, the 'NERICA Consortium' was operationalized with the launching of the African Rice Initiative (ARI). This Initiative should provide a fast-track for NERICA dissemination and adoption throughout the rice-growing regions of the continent. The story behind the Initiative and its operation are detailed in our first feature (page 9).

Exciting things have been happening in our Irrigated Rice Program over the last few years, especially in the Sahel. Having highlighted that multidisciplinary is essential for progress in this ecology through integrated crop management last year, this year we focus on one particular component, namely breeding. The irrigated-rice breeding program has lots of good things to offer and there are more varieties in the pipeline today than ever before (page 15).

A major problem to rice cultivation in the inland-valley lowlands is iron toxicity. West African soils have high concentrations of iron, and these can cause serious problems for the rice plant. We look at the problem holistically, and some solutions that may help improve productivity in these difficult environments (page 29).

The production of new technologies is all well and good, but if the policy climate does not favor domestic rice production, rice farmers are not going to have any incentive to help bridge the deficits currently filled by imports. We take a look at the economic trends in rice in the region, and what can be done to encourage producer- and consumer-friendly policies that make the goal of food-security attainable (page 38).

The whole African continent is being rocked by the pandemic of HIV/AIDS. Last year, we mentioned that the CGIAR Center Directors Committee (CDC) was to develop a System-wide initiative on the impact of HIV/AIDS on agriculture. WARDA has taken a lead role in this activity, and the progress to date is highlighted in our fifth feature article (page 46).

This year's *Donor Country Profile* looks at The Netherlands. From capital input, through research overseers, seconded staff to trainees, The Netherlands has been a staunch supporter of WARDA's activities for many years. A major success has been the Inland Valley Consortium (IVC), jointly funded by The Netherlands and France. All these and more are covered in this year's feature (page 53).

We wish to take this opportunity to express our thanks to our donors, particularly in the light of the downward trend in funding to agricultural research, especially from certain major donors, in 2001 and 2002. We thank you for your faith in our work and support to us, and look forward to continued fruitful collaboration in the years ahead.

We cannot conclude this statement without a word to our Member States. *You* are the reason that we are here: WARDA was established by Member States and continues its mission to serve you in the area of rice research and development. We thank you for your political support when so many of your economies are suffering in an economically 'liberalized' world, and we thank you for the partnership we share as we work together to improve the well-being of rice farmers and rice consumers throughout the region.

Kanayo F. Nwanze  
*Director General*

N. Lindsay Innes  
*Chairman, Board of Trustees*

