

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

Foreword

After NERICA, what? This was a constant refrain that the Africa Rice Center (WARDA) heard after it won the CGIAR King Baudouin Award for the NERICA breakthrough at the beginning of this millennium.

Our next challenge was to come up with something equally good for the lowland rice ecology, which offers greater possibility for rice intensification. We can proudly announce today that our scientists and their partners in the national programs have achieved another scientific breakthrough, building on the NERICA technology. Another new rice for Africa has been developed.

In contrast to NERICA, which was designed for the upland (rainfed) rice ecology in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), the new rice has been developed for the African lowlands, one of the most complex rice ecologies in the world. Given the high potential of the lowlands, the new rice varieties are expected to make an even bigger impact than the upland NERICA in SSA.

This exciting breakthrough was achieved, thanks to the catalytic role of the ROCARIZ rice network and the Center's highly successful partnership-based research model. You can read this breaking news story in the feature *Going beyond the upland NERICA: another new rice for Africa is born*.

For this Annual Report, which covers the period from May 2003 to April 2004, we chose the theme *Towards new horizons*, because it captures best the essence of the futuristic spirit of the Africa Rice Center. As you will observe from the stories featured in this report, the Center has been slowly but steadily moving beyond its traditional focus towards new frontiers of research, development, scope and recognition.

The theme of expanding horizons is reflected in the Center's new *Strategic Plan (2003-2012)*, the highlights of which are presented in this report. The theme also fits in well with its expansion in East and Central Africa, following NERICA's growing popularity in those regions. The feature on *The growing NERICA boom in Uganda* recounts an amazing history in the making. If this is a sign of things to come, the Center is indeed charting the future of rice in SSA.

The new horizons do not represent only the geographic expansion of the Center's reach, but also the scope of the Center's research, which is no longer focusing on just rice, but is also exploring the possibilities of diversification of rice-based livelihoods. The article *Enabling successful livelihood diversification for the rural and urban poor in sub-Saharan Africa* describes WARDA's new initiatives with partners in the areas of rice-fish and rice-vegetable farming.

With a new brand name and identity, reflecting its leadership role in rice R&D in SSA, a new research and corporate structure and a new project-based mode of activities



Another exciting breakthrough: a new rice for African lowlands developed

in line with its new strategic plan, the Africa Rice Center is now strategically positioned to confront the challenges of the future. This bold vision is bolstered by the worldwide recognition of its achievements.

It is one of the biggest ironies of Africa, that when the Center was going through immense difficulties, having been uprooted from its headquarters because of the civil strife in Côte d'Ivoire in September 2002, it was also winning the highest accolades that any research institute can ever aspire for:

- High praises for NERICA from world leaders at the Tokyo International Conference on Africa's Development (TICAD) III, where NERICA emerged as a byword for successful Asia-Africa cooperation
- The Senegalese President's Science and Technology Award for the development and promotion of the ASI rice thresher
- Appreciation for the Center's courage during the Ivoirian crisis from the Council of Ministers at its 24th Session
- Recognition from the Côte d'Ivoire Government for the Center's efforts to alleviate hunger in the country
- The Côte d'Ivoire Government's honor to Dr Kouamé Miezan, a senior scientist, for his long service to rice research at WARDA
- CGIAR-wide praise for WARDA's spirit of resilience at the 2003 Annual General Meeting
- The selection of Dr Monty Jones as the 2004 World Food Prize co-winner for NERICA development, a breakthrough that he achieved at WARDA

Rice is grown and consumed in about 40 countries in Africa



The 2004 World Food Prize for NERICA is especially rewarding—a recognition to all those who have been involved in this work, especially the donors who have championed its cause from the beginning. In the article relating to this Prize, we hail Dr Jones' achievement and give an update on NERICA's spread in SSA.

Rice is an integral part of Africa, where it has been grown for more than 3000 years and has now become a commodity of strategic significance. The article *Celebrating the International Year of Rice in Africa* describes how important rice-growing countries in SSA geared up to pay homage to this important crop as part of the global celebration.

NERICA's growing popularity in East and Central Africa has increased the demand for collaboration from governments, regional organizations and even the private sector in these two regions.

Several important agreements were signed during the reporting period and the information on these is included in the chapter *Period in Review (May 2003 to April 2004)*.

A significant milestone for the CGIAR was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the CGIAR-supported Centers represented by WARDA Director General as 2004 Chair of the Center Directors Committee. This omnibus document provides political recognition for all CGIAR Centers with which NEPAD can work towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Despite the high staff turnover at the Center because of the Ivoirian crisis, we are happy that a new crop of dynamic professionals has joined the WARDA family to carry forward the Center's exciting research work within the NEPAD framework.

Foremost among these was the arrival of Dr Shellemiah Keya, Assistant Director General, Research and Development, in January 2004. Dr Keya brought a wealth of experience to the job, with an impressive track record spanning over three decades of top-level research management and administration, university teaching, scientific publishing, and research consultancies. No stranger to the CGIAR, Dr Keya was the Executive Secretary to the CGIAR Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), from 1996 to 2000, and to the Interim Science Council (iSc) from 2001 to 2003. Before joining the CGIAR, he was the Vice-Chancellor of Moi University, Kenya, from 1988 to 1994.

The reporting period also saw the appointment of: Ousmane Youm (Assistant Director of Research, Program 1), Inoussa Akintayo (African Rice Initiative Coordinator), Moussa Sié (Lowland Rice Breeder), Samuel Bruce-Oliver (Executive Officer), Philippe Morant (Regional Coordinator for the Inland Valley Consortium), Mohamed Kebbeh (Sahel Production Economist), Sylvester Oikeh (Soil Fertility Agronomist), Patrick Kormawa (Policy Economist), Robert Carsky (Cropping Systems Agronomist) and Ed Sayegh (Interim Director of Corporate Services).

As we go to press, the tragic events of November 2004 in Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire, have become branded in the individual and collective memories of the Center's staff and their families. One of our senior scientists, Dr Robert Carsky, was killed when a bomb struck the French barracks where he had sought shelter from air strikes. It is a tragic loss for the Center and for Africa where he had spent most of his professional life dedicated to agricultural research.



Prof. Richard S. Musangi, Chair, WARDA Board of Trustees and
Dr Kanayo F. Nwanze, Director General

The Board, Management and staff expressed their deep sympathy to the Carsky family. The Board Vice Chair, Dr Ed Price, and the Assistant Director General for Corporate Services Mr Long T. Nguyen, represented WARDA at the memorial service in November 2004 in Washington DC, where Dr Price gave the eulogy for Bob.

The resurgence of the civil strife required the evacuation of internationally recruited and senior non-Ivoirian support staff from Côte d'Ivoire. The Board decided during an extraordinary meeting in December 2004 to relocate the Center's headquarters to Cotonou, Benin, in the facilities made available by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and the Institut national de recherche agronomique du Bénin (INRAB). The Cotonou facilities fulfilled the Board's criterion that the management and staff from research, administration and finance departments should be in the same location for increased efficiency.

To give the stability needed for scientists to carry out their important research agenda, the Board in its last meeting has decided that the Center will operate from Cotonou with an initial planning horizon of 5 years during which the decision will be regularly reviewed.

The Center is not abandoning its Bouaké headquarters in Côte d'Ivoire. The offices, laboratories, field facilities and genebank at the headquarters remain intact. Activities in Côte d'Ivoire have been restricted to the maintenance of the genebank and the security at the Campus.

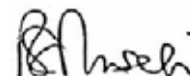
In spite of their traumatic experience in November 2004, our staff have settled down quickly in Cotonou, which has proven to be a safe haven for research. They are vigorously engaged in brainstorming, planning and doing research, thanks to the hospitality shown by the Government of Benin, IITA and INRAB.

We are very grateful to them and to our many friends, supporters and donors around the world who have continued to champion our cause and stood by us in our darkest moments. The spirit of the Center remains invincible, despite all the odds stacked against it.

As our new scientific breakthrough testifies, the Africa Rice Center with its partners will continue to mobilize advanced science to develop global public goods that benefit not only poor people but also the economy of the African countries.



Kanayo F. Nwanze
Director General



Richard S. Musangi
Chair, Board of Trustees