

The Period under review May 2004 to April 2005

Africa Rice Center truly began to come of age as a pan-African center of research excellence during the period under review. This greatly increased involvement in all regions of sub-Saharan Africa was undertaken at the request of both the WARDA Council of Ministers and national agricultural research systems (NARS) in many non-member countries, and because of the continuing evolution of the CGIAR and its activities in SSA.

During 2004, Director General Dr Kanayo F. Nwanze was the Chair of the CGIAR Center Directors Committee (CDC), and SSA in its totality benefited from the oversight brought to bear on the region as a result.

At the same time, the NERICAs continued to consolidate their impacts on West African farming systems and heralded the potential for expansion into similar ecologies in other parts of the continent. Four new Lowland NERICAs were released and farmers selected many others in PVS for further evaluation.

Drying rice in a village cooperative near Kumasi, Ghana.



2004

May

Program reform and the 2005–2007 MTP

Development of the new research program structure dominated the early part of this 12-month period, together with that of the new MTP for 2005–2007 based on the revised programs designed to tackle two major challenges – Integrated Rice Production Systems and Rice Policy and Development – as highlighted in the 2003–2012 Strategic Plan.

Prime elements of the previous programmatic structure are covered by the new Programs 1 and 2 which synthesize the most important concerns of SSA under eight project headings that reflect a fresh approach in line with the developments surrounding the CGIAR and its external environment. A new approach to challenging familiar problems for African agriculture and development was embodied by the inclusion of a project devoted and rice-based technologies to drought – previously identified at systemwide level as a major challenge – and another aimed at using rice to overcome the disruption that can be caused to agricultural production and infrastructure by civil conflict or environmental disaster.

June

National Experts Committee meeting, Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire

The Fourth Biennial Regional Consultative meeting of the National Experts Committee was held in Côte d'Ivoire from **24–26 June** under the chairmanship of Prof. Hamidou Boly of INERA, Burkina Faso. Member countries present were Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal, with observers from Ethiopia, Congo DRC, Guinea, Uganda and Sasakawa-Global 2000.

International Year of Rice Celebrations

WARDA helped organize the successful IYR celebrations held during the NEC meeting at Yamoussoukro and those in Ghana and Nigeria. The Center also took part in the IYR celebration in Guinea where farmers have enthusiastically taken up the NERICAs.



Displaced women rice farmers celebrate IYR in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire.

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MTP 2005–2007

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Board of Trustees. The MTP draft was shared with the WARDA National Experts Committee, comprising representatives from more than 20 countries in Africa. During a two-day priority setting exercise, donors and selected NARS participated in the discussion and evaluation of the draft priorities. The priority setting process was guided firstly by the broad priority drawn from the Strategic Plan that 65% and 35% of the resources shall be assigned to Programs 1 and 2, respectively. The CGIAR global and regional priorities completed by the SC in 2004, NEPAD's Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP), WECARD/CORAF and FARA strategies and priorities were considered, all of which have given high priority to rice in development of the challenge programs, and other initiatives were taken into account in determining current and future priority themes.

Partnership is a major strength of WARDA, particularly when the Center is able to ensure that research investments are consistent with and supportive of national objectives in Africa. In this way, the priorities of NARES partners can be aligned with WARDA's own broad vision of future rice research in Africa over the next 10 years as detailed in the Center's Strategic Plan 2003–2012.

Because of the Center's new programmatic alignment, WARDA commissioned an internal task force on research priority setting. Its main objective was to develop a priority setting methodology and approach for prioritizing research outputs and activities within the new MTP. So that the possible contribution or impact of each MTP project to the mission and strategic goal of WARDA could be critically examined, a participatory priority setting exercise with a broad stakeholder consultation was carried out and concluded with an open-door workshop held in Bamako.

The task force developed a set of six impact criteria based on WARDA's mission statement and the Strategic Plan 2003–2012:

- Contribution to poverty alleviation
- Food and nutrition security and good health
- Partnership/capacity building
- Increasing productivity and profitability
- Sustainability of farming environment
- International public goods

During the project workshop, stakeholders assigned weights to the impact criteria based on their judged importance to WARDA's mission, its strategic objectives and elements of the Millennium Development Goals.

The activities and outputs of each WARDA project were examined in turn and assigned weights by the stakeholders. Together with the feedback from WARDA's close partnerships with NARS, with the National Experts Committee, whose members are heads of their respective NARS, and periodic priority-setting exercises during country-to-country visits, the underpinnings of the new MTP were developed.



Traditional chiefs inspect rice samples during IYR in Côte d'Ivoire.

The MTP itself reflects a fresh approach in line with the developments surrounding the CGIAR and its external environment, and the major role WARDA can play at the heart of the Challenge Programs as well as with continuing involvement in several Systemwide Programs.

As part of its new research agenda, the Center is reaching out beyond its traditional partners to ensure that its knowledge and technologies are relevant and accessible to a broader range of actors interested in rice development in Africa; ranging from international development banks and bilateral agencies, through government and research institutions to local NGOs and the private sector. WARDA continues to strengthen its links with WECARD/CORAF, as the sub-regional organization that takes the leadership in the consolidation and integration of research activities of both international and national centers within the sub-region.

September

ROCARIZ 4Rs Biennial Meeting, Accra, Ghana

ROCARIZ held its third biennial regional rice research review network (4Rs) meeting in Accra, Ghana from **27 September – 1 October**. Attended by more than 70 scientists from West and Central Africa, as well as visitors from other CGIAR Centers and donors, the meeting coincided with the International Year of Rice celebrations in Accra, involving Government Ministers from several West African countries.

CCER on Partnerships

Not only was this the first CCER on Partnerships by WARDA, it was also the first such evaluation of partnerships to be carried out in the CGIAR System. The evaluation team reported as “very positive and commendable” the very strong support of all those contacted to WARDA and its partnership model as a common tool for the development of rice production in West and Central Africa. The final report concentrated on four main issues: mechanisms for linkage/partnerships, information documentation and exchange, capacity building, and technologies and their impacts.

October

World Food Prize Award Ceremony, Iowa, USA

Dr Monty Jones, former WARDA researcher was selected a co-recipient of the **2004 World Food Prize** for developing the NERICA varieties by successfully crossing African with Asian rice species to produce drought- and pest-resistant, high yielding NERICA rice varieties, a feat which had not been achieved before in the history of rice breeding. Dr Jones, from Sierra Leone, shared the \$250,000 World Food Prize with another rice scientist Professor Yuan Longping of China’s National Hybrid Rice Research and Development Center.

World Food Prize President Ambassador Kenneth Quinn lauded both scientists for their “breakthrough scientific achievements which have significantly increased food security for millions of people from Asia to Africa.”



Dr Monty Jones

CCER on the Inland Valley Consortium

A three-person team carried out an evaluation of Phase II of the IVC, visiting WARDA in Abidjan and Bamako, and the National Coordination Units (NCUs) in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali. The continued relevance of IVC was confirmed by all six NCUs with which the team had contact. The CCER report made a number of recommendations relating to operational, financial and research aspects of the IVC.

Return to Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire

Based on assurances from all those involved in security issues in Côte d'Ivoire and on the approvals given by the Council of Ministers and the Board of Trustees for the return of all Africa Rice Center's headquarters units to the purpose-built headquarters at M'bé near Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire, a carefully-planned move back to Bouaké started at the beginning of October. Site preparations and the return of the M'bé headquarters to operational condition had started some time before but actual staff return did not get fully underway until October. Administration units from Abidjan and the first groups of scientists from Bamako arrived in early and mid-October.

The Executive and Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees held its 32nd ordinary meeting at M'bé headquarters from **4–6 October**.

WARDA staff prepare to leave Bouaké in convoy following the resumption of the Ivorian crisis.



November

World Rice Research Conference, Japan

The Director General and several WARDA scientists took part in the World Rice Research Conference and Symposium in Tokyo and Tsukuba, Japan from **4–7 November**. Dr Howard Gridley presented a paper entitled ‘Perspectives for improving rice productivity in Africa’, concentrating on the yield performance of NERICAs, especially under conditions of low fertility, and on the distribution and diffusion of NERICAs via PVS. Dr Koichi Futakuchi also presented on ‘Submergence damage in rice and challenges in expanding its adaptability to submerged conditions in West and Central Africa’.

Resumption of hostilities

Scarcely had the returnees got their respective units functioning and making ready for the full return of the Research Division in December than hostilities again resumed in the country’s civil strife which had been relatively settled since 2002. Unfortunately, this led to the death of Dr Robert Carsky during aerial bombardment on **November 6** and the evacuation of Africa Rice Center staff from Bouaké to Abidjan and on to Ghana for non-Ivorian nationals.

Most staff were placed on a special leave until January 2005 and returned to their home bases. Management, together with a small group of support staff, stayed in Bamako to plan the next steps in returning the Center to full research capacity. Scientists already in Bamako carried on working as normal to complete 2004 trials and research.

Extraordinary Board Meeting, Nairobi, Kenya

The full board of Trustees met on **30 November – 2 December** to discuss the crisis in Côte d’Ivoire and the implications for WARDA’s continued occupation of its headquarters there. The Board received reports on the current security situation following the ceasefire between Government and rebel forces and from WARDA teams sent to explore alternative temporary headquarters sites in Senegal, Mali and Benin. After careful consideration, it was decided to proceed with the temporary relocation of Africa Rice Center to the vacant accommodation offered by IITA at its Benin research station at Togoudo, north of Cotonou, Benin.

December

EU Monitoring Review on Project 1.4, Bamako, Mali

A monitoring team from the European Union visited WARDA’s temporary offices in Bamako, Mali and met with NARS in Mali and Burkina Faso to evaluate the EU-funded research on creating low management plant types for resource-poor farmers in rainfed ecosystems, known as Project 1.4. The team made a number of recommendations and findings that are useful in streamlining the management of this research project.

Move to Cotonou, Benin

Thanks to the extraordinary cooperation of the Government of Benin and the assistance of our partners in IITA and INRAB Benin, the necessary approvals and arrangements for relocation of the entire WARDA headquarters administration and research units to Benin were completed within a matter of weeks.

2005

January

The first relocated staff, including those who had been on special leave since November, reported for work on **4 January**.

ECARRN operational

With support from the Canada Fund for Africa and from the European Union, the East and Central Africa Rice Research Network (ECARRN) was established in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The Coordinator was appointed in January 2005 and the steering committee inaugurated.

February

JICA Technical Seminar, Nairobi, Kenya

The WARDA Focal Point for eastern and central Africa, Dr Sylvester Oikeh, represented the DG and delivered the opening speech, keynote address and closing remarks at the JICA Technical Seminar on Rice Cooperation in East and Southern Africa held in Nairobi, 16–19 February. The meeting allowed information on NERICA to be shared with many existing and potential partners in the sub-region.

March

Research Days

Research Days postponed from 2004 because of the move from Bamako to Bouaké and then on to Cotonou were held at Togoudo Station in the presence of invited guests from NARS, including INRAB, NGOs, JICA, Sasakawa Global 2000 and other CGIAR Centers, including IRRI and IITA.

Board of Trustees Meeting, Cotonou, Benin

The full Board held its 24th ordinary meeting of the Board and all committees also met in Cotonou from **14–18 March**. It was agreed that WARDA should remain in Cotonou for a minimum of five years.

April

IVC Annual Workshop

The Inland Valley Consortium staged its five-day annual workshop in Cotonou, **4–8 April**, followed by a two-day meeting of the IVC Consortium Management Committee.

Lake Kivu Pilot Learning Site launch

ECARRN Coordinator Dr Ashura Luzi-Kihupi represented ECARRN and WARDA on **26–29 April** at the launch workshop for the implementation of the Lake Kivu Pilot Learning Site for East and Central Africa as part of the Sub-Saharan African Challenge Program.

Lowland NERICA varieties

Another scientific breakthrough, with yield potential of 6–7 t per ha and good resistance to major lowland stresses. Four lowland NERICA varieties were released in Burkina Faso and two in Mali.