

Appendices

1. WARDA: A Concise History

WARDA – The Africa Rice Center was constituted in 1970 by 11 West African countries (Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo) with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) as the West Africa Rice Development Association (WARDA); a name that it carried until late 2002 when it was designated ‘The Africa Rice Center’ in recognition of its increasing and leading role in rice research and development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

WARDA became operational in 1971 with its headquarters located in Monrovia, Liberia, and an initial broad mandate including research, training, development, rice policy formulation and intra-regional cooperation. Emphasis was placed on on-farm adaptive trials through direct introduction of genetic material from other regions, particularly Asia.

From its establishment, WARDA’s goal has been to increase rice production in West Africa. To achieve this goal, some 15 years of research effort were invested in screening a wide range of introduced Asian genetic material in order to identify and select rice lines that could be adapted to and respond well under African conditions. This approach proved misdirected and it became clear that a longer-term, more assured commitment to research was needed to generate location-specific technology within the region.

In 1986, it was agreed that WARDA should come under the aegis of the CGIAR with a broadened mandate. The Association underwent a major transformation. In 1987, because of instability in Liberia, WARDA moved its headquarters from Monrovia to M’Bé, Côte d’Ivoire, with a new organizational structure and strategic plan. A new era of WARDA had started with the membership of the Association increasing from 11 to 17 countries of West and Central Africa (Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Nigeria in addition to the 11 mentioned above) and an increasing number of external donors, including OECD countries, development agencies and private foundations.

A new organizational structure and a clearly conceptualized strategic plan helped build a reputation of institutional excellence and scientific credibility. However, from the days of Monrovia to the time of this Strategic Plan, WARDA has faced a number of challenges.

During the period 1987–2003, WARDA underwent four External Program and Management Reviews (EPMRs), an inter-center review on rice, and several internally commissioned reviews. While an earlier study by Grant Scobie had questioned the existence of WARDA as an autonomous center, the fourth EPMR, conducted in 1999–2000, provided a strong testimony to the transformation of WARDA into a well-managed, vibrant and viable center of scientific excellence. The Millennium CGIAR King Baudouin Award bestowed on WARDA in 2000 further attested to the scientific excellence of the Center.

In 2000, WARDA was subjected to an intensive review of its management and financial practices. Allegations of wrongdoing were eventually unproven.

In September 2002, WARDA faced yet another challenge with the military uprising that erupted in the host country of Côte d’Ivoire. WARDA was forced out of its headquarters, established temporary headquarters in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, and redeployed most of its scientific staff to Bamako, Mali.

At the time of going to press, the political situation in Côte d’Ivoire was experiencing positive

developments towards national reconciliation and WARDA was putting in place a ‘Progressive Return Plan to Bouaké.’

Further reading

Walsh, J.R., 2001. *Wide Crossing: The West Africa Rice Development Association in Transition 1985–2000*. Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot, UK.

WARDA, 2001. *WARDA: 1970–2001*. West Africa Rice Development Association (WARDA), Bouaké, Côte d’Ivoire, 16 p.

