

## 2. Research Priority Setting

Poverty alleviation is prominent in WARDA's mission statement, in line with the CG focus on reduction of poverty, hunger and malnutrition in developing countries.

WARDA will contribute to poverty alleviation through integrated sustainable development of the rice sector and enhancing food security at various levels, particularly through technology development. WARDA's ultimate beneficiaries are rice producers and consumers in West and Central Africa. WARDA's more immediate beneficiaries are its R&D collaborators, such as the NARES and NGOs.

To achieve its goal over the coming decade, WARDA needs to address those priority areas where (i) WARDA has or could have a comparative advantage, and (ii) WARDA can have rapid and substantial impact. This has a number of implications. A first implication is that WARDA cannot and should not do everything in the research-to-development continuum. A second implication is that WARDA's priority-setting should be guided by an assessment of the impact that can be expected from research devoted to solving a certain constraint. This means that for a given constraint, quantitative information is needed on (a) yield loss per hectare, (b) surface area affected, (c) probability that the constraint occurs, and (d) likelihood that a solution can be found and scaled up within a reasonable timeframe and with limited resources. Unfortunately, this type of information is currently lacking for most constraints. A recent priority-setting exercise by WECARD/CORAF showed the importance of rice across the region. In this exercise, rice was the

priority food crop in West Africa's coastal countries, and ranked as the second most important food crop (after vegetables) in Sahelian West Africa. WARDA and NARS will periodically conduct priority-setting exercises by country to revisit and coordinate research strategies. Such a regional approach to research planning is in line with the new CG<sup>1</sup> and FARA<sup>2</sup> strategies.

In the next decade, WARDA will continue to focus on the three main rice-growing ecologies (upland, rainfed lowland and irrigated) that together cover most of the rice-growing areas of Sub-Saharan Africa (Table 2, page 11). WARDA will not work directly in the mangrove ecology, but will continue to provide support to NARS-driven research in this area, namely the highly successful collaboration with the Rokupr Rice Research Station in Sierra Leone for mangrove rice research.

### *Geographical coverage*

Although our potential target area in the new Plan period will be Sub-Saharan Africa, historically, WARDA's priority area has been West and Central Africa (WCA). However, even within this region, progress is likely to remain uneven because of diversity in the R&D and political environments. Over the coming decade, WARDA will place emphasis on those countries where substantial impact can be achieved in 5–10 years (Table 3). In so doing, a sound reference basis will be created to scale up to other countries in the region.

<sup>1</sup>CGIAR, 2000. *A Food Secure World for All: Towards a New Vision and Strategy for the CGIAR*. Washington, D.C., 40 p.

<sup>2</sup>FARA, 2003. *FARA's Strategy for Agricultural Research for Development in Africa, 2002–2012*. Accra, 26 p.

**Table 3.** WARDA's geographic priorities.

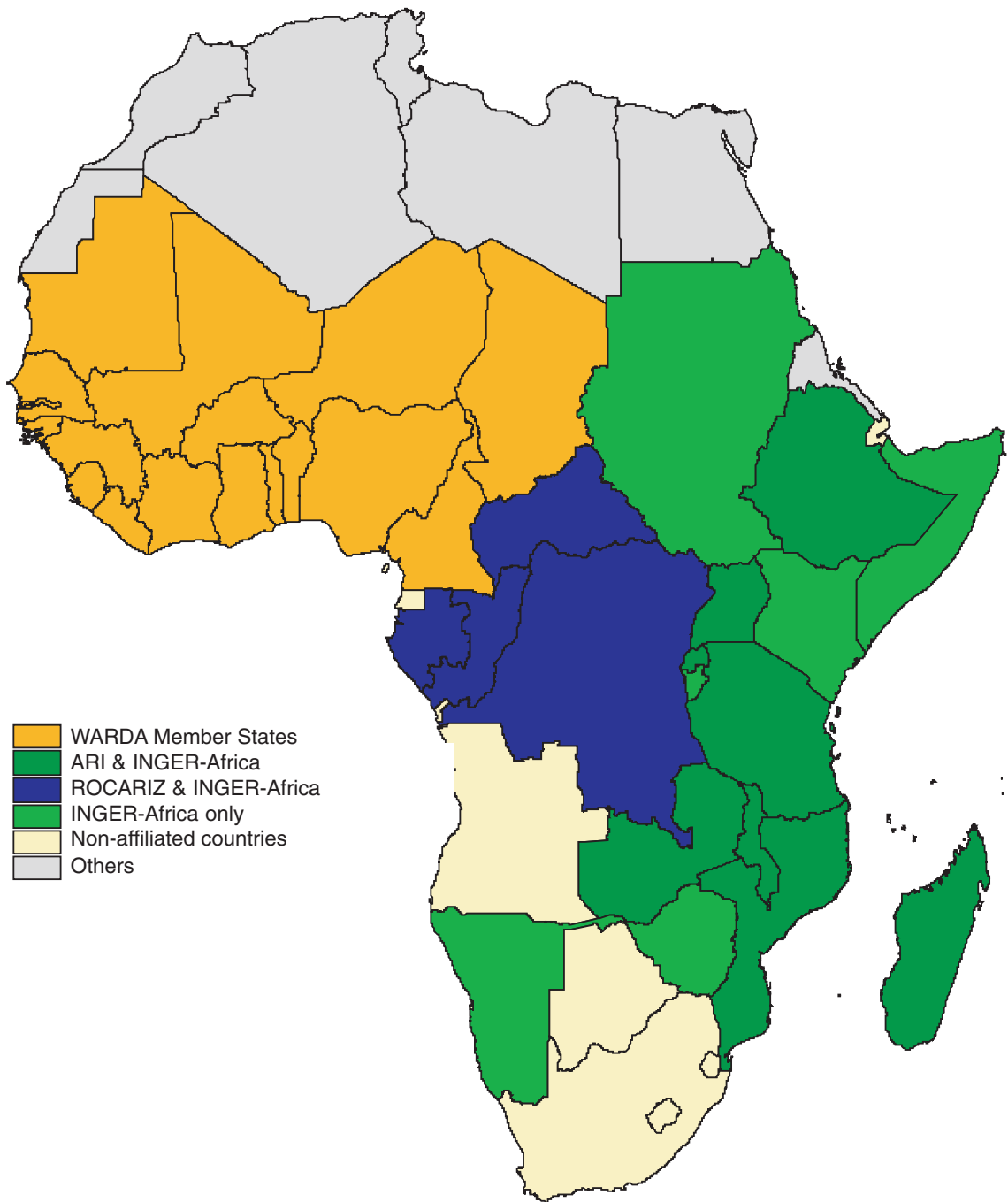
<b>Geographic priority</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Timeframe for verifiable impact</b>	<b>Expected impact</b>
Category I WCA countries	Countries where one or more of WARDA's research priorities are relevant and the situation is likely to remain favorable to achieve substantial impact	Short (< 5 years) to medium term (5–10 years)	Rapid adoption of available technologies
Category II WCA countries	Countries where the situation is likely to remain unfavorable	Medium (5–10 years) to long term (> 10 years)	Strengthening current partnerships to prepare for rapid impact after situation has improved
Category III Countries in the rest of SSA	Countries where rice is important, WARDA's research priorities are relevant, and where strong partnerships with existing R&D institutions can be built	To be assessed over the coming decade	Development of effective collaborative research and development programs

The expansion of WARDA's geographic scope beyond its current member countries seeks to maximize the potential impact of resources invested in rice research through the enlargement of its partnership with direct and ultimate beneficiaries. It will also be in line with the globalization and integration of agricultural research management in Sub-Saharan Africa and the current developments within FARA and NEPAD's Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP).<sup>3</sup> However, without a concomitant increase in resources, such increased coverage is likely to be limited to strengthening of relationships with the scientific community and other low-cost spill-over effects. In the short term, emphasis will be placed on the reinforcement of existing scientific collaboration and information exchange mechanisms, such as INGER-Africa. Rapid implementation of relevant

R&D will be realized in collaboration with ASARECA and SADC-FANR in Eastern and Southern Africa. In the medium and long term, and according to the implications of geographic expansion on resource mobilization and costs, applications for membership of the Association by a few key rice-producing countries from outside WCA should be considered.

Therefore, WARDA will give priority to work in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa where (i) one or more of WARDA's research priorities are relevant, (ii) rice is an important crop, and (iii) the situation is likely to remain favorable to achieve substantial impact during the next decade.

<sup>3</sup>NEPAD, 2003. Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). NEPAD Secretariat, Midrand, South Africa. 102 p.



**Current extent of WARDA's involvement in Sub-Saharan Africa**

WARDA member states are also beneficiaries of ARI, ROCARIZ and INGER-Africa networks