

7. Implementing the Strategic Plan

Research

Our research approach will primarily address the constraints to greater productivity and profitability within the framework of the four elements embedded in our strategic goal and their relative importance in the three main production systems. Our earlier experiences indicate that although research efforts may simultaneously address core challenges across production systems, the relative importance of the main production constraints differ significantly between production systems. Thus, while Table 4 (below) shows the importance of all challenges in all situations, Table 1 (p. 10) clearly articulates the relative importance of the various constraints in each production system.

For biophysical research, our production-system-based approach would specifically aim at:

- stabilization of the fragile natural-resource base of rainfed upland systems;
- intensification and diversification of rainfed lowlands, improved water control, use of external inputs, and integration of vegetables especially in peri-urban environments;
- improvement of resource use efficiency in irrigated systems through ICM and NRM techniques. In all systems, multiple-stress-resistant NERICAs and elite *sativas* are expected to play a key role, while the *O. glaberrima* gene pool will continue to be exploited for new sources of resistance to biophysical constraints and to develop novel plant types.

Specific biophysical constraints such as weeds, and constraints related to the generally unstable socio-economic and policy environment, dysfunctional information and communication

Table 4. Importance of core challenges in the three major rice ecologies.

Core research areas and challenges	Ecology		
	Upland rainfed	Lowland rainfed	Irrigated
1. Integrated Production Systems			
1.1: How best should existing genetic resources be used to develop rice varieties that best fit or better optimize farmers' existing production systems and are acceptable to both producers and consumers?	xxx	xxx	xxx
1.2: How can resource use efficiency be further increased for more productive, profitable and socio-economically viable rice production systems?	xxx	xxx	xxx
2. Rice Policy and Development			
2.1: What factors affect the price of rice and market dynamics, and how do these in turn affect the competitiveness of local rice production?	xx	xxx	xxx
2.2: What impacts do technical, policy and institutional change in the rice sector have on the livelihoods and well-being of the poor?	xxx	xxx	xxx

systems, poor research and development linkages and limited market integration cut across production systems and will be addressed through an integrated approach.

In conclusion, while the research strategy in the new Plan period would focus on a significant and consolidated research effort in the two core research areas, resources (both human and financial) will be deployed and managed on the basis of production systems (Table 2, p. 11). Based on our experiences in the previous Plan period, the structural dynamics and the inherent flexibility in the development of core research projects, the latter and their programmatic organization will be defined in the three-year rolling Medium-Term Plans.

Human Resources

WARDA will continue to strive for the recruitment and allocation of top-class personnel to its operations. Innovative approaches were pursued from the late 1990s into the new millennium in order to harness the rich source of underutilized human resources within the region. This involved the creation of new international staff categories, progressive spouse employment policies, a broadly defined NARS Visiting Scientist program and re-activation of a Research Fellow program for NARS scientists. Given the size of the Center and recognizing that our strength lies in our *modus operandi* of partnerships, we will continue to leverage the necessary and needed additional expertise through collaborative alliances, secondments from other institutions, partners and donors, which together with our own initiatives have historically enabled WARDA to maintain a healthy staff cost of well below 50% of its overall budget.

Financing the Strategic Plan

Trends in Donor Funding

WARDA's total income including donor allocations, Member States' contributions, and in-kind contributions between 1995 and 2002 has oscillated little, being in the range of US\$ 8.6 to \$ 10.5 million per year. However, the proportion of restricted grants, which was over 45% in 1995–1997, dropped as low as 35% and 28% in 1998 and 1999, then rose close to 50% in 2001–2002.

There has been a downward trend in core financial resources and this, coupled with the challenge of promoting WARDA as 'The Africa Rice Center' and the implied expansion into the ECSA region, suggests major challenges ahead for WARDA. This strategic development plus the food-security challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa require an aggressive resource-mobilization campaign, and new and strengthened alliances.

Creating a Conducive and Healthy Financial Environment

Achieving a conducive and healthy financial environment to sustain WARDA's operations calls for a well-coordinated strategy for financial management. This strategy will concentrate on three main areas:

- Full cost recovery of expenditures incurred by WARDA;
- Revised investment policy aimed at targeting profitable and innovative avenues for income generation;
- Creation of a significant cash surplus and reserve to ensure financial stability and sustainability.

Full cost recovery: WARDA will apply the principle of full cost-recovery and core-substitution practices. The target is to be able to make at least an additional US\$ 1 million available for WARDA's activities over the next 10 years.

Investment policy: As a non-profit organization and given the downward trend in overseas development assistance (ODA), an alternative investment policy aimed at providing the Center with the much needed additional income is required to boost the overall budget of the institution. A conducive investment policy is expected to generate an estimated additional US\$ 2.5 million to support WARDA's activities over the next 10 years.

Cash reserve account: Implementation of full cost recovery combined with a sound investment policy should provide opportunities for creating a reserve fund. The creation of a reserve account is critical for the future of the Center. It is expected that a cash reserve of at least US\$ 4 million will be created over the next 10 years.

Public Awareness for Resource Mobilization

WARDA recognizes the importance of public awareness in its resource-mobilization efforts. It adheres to the principle of “conducting public awareness for resource mobilization” and not just for the sake of public awareness.

In support of this strategy, satellite-supported Internet connectivity, a fully equipped conference center, an active Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Unit and the consolidation of the Training, Information and Library Services are examples of recent moves towards more efficient means of communication of results and outputs.

The guiding principle of WARDA's public-awareness strategy is “building on its basic values and past achievements,” including partnership, scientific excellence, sustainable development, integrity, people and corporate independence. These basic values constitute the backbone of WARDA's public-awareness activities.

Creating a Multi-pronged Resource Mobilization Approach

A dynamic strategy for resource mobilization should implicate staff at the early stages of project development. Scientific staff are key to mobilizing resources for research. WARDA will pursue several levels and types of funding:

- ***Unrestricted Core funding*** – Demonstrated successful research outputs supported by objectively verifiable indicators (such as impact studies that clearly link research to improved livelihood of farming communities) are necessary ammunition for ensuring donor support for WARDA's core activities. The Director General's Office plays a lead role in these negotiations.
- ***Competitive research grants*** – Quality of proposals, substantial success rates and demonstrated efficient use of restricted grants are clear indicators of a Center's performance. WARDA will incorporate an evaluation measure for all scientists that accounts for total research grants generated. WARDA will gradually move toward requiring scientists to generate a greater proportion of operational funds from special research grants.

- **Targeting new and non-traditional donors** – A proactive public-awareness program will target new and non-traditional donors to convince them of the value of investing in WARDA. The concept of social enterprise will be explored with a concrete business plan to bring about the necessary changes for new alliances with non-traditional donors and the private sector.
- **WARDA, Inc.: A subsidiary of The Africa Rice Center** – It is WARDA’s conviction that a durable improvement in the quality of life for Africa’s poor populations can only be based on personal initiative and engagement. It is WARDA’s declared strategy to contribute to this development by establishing a self-sustaining subsidiary that will capitalize on WARDA’s achievements and at the same time be an efficient vehicle for the distribution of technology, knowledge and know-how to WARDA’s ultimate clients. Details of this initiative are provided in Appendix 17.

Conclusion

To achieve its goal of significant contribution to food security and poverty alleviation in Sub-Saharan Africa, and to meet the challenge brought

about by the designation of WARDA as ‘The Africa Rice Center,’ WARDA should position itself as an efficient, cost-effective and well-managed institution with adequate financial and human resources. A multi-pronged resource-mobilization strategy as described above should move WARDA’s budget from US\$ 10 million to US\$ 15 million within the next 5–10 years. This is not an impossible task. However, the following components are essential:

- (a) Demonstrated efficiency, high performance level and successful delivery rate of WARDA;
- (b) Efficient management of available financial resources with the aim of sustaining a healthy financial environment;
- (c) Public awareness for resource mobilization functioning well, with output indicators in place and providing an efficient support system to research;
- (d) High success rate of proposals for competitive research grants and increased core substitution, thereby creating much needed capital reserves of at least US\$ 4 million within 10 years;
- (e) Matching human, capital and financial resources to the size of the operation; and,
- (f) Constant identification of potential donors and review of the resource-mobilization strategy to adapt to the changing environment.