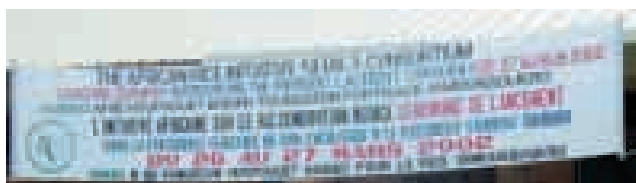


## 15. The African Rice Initiative

The main objective of the African Rice Initiative (ARI) is the rapid promotion and widespread dissemination of NERICA and other new improved rice cultivars, and related technologies in Sub-Saharan Africa to contribute to poverty alleviation and food security.



The Initiative was formally launched at an international ceremony in Yamoussokro, Côte d'Ivoire, on 27 March 2002, under the sponsorship of the Government of Japan, UNDP–TCDC, the Rockefeller Foundation, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the World Bank.

At the heart of ARI is the proposition that by combining NERICAs and other new varieties with complementary technologies, institutional innovation and new dissemination methodologies, significant and relatively rapid progress can be made in the development of the rice sector in Africa. As such, ARI is in line with both the Millennium Development Goals and NEPAD's interest in stimulating growth in the agriculture sector, as well as most national policies seeking increased self-sufficiency in staple foods.

ARI's strategy is based on WARDA's experience with NERICAs in Guinea and the practices that made it a success, such as strategic partnership with donors, NGOs and NARS, political support, PVS and CBSS.



The project will be implemented through the NERICA Consortium for Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa, an alliance of NARS, NGOs, farmers and donors. WARDA hosts the Consortium Secretariat and the ARI Coordinator. In each participating country, national coordinators will be identified and Rice Stakeholder Platforms established. The identification of national coordinators has already been completed in seven countries and is on-going in others. The main role of the Stakeholders' Platform is to closely link researchers, development organizations, farmers and processors so that a common set of goals and activities can be identified and prioritized. Grouping of end-users (including women) will also be used as security for accessing credit resources. PVS will play a central role in the diffusion of NERICAs and other rice lines, and should also provide feedback to researchers in the NARS and WARDA.

As of July 2003, NERICA lines had already been released in some countries across the continent and several of the lines were under extension in many others. The ARI Secretariat has received funding from the Rockefeller Foundation and WARDA has signed a grant agreement with AfDB, which will be used to support the ARI Secretariat, produce breeder seeds and accelerate



the diffusion of NERICA rice. In addition, seven NARS have concluded loan and grant agreements with AfDB for NERICA dissemination. Negotiations with other donors are in the pipeline.

To achieve the objectives of ARI, the following activities will be undertaken:

- Establish a National Coordination Unit in each participating country and constitute Stakeholders' Platforms
- Encourage the production of breeder seeds by WARDA
- Make enough seeds available to NARS for PVS activities
- Strengthen PVS methodology to maintain momentum
- Support and follow up the production of foundation seeds of identified varieties
- Encourage and provide technical support for commercial seed production
- Organize training workshops to strengthen NARS' capabilities
- Develop public-awareness and resource-mobilization strategies to promote NERICA technologies and raise funds
- Develop strategies to extend the ARI program beyond WCA.

