

## Foreword

WARDA's first Strategic Plan period, 1990–2000, marked a major turning point in the history of the Association. Only a few years before, it had become a full-fledged Center supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). The 1990–2000 Strategic Plan was formulated mainly through the efforts of WARDA staff. During the ensuing period, WARDA built a robust reputation as a partnership institution, the key element in its *modus operandi*.

In 2000, as the Center completed its 4th External Program and Management Review (EPMR), WARDA Management decided to revisit its strategic direction and to update its strategy, if not develop a radically new one in concert with developments within the CGIAR and the West African sub-region. It became obvious that a highly consultative and participatory approach was the only way forward.

Over the course of the following three years, much has happened to change the initial timeframe of the task force that was set up to lead the process of developing a new Plan. By early 2001, we had a draft document developed through extensive regional consultations and planning meetings. We had incorporated inputs from the Board of Trustees and the National Experts Committee (Directors General of the national agricultural research systems [NARS]) of the WARDA Council of Ministers, had reflected the main elements of the Sub-Saharan African Strategies of the West and Central African Council for Research and Development (WECARD/CORAF) and the CGIAR that had emanated from a series of consultations popularly referred to as the 'Meeting of Minds' (MoM), and were close to going to press. We had reason to delay.

The NERICAs were already a household name in Guinea and parts of western Côte d'Ivoire. At the same time, signs of instability were creeping into Côte d'Ivoire's political life. An attempted military coup in 2000, and heightened ethnic sentiments were only part of the story. The CGIAR itself was going through a process of renewal, of elevating itself. The call for regional integration (of centers and programs), the articulation of a 'new' African NARS voice, the emergence of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), and the roles and responsibilities of the Sub-Regional Organizations (SROs) and FARA, and the new paradigm in international agricultural research with the creation of the CGIAR Challenge Programs, were another part of the story. It meant a return to the drawing board.

We initiated another process of internal consultations in 2002 and had just presented a 'new' draft Plan document to the Board of Trustees on 18 September 2002, when a failed military coup-turned-rebellion on 19 September 2002 resulted in the evacuation of staff from WARDA's headquarters and main research campus at M'Bé, outside Bouaké. In early 2003, we assiduously re-embarked upon the final leg of the process of developing our 2003–2012 Strategic Plan and were determined to turn adversity into opportunity.

At the time of going to press in November 2003, WARDA's Senior Management is still in Abidjan, and most of the Bouaké-based researchers are temporarily working out of Bamako, Mali. WARDA is

committed to resuming its full program of activities at M’Bé as soon as it is safe to do so. The Strategic Plan presented here makes no assumptions about the timeframe of the eventual return to M’Bé. WARDA will continue to make full use of its research sites and facilities in Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and throughout the region. By building directly on its traditions of and commitment to regional collaboration, the Plan should allow WARDA to continue to make a significant contribution to rice development and poverty alleviation in Africa, even in the face of continued uncertainty in Côte d’Ivoire.

Over the course of the development of this Strategy, much staff time and many resources have been expended. We owe a debt of gratitude to the many present and past WARDA Board members and staff who spent long days and nights reviewing this document and shared their thoughts and concerns. Immense gratitude equally goes to our partners who helped to shape our ideas, mission and the contents of this Plan. The purpose of this Strategy is to guide present and future efforts within the Plan period in providing technologies and approaches for putting more rice on tables, creating more wealth and improving the livelihoods of the millions of poor African farmers and consumers.

With a view to making this Strategic Plan reader-friendly, the WARDA Strategy for the next 10 years is given in the first 16 pages. The Plan itself is supplemented by lists of references (p. 17), acronyms and abbreviations (pp. 17–20), and by 17 Appendixes (pp. 21–56).



Kanayo F. Nwanze  
Director General