

# Message from the Director General and Chairman of the Board of Trustees

**T**HE YEAR that closed the 'nineteen hundreds' was a one of immense activity for all of us associated with WARDA. Several major projects were at or approaching the end of their first phase, and new projects and new directions were coming 'on line.' It was the start of an exciting, if busy, period in WARDA's history that will launch us into the new millennium with great prospects for the long-awaited Green Revolution in Rice in West and Central Africa.

To demonstrate the increasing activity at WARDA and among our partners, we are introducing a new annex to our Annual Report: *The Year in Review* (page 51). This annex chronicles the events as they happened, showing the breadth of research and development topics covered by the Association.

Perhaps the most important event from a management point of view was the Fourth External Program and Management Review (EPMR) of WARDA. The Review Panel consisted of six members and a consultant, and was chaired by Mandivamba Rukundi of Zimbabwe, Program Director of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, with expertise in international agricultural research management, agricultural and food policy, and irrigation economics. The Panel brought a wealth of international experience to bear on the critical review of WARDA's program and management, with most members having served on CG external reviews of other centers. The review process involved a series of interactions with Center staff, Management and Board, and visits to selected national programs and WARDA's field stations in Senegal and Nigeria.

The Review Report itself attests to WARDA's progress in research and management over the past six years (since the Third External Review), and much praise is given to the interspecific hybridization work that has led to the development of the interspecific rices, or NERICAs. Two quotations from the Report are worthy of note.

"WARDA is at the cross road where scientific breakthrough will yield large production increase in many developing countries where poor rice farmers now lag behind the technology curve. A fundamental difference is that WARDA is now developing technologies that are adapted to the African environment, without modifying the environment to fit the technology."

"WARDA is best positioned to push hard for a rice-based green revolution in WCA [West and Central Africa]. The Panel urges WARDA to maintain focus on the impact of its work on people's lives—by putting more rice on the tables of poor and hungry people, and by putting more money into their pockets."

However, a major constraint that was identified in the overall impact of the products of our research was the lack of economic incentives for wide and massive adoption, due to (a) poor technology transfer and delivery systems, especially for seed, and (b) inadequate agricultural policies—policies are needed that encourage competitiveness of domestic rice production against heavily subsidized and cheap imports. This is particularly crucial in West Africa, where

rice increasingly means food for over 240 million people and demand is growing at an annual rate of 6%, resulting in total annual imports of over 3.2 million tonnes at an alarming price of US\$ 1 billion. Thus, WARDA is faced with a major challenge and a pivotal role in enhancing national capacities, both individual and institutional, in policy analysis and formulation for meeting the food security challenges of the 21st century.

The year saw a larger than average influx of new staff, especially when we consider the recently established middle-management positions established in 1998 and 1999. New faces in 1999 included: Frank Abamu (Agronomist/Crop Modeler), Mark Abekoe (Soil Agronomist, Visiting Scientist from Ghana), Antoinette Baroan (Personnel Officer), Olivier Briët (Medical Entomologist, DGIS), Mory Cissé (Purchasing and Supplies Manager), Gilbert Kato (Transport Officer), Mohamed Kebbeh (Agricultural Economist, Visiting Scientist from The Gambia), Rebecca Kent (Weed Scientist, DFID), Adrian Labor (Information and Communications Technology Manager, IDRC), Frédéric Lançon (Policy Economist), Marie-Noëlle Ndjiondjop (Molecular Biologist), Francis Nwilene (Entomologist), Takeshi Sakurai (Agricultural Economist, JIRCAS), Fassouma Sanogo (Translator), Olusegun Olubowale (Senior Accountant), Gaston Sangaré (Farm Manager), Nko Umoren (Internal Auditor), and Norberte Zézé (Public-Awareness Assistant).

As we like to remind everybody, partnership is the *modus operandi* of WARDA. In December, we hosted an International Workshop on 'Effective and Sustainable Partnerships in a Global Research System: Focus on Sub-Saharan Africa,' which we co-convened and coordinated with our fellow CG Center, the International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR), in collaboration with the Organizational Change Program (OCP) and with significant support from other international agricultural research organizations. The Workshop significantly strengthened the mutual understanding of successes and failures in IARC–NARS partnerships in Sub-Saharan Africa, and noted transparency, trust, fair attribution of achievements and financial opportunities as important factors for success. Sharing of these lessons learnt from past research partnership experiences should help those involved to identify areas for establishment of new innovative global partnerships.

As indicated in last year's report, 1999 saw the merger of WARDA's Task Forces with the Rice Network of the West and Central African Council for Research and Development (WECARD/CORAF) to form the West and Central Africa Rice Research and Development Network (*Réseau Ouest et Centre Africain du Riz*, ROCARIZ). The role of ROCARIZ is to link rice stakeholders in the region to generate improved and relevant rice technologies and ensure their successful and widespread adoption. Its purpose is to strengthen the capacity and capability of the national agricultural research and extension services for coordinated research planning, and technology generation, evaluation and transfer to end-users. Ultimately, this work—like all of WARDA's activities—is aimed at reducing poverty and malnutrition through enhanced rice production and market development. A five-year strategy was developed and accepted by USAID for funding.

The first phase of our flagship Interspecific Hybridization Project (IHP) was drawing to a close in 1999 (it officially ended in early 2000). The principal donors to the project—the United Nations Development Programme Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (UNDP/TCDC) and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)—reviewed the progress over the three years of phase 1, concluding:

“The team highly **recommends** ... to consolidate funding and to identify ‘champions’ who will assist WARDA in moving this unfolding revolution beyond research and development to production, marketing, and the household consumer. Otherwise, the international community and friends of Africa will be missing a golden opportunity to finally change Africa from a ‘food-aid’ recipient to a rice-surplus producing continent.”

The community-based seed production system (CBSS) has become a major component of the IHP since its introduction to WARDA in 1998 (*see* ‘Farmers Producing Seed for Farmers,’ *WARDA Annual Report 1998*, page 40). We introduced the system because the formal system for producing Certified Seed of cultivated varieties is poorly developed in most countries of the region. The CBSS enables farmers themselves to produce ‘seeds of acceptable quality’ to be grown by themselves and their neighbors, with a view to providing seed of the New Rice for Africa (NERICA) in this period of expanding demand; however, even this venture is not generating enough seed to meet demand, as the review team points out:

“The team strongly believes that the direct participation of farmers from the initial stages of technology development [in] the IH project [in] such approaches as the ‘village garden rice plots,’ PVS [participatory varietal selection] trials, and CBSS has been both effective and instrumental in bringing about the positive outcomes of *immediate and widespread acceptance of the NERICAs* for the upland. In Côte d’Ivoire [two] varieties while in Guinea [three] varieties are not only already being grown by many farmers, the demand for seed far exceeds the supply. ... Access to adequate *NERICA seed* is a major constraint to greater widespread adoption of the new technology ... The request for seed by participants in the PVS, CBSS, their neighbors, or farmers that have simply attended field days was always top on the list of input needs during the team’s field visits to Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, and Nigeria. Although the current CBSS has been a good initiative and for which the team commends WARDA, it is not an adequate source of seed. WARDA and its partners [in] the CBSS [will need] to include contract seed growers and private seed companies.”

Thus, not only the External Program and Management Review, but also the donor review of the IHP recognize the value of the NERICAs and associated technologies. Through their comments, many experienced research and development managers around the world are recognizing that we are truly on the verge of a Green Revolution in Rice in West and Central Africa. Funding for a second phase of the IHP is assured, and we call on the governments, policy-makers and private-sector investors in our Member States to put in place the components of a suitable environment (policy, socio-political, financial) that will enable it all to happen.

In the light of this threshold, we take the opportunity to look back over the ground-breaking development of NERICA, with special thanks to the donors who made Phase I such a success (page 9). The effects of the IHP have been far-reaching and have resulted in several spin-offs, one of which has been the establishment of molecular biology facilities at WARDA’s Headquarters. The establishment of the laboratory and facilities is covered in our second feature story this year (page 16).

Soil degradation is a potentially major problem in many farming systems throughout the world. This year, we are highlighting the UK-funded research in irrigated systems in the Sahel (page 30) and the soil acidity problems in the humid forest zone (page 23).

Another project winding down towards completion in 2000 was the Human Health Consortium, hosted at WARDA. As an indication that research is not always the answer to the world’s ills, we highlight the difficulties involved with indigenous perceptions of the potentially dangerous disease schistosomiasis (page 38). The Consortium is finalizing its research publications in 2000, but WARDA will be retaining an active interest in health matters as it starts to look at the nutritional benefits at community level of the NERICA varieties.

This year’s *Donor Country Profile* highlights our complex relationships with colleagues and institutions in the United Kingdom. We particularly welcome the UK’s stalwart support during this time of general decreases in unrestricted core contributions to CG Centers.

Let us share with you our vision for WARDA as we move into the Third Millennium...

We see WARDA as fulfilling a triple role as a dynamic center of excellence, as a model regional institution, and as the hub or pivot of an efficient technology and knowledge delivery system. In the short term, our priority as a Center of Excellence will be in fostering and sustaining an enabling environment that supports all staff in contributing to excellent, effective and efficient research—research is our *raison d'être*. A central and leadership role for WARDA in the third millennium is one of a model and pivotal regional institution for science and technology-based systems. An institutional *system* will encompass broad partnership (WARDA's *modus operandi*) among all players and stakeholders, in contrast to an isolated *center*. The final element of our tripartite role is as the hub of an efficient technology and knowledge system. This will build on our successful Task Force, Open Center and participatory research approaches in the empowerment of farmers. It will constitute a sustainable framework to respond to current and future challenges, with the aim of providing a constant flow of new technologies (international public goods) to farmers. This triple role of WARDA represents a dynamic interlocked system with the ultimate objective of contributing toward poverty alleviation and food security in the subregion.

It comes as no surprise to us that this Vision, developed during 1999, fits in well with the recently-developed CGIAR Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa, which was developed in close collaboration with the CG Centers, subregional organizations, and all-inclusive NARS partners.

We hope that you will enjoy reading the various stories in this Report with as much pleasure as it gives us to present them to you.

Kanayo F. Nwanze  
*Director General*

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*Chairman, Board of Trustees*