

2010 AFRICA RICE CONGRESS
22 – 26 March 2010, Bamako, Mali
Declaration

The second Africa Rice Congress (after the first one held in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania in 2006) was organized by the Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice, ex-WARDA) under the aegis of the Malian government and in collaboration with the Malian national research institute 'Institut d'Economie Rurale' from 22 to 26 March 2010 in Bamako. The Congress was opened by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali, Dr. Modibo Sidibé, on behalf of the President, His Excellency M. Amadou Toumani Touré and had as the theme 'Innovation and Partnerships to Realize Africa's Rice Potential'. The more than 500 participants included rice farmers, seed producers, rice processors, input dealers, agricultural machinery manufacturers and representatives from agricultural ministries, national and international rice research and extension communities, non-governmental organizations, the donor community and other development partners.

During the opening ceremony, His Excellency Dr. Modibo Sidibé, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali presented distinguished service awards to Dr. Jacques Diouf, Dr. Eugene Terry and Dr. Kanayo Nwanze for their outstanding contributions to rice research and development in Africa during their terms as Executive Secretary and Director Generals respectively of the Africa Rice Center. In turn, the chair of the Board of Trustees of AfricaRice, Dr. Getachew Engida presented a plaque of appreciation to the President of Mali, His Excellency M. Amadou Toumani Touré for the tremendous efforts of the Malian government to raise rice productivity through the Presidential Initiative on Rice in Mali.

The Congress in its deliberations noted:

- the global food crisis that imparted negatively on the African continent in 2008, predicted in 2007 by AfricaRice, leading to soaring and highly volatile rice prices, declining rice stocks and closing of borders to rice export;
- that rice prices are predicted to remain high because of declining production capacity in major rice producing countries in Asia and growing demand;
- the fact that rice consumption in Africa is growing at 6 to 7% per year and that the African continent is already importing close to 10 M tons of rice annually, equivalent to one-third of rice traded on the world market and costing US\$ 4 billion in foreign exchange in 2009;
- the large gap between yields obtained by African farmers and what would be possible under better management;
- that the African continent has sufficient land and water resources and favorable growth environments to close the gap between Africa's rice consumption and production and that local rice production is competitive vis-à-vis imported rice;

- the Maputo declaration where African countries committed to investing 10% of their national budgets in agriculture by 2010 and congratulating the nine African countries that have so far achieved this target while urging others to follow suit;
- that the CAADP framework as re-enforced by the 2008 World Development Report emphasized that the largest impact on poverty reduction in Africa comes from investments in agriculture;
- that rice has become a strategic commodity to fuel economic growth and to contribute toward hunger and poverty reduction across the continent;
- the desperate lack of capacity at all levels in the rice value chain which puts in jeopardy progress toward developing Africa's rice sector, and especially the neglect of Africa's rice research capacity as already noted during the first Africa Rice Congress;
- the lack of appropriate technology delivery mechanisms;
- the need for a holistic investment approach and public-private partnerships to develop Africa's rice sector across the entire value chain, creating trust and benefits for all stakeholders, from seed to plate.
- that relying on the world market to supply rice to African consumers is becoming a very risky, expensive and unsustainable strategy and that it may lead to severe food insecurity and civil instability;
- that Africa's agriculture is predicted to be the hardest hit by climate change;
- that Africa's rice sector depends primarily on the efforts of small-scale resource-poor farmers, particularly women;

formulated recommendations related to investment in the following key areas pertaining to Africa's rice sector:

Investments in Africa's rice sector

1. Africa's rice farmers need to be involved in the definition and implementation of policies that modernize rice farming, lessen the burden on women, and turn it into a viable agri-business, attractive to young people.
2. National and foreign investments are needed to unlock Africa's tremendous rice potential whilst ensuring that this leads to win-win situations for all of Africa's rice farmers and consumers.
3. Sustainable intensification and diversification of rice-based production systems are necessary to meet the demand of Africa's population.
4. National seed regulatory bodies need to be established and/or strengthened to map and meet rice seed demand for target ecosystems and consumer preferences. They should ensure

efficient varietal release mechanisms, link public and private sector seed producers and establish functional and decentralized seed control systems.

5. Small-scale enterprises will need support to help them create and sustain a viable seed business. Private medium and large size seed companies should play an increasingly important role in high input systems, especially for hybrid rice seed.
6. Regional economic communities should be strengthened to contribute in such areas as harmonizing seed legislation, import tariffs and regulating rice imports, in line with the CAADP framework.
7. National governments need to take the lead in promoting public-private partnerships across the rice value chain for adequate production, storage, processing, and distribution infrastructure to produce quality rice for the African market.
8. A global effort to develop targeted technological options to help African farmers to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change is needed.

Investments in capacity building

9. A 'Marshall' plan by African governments and their development partners is needed to substantially strengthen the training and retention of new staff, whilst updating agricultural curricula in vocational training schools and universities and ensuring efficient spill-over to actors in the rice value chain. Conducive working environments are needed to retain an effective capacity in agriculture.
10. The Congress endorsed the Task Force concept, a collective research for development effort on critical thematic areas in the rice sector, based on the principles of sustainability, build-up of critical mass and ownership by the national systems and asked AfricaRice to facilitate and animate these Task Forces.
11. The Congress endorsed the emergence of a Global Rice Science Partnership, an initiative of AfricaRice, IRRI and CIAT as part of part of the revamped CGIAR to pool resources, build capacity and align national and international research agenda's, enabling greater efficiency and efficacy of rice research.

Participants commended the Congress organizers for their efforts.

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