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Inland Valley Newsletter n° 5

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Editorial

This issue has taken some time to see the light of day, but we hope you will enjoy it. The first half of the year has been filled with activities within the Inland Valley Consortium (IVC). It is a good moment to sit back and reflect on what has been done and what is coming up. Some thoughts:

It is clear that IVC's financial resources are not going to be sufficient to cover all research areas identified for Phase II. The Netherlands and France, our most faithful donors, continue to provide funds for small research grants and to cover operational expenses of the national coordination units (NCUs) and the regional coordination unit (RCU) based at WARDA. These funds give our Consortium a certain autonomy. Without these we would have great difficulties in communicating, exchanging ideas, coordinating activities and mobilizing partners and resources, i.e. in essence all that a consortium is about. However, we will have to look for additional funds to really start with the benchmark research activities. This requires a substantial effort from all of us. We feel that the IVC should ideally evolve into an 'umbrella structure', involving a large number of projects on inland valley development and a range of donors. The level of involvement of IVC in such projects could range from being observer e.g. to help diffuse ideas or results, to executing and/or implementing agent. This development would be in line with the conclusions of an international workshop on eco-regional initiatives organized by the International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR) in Wageningen, The Netherlands earlier this year. Marco Wopereis and Ernest Otoo represented IVC at that meeting, and a report on the major conclusions is given in this newsletter.

*We are very pleased that WARDA researchers are getting more and more involved in IVC activities. This is one of the positive points of the **integration of the IVC within WARDA's program structure** and of mutual benefit: WARDA will benefit from our expertise and the partnership that we all have put in place, and the IVC can benefit from WARDA's expertise and relationships.*

*Our major challenge is to start the research activities that are to be conducted at the **benchmark areas**. During the 2001 annual workshop, we identified the main research priorities, but more work is needed on methodology development.*

These aspects will have to be discussed in country-specific workshops in each zone by the end of this year as soon as funding from the European Union becomes available. Meanwhile, we have to look for other opportunities. A good example is the fact that the NCU of Mali, and to some extent that of Côte d'Ivoire, will be involved in a WARDA project on peri-urban lowlands. WARDA's project on natural-resource management in inland valleys may also partly be conducted in benchmark areas (see elsewhere in this newsletter).

*We are gradually **reducing the backlog from Phase I**: the synthesis of the 1997 Hydrology workshop and the synthesis of annual workshops are in press. From this material we will identify papers that merit publication through other channels. We are reasonably optimistic about the possibility of publishing a special volume on inland valleys in **Agricultural, Ecosystems and Environment** in 2002.*

*The **SPIRIVWA** (Sustainable Productivity Improvement for Rice in Inland Valleys in West Africa) **project** is advancing slowly but steadily at the three project sites in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria. The most difficult part is almost done: the land development at all three sites is nearing completion. Now we have to start with the research component!*

Marie-Jo and Marco

Annual Workshop

The annual workshop was held from 19 to 23 March at WARDA's Headquarters in M'bé, Côte d'Ivoire. Nine of the 10 countries and 5 of the 8 international institutions that are members of the IVC were represented. A report on this workshop was sent out in April. Some key points are summarized here. The workshop broadly addressed two topics:

1. Reporting and discussions of results of the research projects funded within IVC in 2000, including a field visit to the SPIRIVWA project site in Gagnoa, Côte d'Ivoire
2. Discussions on implementation of Phase II of IVC.

In general, presentations were of very high quality and mostly given in PowerPoint. We would like to congratulate all speakers for an excellent job.

The field visit to Gagnoa was an eye-opener for many. The land development works at the site is

progressing and will hopefully be completed before the onset of the rains. Mr Koné and colleagues from CNRA gave an excellent presentation on the site, illustrating research results obtained so far with posters.

During the second part of the workshop, working groups were formed to discuss the four research themes of Phase II, based on the outcome of the preparatory workshop held at WARDA in January 2001. The working groups identified research priorities in each research theme:

Theme 1: Characterization of inland valley land use dynamics

We identified four research priorities within this theme: land use dynamics, hydrological functioning, soil-fertility evolution and biodiversity evolution. Workshop participants realized that research on these topics is time-consuming and that modern tools, like simulation modeling and the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), may help speed up research. NCUs are expected to take a leadership role in research in benchmark areas.

Theme 2: Development and evaluation of technologies for improved production systems and natural resource management

Research will focus on the development of low-cost water management systems, intensification of rice production systems, integration of aquaculture and livestock, and diversification of cropping systems. For aquaculture, leading institutions could be ICLARM, FAO, WUR and CIRAD ; WARDA for intensification of rice production systems ; ILRI for livestock integration and IITA for other crops than rice. CIRAD and WUR could take the lead in the development of low-cost water management systems.

Theme 3: Socio-economic and policy aspects of improvements in inland valley use systems

Two main issues were identified: input and output markets, and the influence of national policies on inland valley development. Workshop participants stressed the need for WARDA to take a lead role here.

Theme 4: Technology dissemination processes and impact pathways for inland valley development

Workshop participants in general felt that research on this theme should start later in Phase II. Some good work on database development within this theme is, however, already on going in Benin and Togo.

An action plan for the next six months was drawn up, consisting mainly of the following :

- Reporting on the outcome of the workshop (RCU)

- Preliminary workshops in the benchmark areas to define work plans (NCUs and RCU)

Intensifying discussions on inland valley research in general, within WARDA and other international institutions (RCU)

Looking for additional funding sources (all partners)

Improving communications processes (on going).

Closing remarks by Monty Jones and Willem Stoop
Dr Monty Jones, Acting Director of Research at WARDA and Dr Willem Stoop, Associate Director of Research, gave the closing remarks of the workshop. Dr Jones noted the evolution of IVC and congratulated participants on the high quality of presentations and interventions. He stressed that inland valleys have great potential to alleviate food security problems in West Africa, but that this potential is still largely unexploited. Dr Stoop saw IVC as an ideal instrument to promote inland valley development because of the diversity of production environments and stakeholders that it represents. He suggested that we continue to improve communication with international institutions, between RCU and NCUs, among NCUs, and with the outside world, as this is one of the key elements of a consortium.

Recommendations of the CMC regarding projects to be retained for funding:

- o *The first condition for funding is the need for a change in scale with respect to Phase I ; research needs to work towards general recommendations. There is a need to become more pragmatic, and more concerned with the impact of inland valley development than with characterization.*
- o *There is a need to focus research, and to give a qualitative and quantitative inventory of the potential of inland valleys.*
- o *Socio-economic aspects need to be given a more prominent position.*

A total of 13 projects was retained in nine countries, mainly on theme 2 (technology development) including socio-economic dimensions. The CMC decided that in the future no proposal will be considered for funding if it has not arrived at the RCU office in time. The CMC stressed the need for the NCUs to review project proposals in-country, and filter out any that are weak, or do not address a national priority. Projects approved by the NCU need to be signed by the NCU coordinator. Some progress has been made this year, but a lot remains to be done. For multi-year projects, new project proposals need to be submitted each year and a progress report is needed to obtain funding for the 2nd year.

Current and up coming Projects...

Peri-urban project: The evolution of agricultural systems in the peri-urban lowlands of West Africa and the development of policy and technologies for sustainable intensified use

Contact points at WARDA:

Olaf Erenstein, Production Economist
Andreas Oswald, Systems Agronomist
Regional Coordination Unit, IVC

The overall goal of the project is to enable the sustainable intensification of rice-based cropping systems in peri-urban lowlands. Based at four study sites — Daloa, Bouaké and Korhogo in Côte d'Ivoire and Sikasso in Mali— the project seeks to predict the future development and role of peri-urban lowlands, and to improve and expand technical options for agriculture-based livelihood in land-limited, densely populated environments. During the first phase of the project (3 years) the following major activities are planned:

- (1) description of the evolution of current land use and the driving forces behind the intensification of agricultural systems with increasing market access;
- (2) identification of the extent and spatial distribution of production constraints and opportunities;
- (3) development of decision aids to enable effective targeting of policy and production technologies that reduce tradeoffs between economic performance and environmental risks; and
- (4) adaptation and testing of existing technical options for more sustainable intensification of lowland systems along the rural to peri-urban gradient.

In a second phase of the project, results from these studies will be extrapolated to guide the development of peri-urban lowlands in the West African region.

Applying Watershed Management Methods to Optimize Resource Use Efficiency in Inland Valleys

The objectives of this WARDA project are to identify the most promising options for the development of new land, water and crop management practices to improve water and soil nutrient efficiency at the scale of small watersheds.

Such options should aim to reduce wasteful loss of soil and nutrient resources, thus conserving the natural-resource base; and to capture and exploit resource flows in lower portions of the toposequence for increased productivity. Sitapha Diatta is the coordinator of this project and is currently establishing contacts within the region to define a workplan. Initial activities will be implemented in Burkina Faso (in collaboration with Mr Blanchet from EIER) and in Côte d'Ivoire.

SPIRIVWA (Sustainable Productivity Improvement for Rice in Inland Valleys in West Africa) project

Marco and Marie-Jo visited all three project sites in May and June 2001. Land development is on-going, at all sites but may have to be continued beyond the end of June. The delays are mainly caused by administrative procedures that take much more time than expected. Some keypoints from our visit:

- It is important that land development respects the environment as far as possible : we should strive to leave the environment as intact as possible. In Burkina Faso, we hope to establish a 'model' irrigation scheme where natural resources are protected (limit land scarping, limit the removal of trees, etc.)

In Nigeria, we preserve water quality as water is also used for human consumption. It has been decided that no herbicides will be used at the site.

- It is very clear that land tenure issues play a dominant role at all three sites. This is a very important issue that merits substantial research effort in all countries.

- At all three sites, much data on the initial conditions before land development have been collected. These data will serve as an important reference point to determine impact of the land development at a later stage.

Aquaculture

Many institutions are currently working on this purpose. Among these are several members of Inland Valleys Consortium: FAO, CIRAD, and NCUs from Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Bénin, Togo, Ghana.

IVC is trying to develop a common framework and to share information on the current works and thinking. WARDA will host a meeting on agriculture-aquaculture integration next February FAO initiative.

Contact on this issue is Dr Yté, now based in Gagnoa.

IVC database soon available via the web and on CD-ROM

From 1 May to 29 June 2001, I was in Montpellier, France at CIRAD to develop (with M. Passouant) a software application to integrate the various databases of IVC on CD-ROM and the Web. My stay in France was very interesting as it allowed me to get acquainted with the latest developments in the field of information technology. It was also rewarding because it allowed me to apply these new ideas directly for IVC.

The growing volume of databases of different types that are being accumulated place huge demands on archiving and structuring to provide users with fast and reliable information. This is especially difficult in the field of geographic information and interactive usage via the Web and CD-ROM.

IVC has accumulated a considerable amount of data on the development of inland valleys in West Africa. The objective of my stay in France was to explore technological possibilities to make these data available on the Web and on CD-ROM for use within and outside of IVC.

A number of options were explored, taking several factors in consideration, such as costs, complexity and demands on programming skills and hardware. In the end, the HTML format was retained for documents, the SVG format for geo-referenced data, and visual programming for the statistical data. Using these formats, a platform was built on CD-ROM. Data entry will take place in Bouaké over the next few months. The result will be distributed to all member countries for a last check of the data, before official release on CD-ROM and on the Web.

Moussa Mahaman

Special volume on inland valleys

So far, five scientists from NCUs have worked at WARDA on papers to be published in a special journal volume on inland valleys: Dr Egue from Togo, Dr Narteh from Ghana, Dr Simpara from Mali, Dr Kandeh from Sierra Leone and Dr Houndagba from Benin. Representatives from Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso are expected to arrive in the near future. We are currently targeting *Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment*, an Elsevier journal.

NCU news

The NCUs of Nigeria, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin and Togo have held in-country meetings earlier this year.

The NCU in **Nigeria** has set up a 'federal structure' to better cover the country, with rotating chairpersons from different parts of the country. In a way there are now five 'sub-coordination units' in Nigeria, with the national coordination unit stationed at NCRI in Badeggi.

In **Mali** and **Côte d'Ivoire**, NCU meetings were held during the RCU visits to these countries.

Working on the benchmark area issue, **Benin** and **Togo** NCUs members met for a mission for five days during the regional coordinator's visit to these two countries.

Miscellaneous information

o ILRI Workshop: a workshop will be held at IITA in November. The subject is : Integration of agricultural and livestock systems in West Africa (Contact : Marco Wopereis)

o A meeting on "Agriculture-aquaculture integration" (FAO initiative) is planned for February at Mbé (see above)

o Workshop "Training on research management for program leaders" (in French) will be organized by INTG (IARC/NARS Training Group) in Abidjan from 5 to 17 November 2001. More information with Brigitte, IVC secretary.

Reminder

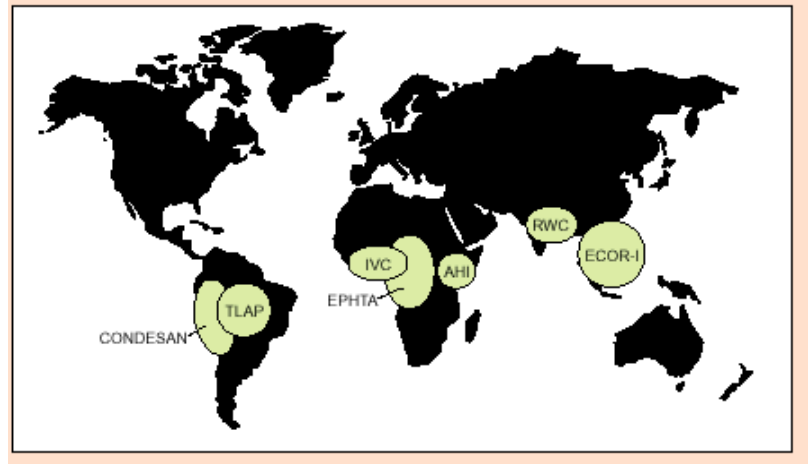
*We have received only a few financial reports so far.
Please send these to us as soon as possible!*

International Workshop on Organizing and Managing Ecoregional Challenges

From 26 to 28 March 2001, an International Workshop on Organizing and Managing Ecoregional Programs was held in Wageningen, International Conference Center, The Netherlands. Here, we give some of the key points that came out of the meeting.

Participating Ecoregional programs

- Ecoregional Program for the Humid and Sub-humid Tropics of Sub-Saharan Africa (EPHTA)
- Consortium for the Sustainable Use of Inland Valley Agro-ecosystems in Sub-Saharan Africa (IVC)
- African Highlands Initiative for Eastern and Central Africa (AHI)
- Tropical Latin America Program (TLAP)
- Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Region (CONDESAN)
- Rice–Wheat Consortium for the Indo-Gangetic Plains (RWC)
- Ecoregional Program for the Humid and Sub-humid Tropics of Asia (ECOR-I)



Issues

- How can the goals of improved natural-resource management and poverty eradication be achieved in a regional context?
- How can local needs and global concerns be addressed simultaneously?
- How can multiple actors with different agendas work towards common research and development objectives?

These are some of the challenges faced by eco-regional programs.

Ecoregional Programs: A Statement of Purpose

The purpose of ecoregional programs is to bring about lasting improvements in the lives and livelihoods of poor people. The programs are characterized by a focus on specific ecological and geopolitical regions and by a balanced emphasis on production, natural resource management and social equity. The technical and human dimensions of problems and opportunities are addressed through partnerships with farmer groups, national research organizations, NGOs, advanced research institutes, CGIAR centers and the private sector.

What is an Ecoregional Program?

Ecoregional programs aim to achieve a balance between better natural-resource management, increased agricultural productivity and greater social equity in research for development. The focus is on people, agricultural systems and decision-makers at various levels within geographical regions that are defined in both biophysical and socio-economic terms.

Ecoregional programs support participatory technology development of a wide range of options and stimulate policy dialogue. They develop methods to promote research efficiency and to achieve broader impact through the extrapolation of results. They are vehicles for implementing the new Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM) research and development approach promoted by the CGIAR.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Exchange of information and experiences resulted in the following recommendations for future action.

1. Information and communication

The ecoregional programs need to put more effort into developing and sharing information, and especially into collecting feedback and providing information to farmers and development agencies. The exchange of information between programs should also be improved, including the sharing of tools and methodologies. Investors need to be kept informed of program results, impact and problems. And closer alliances should be forged with the INRM initiative and Ecoregional Fund of the CGIAR.

2. Planning, monitoring and evaluation

The ecoregional programs need to maintain an efficient facilitation or coordination unit to provide leadership and to mobilize partners and resources. Clearer development-oriented research objectives are required with more attention paid to relevant monitoring and evaluation systems, including impact assessment. Strong capacity building is required to promote program sustainability.

3. Policy

The programs should strengthen their interactions with policy-makers and their focus on policy as a key variable in the natural-resource management and poverty equations.

4. Partnerships

In addition to intensifying collaboration with farmer organizations and development-oriented NGOs, the ecoregional programs need to expand their stakeholder base to include NGOs with a conservation mandate, municipal governments, policy-makers and the business community. Programs must continue their emphasis on research for development, linking on-farm activities with urban markets and agro-industrial activities.

5. Funding issues

The programs need to develop new funding mechanisms, such as 'basket funding' and competitive grants, as well as re-deploy existing resources. More secure funding for the facilitation units is essential to ensure long-term continuity and success.

6. Program support

- Center Directors are asked to support the Ecoregional programs strongly, as appropriate vehicles for implementing the new INRM approach.
- The need for adequate time to achieve demonstrable impact in this new area of research and development is stressed.
- The support of ISNAR and IAC (International Agricultural Centers) is requested in the development of planning, monitoring and evaluation tools that are specifically tailored to the needs of Ecoregional programs, and in facilitating the exchange of information and knowledge between programs and their partners.
- Workshop participants will seek support from sub-regional research and development organizations.
- A promotional brochure illustrating the achievements of current programs will be made available to attract continued support for the ecoregional approach.

Note: All the material related to this workshop, together with descriptions of the Ecoregional programs, can be accessed at:

<http://www.wis.cgiar.org/isnar/index.htm>.

A full workshop proceedings is also available.

[Extracted from *Meeting The Challenge of Ecoregional Research*, An International Workshop on Organizing and Managing Ecoregional Programs, Wageningen, The Netherlands, 26-28 March 2001]