



*Dr Sié awarded 2006 International Koshihikari Rice Prize*



Dr Moussa Sié, WARDA Lowland Rice Breeder, was awarded the 2006 Fukui International Koshihikari Rice Prize of Japan, in recognition of his significant contributions to rice production in sub-Saharan Africa. He shares the prize with Dr Akihiiko Ando.

Dr Sié, in close association with WARDA's Irrigated Rice Breeder Dr Kouamé Miézan and national programs of West African countries, was instrumental in extending WARDA's upland NERICA rice breakthrough to lowlands. Key to this success was the unique R&D partnership forged with the national programs through the ROCARIZ rice network.

Dr Sié, a Burkinabe national, is the first African to receive this important prize.

**Celebrating 35 years of research partnership**

1971 was the year when the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) was formed. It was also the year when farsighted leaders from 11 West African countries decided to constitute a regional association for rice research and development. I am sure this was no mere coincidence, as 15 years later the Association became part of the CGIAR family, while maintaining its status of intergovernmental organization.

Over the years, the Association has gone from strength to strength, with the increase in the number of its member countries and its gradual evolution into the Africa Rice Center in 2003, in recognition of its leading role in rice R&D in sub-Saharan Africa. Thanks to its unique partnership model, its scientists are the first Africans to receive world-class awards, including the World Food Prize in 2004 and the International Japanese Prize in 2006.

It is fitting that the Center's anniversary this year is an occasion to commemorate 35 years of research partnership. Several events are being organized, including the launch of our new website with a stronger focus on partnership successes. We invite you to visit our new virtual home at [www.warda.org](http://www.warda.org).

This year is significant for WARDA in other ways too. It was a privilege for us to host the 5th CGIAR Science Council meeting, which gave an opportunity for the members and our scientists to interact with each other. This will also help us prepare for our External Program and Management Review (EPMR) scheduled for 2007.

As I am going to complete my 10-year term as Director General in November, the Board was engaged in the process of selecting my successor during its recent meeting according to WARDA's constitution. The result will be announced by the Chair of WARDA's Council of Ministers in June 2006 at an extraordinary Council meeting in Nigeria, which holds the current Chairmanship.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all our colleagues, partners and donors for having supported us over these 35 years in transforming WARDA into a veritable pan-African rice research and development center.

**Kanayo F. Nwanze**  
Director General



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**Unlocking farmers' best-kept secrets**

A joint WARDA-IFAD project helps document local knowledge and innovations

Did you know that you can get rid of termites by smoking them out with tobacco leaves; that if rice seeds are dressed with wood ash, they can be safely stored; or that tethering of livestock in cereal fields can help reduce *Striga* infestation in those fields?

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If you haven't heard of these simple solutions, you are not the only one. Quite a few agricultural researchers and extension workers are also not aware of them. These are some of the little known local "best practices" that are being identified, validated and documented, thanks to the project Participatory adaptation and diffusion of technologies for rice-based systems (PADS) in West Africa (Phase II).

The project is carried out by the Africa Rice Center (WARDA) and its partners in four West African countries—Ghana, Guinea, Mali and The Gambia—with support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

The project focuses on the inland valley systems, and its overall aim is to improve rice productivity, stimulate crop diversification and increase farmers' incomes in these systems. To achieve its aim, the project seeks to identify, evaluate, enhance and scale out sustainable innovations—not only from research institutes, but also home-grown ones, in particular from farming communities.

Indeed, a major challenge of PADS is to change the mindset of the people who work with farmers. "Most of us automatically assume that scientists are the sole source of innovation in agriculture," says Dr Paul Van Mele, WARDA Technology Transfer Specialist, who is leading this project.

"We tend to forget that farmers play a significant role as local innovators capitalizing on their day-to-day experience," he explains. Unfortunately, their knowledge often gets lost over time or remains locked up in the memories of individual families and communities, because of the lack of suitable mechanism for dissemination.

The project will select some of the successful and widely applicable local innovations for dissemination in the region through farmer-to-farmer extension and mass media. "Some of these local innovations may even be considered as researchable topics by scientists for their experiments," Dr Van Mele comments.

But how do you go about finding local innovations? And once identified, how do you document them? Finally, how do you select the ones that are most suitable for scaling up?

To address such questions, in 2005-2006 four training workshops were held in each of the countries for project coordinators, extension workers, scientists and NGOs. These focused on concepts, tools and techniques to better understand farmers' perceptions and innovations:

#### Tools to classify knowledge and understand knowledge flows

**Knowledge matrix:** This tool helps to classify the knowledge of people on any subject into four types: deep, shallow, mistaken

and missing. Based on this, appropriate interventions can be developed. For instance, if farmers have deep knowledge about controlling an insect pest, this is the place where local innovations are likely to be plenty and where scientists can learn from them.

**Local names:** What's in a name—you might wonder. But it is important to remember that local names often tell a story or give the summary of a problem. For example, in some parts of Ghana, rice off-types are known as Modiak (male rice), which implies a negative connotation, because rice is considered a female crop, a life giver.

**Well-being analysis:** The poorest are often forced to innovate to survive. The well-being analysis allows farmers to identify the poorest section in their own community. In the project, the tool is also used to evaluate the social dimensions of farmer-to-farmer extension and to measure the impact of its interventions.

#### Tools and techniques to collect, document and scale out local innovations

**Interviewing techniques:** During the workshop, participants learn how to listen to farmers and use open-ended questions to elicit useful answers from them.

**Documenting techniques:** The art of storytelling is a valuable skill for describing and documenting local innovations in a more reader-friendly way.

**Validation criteria:** Participants from diverse backgrounds learn to identify the local innovations that are worthwhile to disseminate, using such criteria as whether the innovations are sensitive to local cultures; safe; environmentally friendly; likely to be accepted; and whether the required materials are readily available.

**Tools for scaling out:** Towards the end of the workshop, participants explore the advantages, drawbacks and potential of various extension methods, and develop action plans for large-scale dissemination of local innovations and underlying scientific principles.

"One of the most important findings emerging from the Project is that people in developing countries often face similar challenges," observes Dr Van Mele, giving the example of how the videos on rice seed health, made in Bangladesh with rural women, have become a big hit in many African villages.

The Project not only facilitates the sharing of knowledge and innovations from one community to another and from one region to another, but also aims at institutionalizing pro-poor research and development processes—all crucial contributions to solving global issues.



Leaves from Hyptis plants are used in Mali to protect seed from storage insects

## Forging new strategic alliances

Thanks to its traditional strong partnership links with the national agricultural research systems (NARS), WARDA can at any given time draw on a pool of more than 100 scientists through the networks and consortia convened by it.

This collaboration with the NARS has been further extended by the presence of the Eastern and Central Africa Rice Research Network (ECARRN) and the expansion of the African Rice Initiative (ARI) activities in eastern and central Africa.



*Fr Nzamujo Godfrey (left), Founder-Director of the Songhai Center, and Dr Kanayo F. Nwanze (right), WARDA Director General during the MoU signing ceremony*

WARDA is continuing to forge new strategic alliances with its sister Centers, with international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector to step up the reach and impact of its technologies, especially the NERICA varieties, across sub-Saharan Africa

**MoU with IRRI:** Spurred by NERICA's amazing popularity among rice farmers in Africa, the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) is teaming up with WARDA to pursue work on this exciting technology for Africa. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was recently signed to formalize this collaboration. The partnership will gain on one hand from WARDA's rich experience in sub-Saharan Africa and its historic relationship with NARS and on the other from IRRI's expertise in genomics and biotechnology.

**MoU with IITA-Tanzania:** In response to the increasing demand

for its involvement in rice research and development in Eastern Africa, WARDA has reactivated the ECARRN rice network of ASARECA and established a Coordination Unit for the network in Tanzania. To increase the resource use efficiency of the CGIAR Centers based in one location, WARDA has signed an MoU with IITA-Tanzania station to provide corporate service support to the ECARRN Coordination Unit.

**Agreement with JICA:** The Japan International

Cooperation Agency (JICA) and WARDA have a long-standing partnership on rice R&D. JICA has currently posted two rice experts to work with the WARDA-coordinated African Rice Initiative (ARI). A Research Collaboration Agreement was signed with JICA to formalize this partnership.

**MoU with Songhai Center:** Songhai is an international NGO in West Africa that provides an ideal extension platform for agriculture. An MoU was recently signed with the Songhai Center, which will help link up rice research to farmers and the rice market.

**Partnership with the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) and Arcadia Biosciences Inc:** A joint project to improve rice varieties with traits for nitrogen use efficiency (NUE) and salinity tolerance has been initiated and an MoU is expected to be signed.

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## WARDA hosts CGIAR's Fifth Science Council

In response to WARDA's invitation, the Science Council held its Fifth meeting at the Center's temporary headquarters in Cotonou, Benin, 7-12 April 2006. Welcoming the Council members, Dr Nwanze gave a presentation on WARDA's unique partnership model and its research activities aligned to CGIAR priorities. The members visited laboratories and field trials and interacted with scientists from WARDA, IITA and IPGRI.



*Scenes from the Science Council visit*

## News and Notes

### Milestones

*26th Meeting of the WARDA Board of Trustees  
19 – 24 March 2006, Africa Rice Center (WARDA), Cotonou, Benin*



### New faces

*Assistant Director General for  
Corporate Services (ADG-CS)*

*Koen Geerts*



*Head (Consultant) of  
Donor Relations*  
*Samira Hotobah-During*

*Planning and  
Budget Manager*  
*Kolade Oladimeji Olatifede*



*African Rice Initiative (ARI) Steering Committee Meeting  
18-20 April 2006, Africa Rice Center (WARDA),  
Cotonou, Benin*



### Training

*Training of NARS Partners in Molecular Techniques  
18-28 April 2006, Africa Rice Center (WARDA),  
Cotonou, Benin*



Please send your questions, comments or suggestions to:

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