

The Year in Review: 1999

THE YEAR 1999 was a busy one for WARDA and its many partners. With several major projects at or approaching the end of their first phase, and new projects and new directions coming ‘on line,’ it was a time for review and planning. It marked the start of an exciting, if busy, period in WARDA’s history.

In January, the National Coordination Unit of the Inland Valley Consortium (IVC) in Côte d’Ivoire held its *Atelier national sur les bas-fonds en Côte d’Ivoire* in Gagnoa. The meeting was attended by representatives from IVC and the Human Health Consortium (HHC), the Ivorian national program (CNRA), the University of Bouaké, various development agencies and NGOs. The meeting revived the Ivorian National Coordination Unit and prepared an action plan for the coming years, including activities to strengthen the linkages between research and development.

A major public-awareness event was held in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire—*Journée ADRAO, or WARDA Day*, on 16 February at the Hotel Ivoire. This was a one-day event where WARDA presented itself to the region’s diplomatic community and others; an event sponsored by AfDB, FAO, UNDP and the World Bank. The day was a great success, with speeches from the sponsors, WARDA’s Council of Ministers, the Ivorian Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources, farmers and national partners. The Ivorian Prime Minister was guest of honor. Other guests included diplomats representing the donor community, WARDA member states and other African nations from missions based in Abidjan and elsewhere in the region. In the afternoon the exhibition was opened to the public, and we estimate that some 600–1000 people saw the displays.

During 17–20 February, 16 participants representing GTZ, WARDA, the University of Hohenheim, the NARS of Nigeria and Benin, the agricultural extension system of Benin and farmers’ organizations from both Nigeria and Benin, took part in a **Planning Workshop on Farmer Participatory Improvement and Adaptation of Production Technologies for Rainfed Rice-based Systems in West Africa with Emphasis on Nigeria and Benin**, at WARDA Headquarters. As a result of the workshop and subsequent project proposal, BMZ is funding a project on this subject, implemented by WARDA in collaboration with the University of Hohenheim.

March saw the final meetings of the **WARDA/NARS Task Forces** at which they began to be remodeled into **ROCARIZ**, with a Task Forces Stakeholders’ Meeting on 15–17 and full Task Forces Meeting on 18–19. Over 100 delegates attended, comprising NARS Task Force members, WARDA researchers, and WECARD/CORAF representatives. It was at this meeting that an Interim Steering Committee was established for ROCARIZ, which was mandated to draw up rules and regulations for the new network for approval at the First Regional Rice Research Review in early 2000.

A training course on **Systems Analysis and Simulation of Rice Production and Rice-Weed Interactions** was held at WARDA Headquarters between 22

and 30 March, conducted by the Department of Theoretical Production Ecology, Wageningen Agricultural University, The Netherlands. It was primarily aimed at WARDA research staff, although 5 NARS personnel also took part.

Another public-awareness event took place from 25 March to 4 April—*Carnaval de Bouaké (Bouaké Carnival)*. An estimated 2–3 thousand people visited the WARDA stand on one of the main streets of WARDA's host city.

The **Inland Valley Consortium (IVC)** was also in transition in 1999, as the year marked the end of phase I and the establishment of a new status in preparation for phase II. The IVC Heads of Member Institutions met on 13–14 April, immediately followed by the Annual Planning Workshop through 16 April. A collaborative agreement was signed by the heads of institutions and a Consortium Management Committee was established. The ground was set for the wrapping up of phase I activities (principally some unfinished agro-ecological characterization work in several countries) in 1999–2000, and for the start of phase II in 2000 with new emphases and activities, building on the lessons learned in phase I and other inland-valley and technology-transfer initiatives. The IVC is now an integral component of WARDA's research program structure, being housed in a project in the Systems Development and Technology Transfer Program—*Inland Valley Systems Development and Technology Transfer*—, rather than being a separate entity with no overlap (and little interaction) with WARDA's mainstream program.

Building on the success of participatory varietal selection (PVS) in several countries up to 1998, WARDA organized two workshops from 19 to 28 April 1999. The first—**Participatory Rice Improvement and Gender/User Analysis Reporting and Planning Workshop**—brought together the PVS teams from 10 countries (many

of whom had been trained in 1998) to report on their experiences, share ideas and plan activities for the 1999 campaign. The follow-on **Participatory Rice Improvement Training Workshop** offered PVS skills to teams from the remaining seven WARDA member countries, so that all 17 member states have now received PVS training. The reporting and planning workshop is set to become an annual event, as more donors are giving backing to this technology-transfer research initiative.

In May, our financial team were put 'under the microscope' by the **Center-Commissioned External Review on Financial Management and Control**. The review panel made 23 recommendations and concluded that the mechanisms were in place to significantly improve financial reporting.

The year was also set to be crucial for the **Human Health Consortium**, as the project was coming to an end and had met its objectives (or, in the case of schistosomiasis, showed that some avenues of research are doomed to be unproductive—*see* 'Perception is Reality' in this Report). The Consortium is a joint undertaking between research and extension agencies in Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, WARDA and the World Health Organization's Joint Panel of Experts on Environmental Management for Vector Control (WHO/PEEM). The Consortium Scientific Advisory Committee—chaired by WHO/PEEM—met with IDRC (representing the donors) in Bouaké, on 24–26 May for their annual meeting to discuss results and plan activities through the end of the project in 2000. Unfortunately, with a lack of donor funding for a second phase, the end of the project will see the end of Consortium activities hosted by WARDA.

June saw the WARDA research staff taking a good hard look at themselves as they were evaluated by a **Center-commissioned External Review of Program Strategy and Management**. The Review, chaired by Dr Bernard Tinker, was generally positive, but gave valuable

feedback on issues such as the balance between adaptive and strategic research. The Review was timed to provide valuable feedback and input into the External Program and Management Review, which started towards the end of the year.

‘Summer’ is always a quiet time at the international centers, as many senior staff take their annual holidays to spend time relaxing with their families. However, ‘Fall’ kicked in with the **Twenty-second Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers Meeting**, on 16–17 September, where member-state ministers of agriculture met to discuss WARDA’s progress and make recommendations for the future. This year, the meeting made history as the first international forum to meet in Liberia since the onset of the civil war there. Eight member states were represented at the meeting, five of those at ministerial level. Despite the lack of quorum, nine resolutions and two votes of thanks were drafted for submission to the full Council for approval.

The **Crop Science Society of America (CSSA)** offered the CGIAR the opportunity to present seminars and an exhibit-stand at its **Annual Meetings**, starting with IRR and WARDA in October–November 1999, in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. We, of course, jumped at the opportunity to ‘spread the word’ of our work among the elite of America’s crop scientists. Three presentations were made by WARDA staff, and they and the exhibits were well received.

Another important event for the Human Health Consortium was the **Ecosystem Health Analytical Workshop** from 6 to 24 November. The meeting, split between Abidjan and WARDA Headquarters, focused on **Mapping malaria Risk in Africa (MARA) in West Africa: The role of humid zones and open water bodies**. The combined results of several research groups were brought together to develop the first map of malaria risk in Africa, now available on the Internet.

The biennial *Salon international de l’agriculture et des ressources animales* (SARA)—a regional forum for promotion of all things agricultural, both commercial and not-for-profit—was held in Abidjan between 12 and 19 November. WARDA again had a booth, and senior staff took turns discussing our work with members of the public, commercial farmers, and dignitaries from all over the region—an estimated 8000 visitors.

The Initial Phase of WARDA’s **Fourth External Program and Management Review (EPMR)** ran from 20 to 30 November, with general presentations to the Panel (chaired by Dr Mandi Rukundi of Zimbabwe) and preliminary discussions on matters of interest to Panel members. This was to pave the way for the Main Phase in early 2000. The report of the EPMR was presented to the CGIAR Mid-Term Meeting in Dresden in May 2000. Issues facing WARDA as it enters the next millennium, and the overall assessment of the Review Panel are presented in the Message from the Director General and Chairman of the Board of Trustees (page 1).

At the November meeting of the **Board of Trustees**, the new Information and Documentation Center (IDC) and research extension buildings were inaugurated. Building costs of US\$1,677,084 were provided by the WARDA member states—attesting to both their political support and ownership of the Association. The meeting also marked the last meeting of Chairman Dr Just Faaland of Norway. Dr Faaland served as Chairman for six years, extending his term to seven years in order to provide continuity and smooth transition during the EPMR year. Prof. Lindsay Innes of Scotland (UK) was elected as the incoming Chairman, to be effective June 2000 at the next Board meeting.

The **Final Evaluation of the Interspecific Hybridization Project Phase I** took place on 29 and 30 November, with representatives from UNDP/TCDC,

the World Bank, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Japanese Embassy in Abidjan and JIRCAS, along with research partners from IRRI, IRD, Cornell University, Yunnan Academy of Agricultural Sciences (China) and Guinea. (See 'New Rice for Africa... with a Little Help from Our Friends' in this Report.)

In December, WARDA hosted an **International Workshop on Effective and Sustainable Partnerships in a Global Research System: Focus on Sub-Saharan Africa**. The workshop was convened and coordinated by WARDA and ISNAR, in collaboration with the Organizational Change Program (OCP) and with significant support from other CG Centers, the Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR) and the Technical Centre

for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA). Thirty-nine participants represented 27 organizations and 18 countries.

The activity in 1999 set the stage for WARDA to launch a full and exciting agenda into 2000 and beyond. The events listed here were only the first signs of WARDA's renewed energy and enthusiasm for the work ahead, and provided a platform on which upcoming meetings in 2000—the first Regional Rice Research Review (ROCARIZ), the first INGER-Africa workshop under the auspices of WARDA, the third series of PRIGA/PVS workshops, the second biennial meeting of the National Experts Committee, and the Universities Collaborative Platform—would build.