



# ON DIT quoi?

A newsletter from Africa Rice Center (WARDA)

## JICA Senior Vice President visits Africa Rice Center



A high-profile delegation led by Mr Kenzo Oshima, Senior Vice President, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) visited the Africa Rice Center, Cotonou, Benin on 5 May to discuss a new rice initiative for Africa – the Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD) – prior to its launching at TICAD IV. Mr Oshima was accompanied by Mr Yoshitaka Sumi, Leader, Africa Group Rural Development Department, JICA Agriculture Cooperation Planning.

“Africa Rice Center will be an important factor in this initiative and JICA is proud to work with the Center,” said Mr Oshima, highlighting the special relationship between JICA and the Africa Rice Center. “Given the importance of rice as an African food staple and the recent success stories of NERICA® in countries like Uganda, we believe that rice will also play a key role in Africa’s development.”

Mr Oshima presented the new initiative, which he said would “build on the existing policies and programs, such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) and the African Rice Initiative (ARI).” JICA actively supports ARI and has posted two rice specialists since 2004 to work with ARI.

Conveying his deep appreciation to Mr Oshima, Dr Papa Abdoulaye Seck, Director General of the Africa Rice Center remarked, “We will actively contribute to the implementation of this initiative which can really make a big difference to rice production in Africa.”

CARD aims to forge strong links between national programs, JICA, Africa Rice Center and the International Rice Research Institute with strong support from the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD).

## MoU signed with French Institutions (CIRAD, INRA and IRD) dissemination

An agreement of great significance for Africa’s rice sector has been signed between three French research organizations and the Africa Rice Center to help improve sustainable rice production, address climatic change-related issues, diversify rice-based systems and reduce post-harvest losses in the continent.

“This will help bring together our comparative and complementary advantages that will greatly benefit rice research in Africa,” said Dr Papa Abdoulaye Seck, Director General of the Africa Rice Center. The signing ceremony was held on 2 June, in Paris, in the presence of Dr Ren Wang, Director of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)..

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## MoU signed with French Institutions

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The partners will carry out joint activities in areas of common interest to improve the impact of research, training and information dissemination on rice-based production systems in Africa. This work will be done in collaboration with national and regional R&D programs.

The agreement, which will be valid for 5 years, was signed by Dr Gérard Matheron, Director General of the Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement (CIRAD); Dr Marion Guillou, President and Director General of INRA; Dr Michel Laurent, Director General of the Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD); and Dr Seck on behalf of the Africa Rice Center.

As part of this agreement, scientists from the French research organizations will be posted at the Africa Rice Center's research stations to work on specific constraints to rice production in Africa. Already joint research proposals have been developed and submitted to donors.

## Africa Rice Center at TICAD IV

Africa Rice Center was invited to attend the TICAD IV meeting in Yokohama, Japan in 28-30 May, because of the special importance that Japan gives to Africa Rice Center in the context of Asia-Africa partnership.

Mr Kossi Messan Ewovor, Honorable Minister of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries of Togo and Chair of the Council of Ministers of the Africa Rice Center was requested by the CGIAR to attend the TICAD meeting and issue on its behalf a TICAD IV declaration, thanking Japan for its support to CGIAR's research and urging the

## Rice in the limelight

Africa Rice Center and the NERICA continued to receive worldwide publicity with more than 200 online news reports appearing in BBC, New York Times, The Economist, Le Monde, Jeune Afrique and many other international, regional and African news outlets in 2007 and 2008.

However, the media attention has increased more than before in the context of the current rice crisis, following the publication of a number of articles in newspapers in Africa and Europe by Dr Seck on the crisis. Dr Seck has been extensively interviewed on this issue by telepress conference, RFI, New Scientist, Jeune Afrique among others.

CGIAR media team has been supporting the Africa Rice Center to disseminate our perspective on the rising rice prices. For the TICAD, CGIAR and the Africa Rice Center brought out a news release which evoked considerable media interest.

Dr Marco Wopereis, DDG as well as several scientists have also been interviewed by BBC, Radio Canada, Reuters, Bloomberg, l'Express, SABC and the Japanese media as well as various other regional and local media. In addition, programs on the Center and NERICA® were shown on BBC, TV5 and on Japanese TV channels.

international community to step up investment in agricultural research in view of the food crisis.

The Chair and the Director General were invited to speak at the launching of the Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD), which will complement the activities of ARI.

WARDA also participated in the TICAD Experts meetings. Throughout the TICAD proceedings, WARDA's research, particularly NERICA, was highly appreciated and was highlighted in the TICAD IV Action Plan.

## ARI takes stock of its progress

The African Rice Initiative (ARI) has achieved a lot over the last few years, but it still has major rice challenges to overcome, particularly in view of the current rice crisis. This was the view of the ARI Steering Committee, which met, 1-3 April, at the Africa Rice Center, Cotonou, Benin.

As ARI started large-scale operations with the launching of the African Development Bank-funded NERICA® dissemination project covering seven countries – Benin, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria and Sierra Leone – the focus of the meeting was on the status of this project.

“In less than 3 years, the project has shown tangible impact in the project countries,” said Dr Inoussa Akintayo, ARI Regional Coordinator. “In The Gambia, because of the popularity of NERICA®, the area under dryland rice increased by about 90%. As a result, rice production in the country increased by 147%. And in Benin, rice production increased by 44%.”

In Nigeria, the government announced that the country's rice imports had declined from 2 million tonnes in 2003/04 to less than 1 million tonnes in 2005/06. Dr Akintayo also cited the example of Guinea, which according to FAO achieved a record harvest of 1.4 million tonnes in 2007 – 5% higher than in 2006 and the highest in its history – largely because of the government's massive support for NERICA® dissemination.

The initiative has helped disseminate improved rice varieties in about 30 African countries, including post-conflict countries. In Uganda, officials recently reported that the country had reduced its rice importation from 60,000 tonnes in 2005 to 35,000 tonnes in 2007, saving Ugandans roughly \$30 million.

Overall, the project has produced more than 10,000 tonnes of improved rice seed. It has trained 6,500 farmers, more than half of them women, to produce high-quality seed. In addition, the initiative has helped train 1,225 technicians.

“NERICA® and other improved varieties are an important component – indeed the basis of rice production, but they have to be put in the right setting,” said Dr Marco Wopereis, Africa Rice Center Deputy Director General. He highlighted the need to establish a link between production, processing and marketing which has been quite successful in Uganda, Ethiopia, Ghana and Togo.

To mark the occasion, a NERICA® Compendium, jointly published by the Africa Rice Center, FAO, AfDB, and Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA), was released.

## Seminars

- Dr Fatogoma Sorho, Scientist from the Université d'Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire presented a seminar on "Inter-institutional cooperation North-South: case of the partnership WARDA-IRD-Université d'Abidjan for research on the rice yellow mosaic virus (RYMV)". Dr Sorho, who did his PhD work under Dr Yacouba Sere, received the 2007 Christiane Doré prize for his thesis on "RYMV in West Africa".
- Dr Ines Sanchez, Head of Africa Rice Center Genetic Resources, gave a seminar on "New regulations for the distribution or transfer of genebank materials".
- Dr Jeffrey Bentley, Agricultural Anthropologist gave a seminar on "Innovations for Inland Valley Rice: Experiences from Mali and Ghana" based on his evaluation of the Participatory adaptation and diffusion of technologies for rice-based systems (PADS) project at the Africa Rice Center.
- Prof. Eric Tollens, Africa Rice Center Consultant on marketing gave a seminar on "The Marketing Unit of WARDA"

## Visitors

- Dr Manabu Yasuhara, Project Coordinator, Special Program for Food Security, FAO, to discuss on collaboration.
- Dr Foussenyi Cisse, Scientist at CRRA, collaborating on biotechnology with Africa Rice Center
- Delegation from French research organizations – Drs Alain Ghesquière, Mathias Lorieux, Philippe Monneveux. Several meetings were held on collaborative activities.
- Dr Michel Partiot, Representative of CIRAD West and Central Africa
- Dr Jeffrey Bentley, Agricultural Anthropologist
- Dr Paula Bremel, DDG, IITA to discuss collaborative activities
- Dr Pieter Windmeijer, Wageningen UR to discuss EU project
- Mr Bruno Bordage - Representative of IRD in Benin
- Eight MSc Students from the Faculty of Agronomy, University of Benin
- Mr Robert Hanson, Attaché regional à l'Agriculture, US Embassy in Dakar and Mr. Jason Hahn, Aattaché aux Affaires politiques, US embassy, Benin
- Dr Dembele Youssouf from INERA, Burkina Faso, to finalize several articles on joint collaborative activities
- Dr Hans van Hoof, Consultant Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, to discuss implication of farmer organizations in rice sector development and participation in the Rice Emergency Initiative
- Prof. Eric Tollens for a consultancy on establishing a Marketing Unit

## Bravo!

- PhD student Mr Timothy Krupnik from the University of California (Santa Cruz), USA, won a prestigious Fulbright award for his work in the Senegal River Valley. He is conducting his study at the Africa Rice Center under the supervision of Dr Jonne Rodenburg.
- Ms Marie-Jose Sogbossi from Benin received the 2007 CODESRIA award for her thesis done under Dr Aliou Diagne.
- Dr Khady Nani Dramé, 2007 UNESCO-L'ORÉAL laureate, for being featured in Science Planete "Le producteur de riz n'aura plus à déplorer les périodes de sécheresse"
- Mr Felix Houinsou, Consultant in the Innovation and Learning Systems Program is among the winners of the *Continent-Wide Scriptwriting Competition Radio Scripts on Climate Change Adaptation Strategies for African Farmers*. Two radio scripts developed by Felix were chosen by the selection panel. The winning scripts will be published in French and English and distributed by CTA and Farm Radio International to approximately 500 radio organizations across sub-Saharan Africa. They will then be transformed into a wide variety of programs and shared with rural audiences.

## My family!

### On dit "Welcome"

- Ms Yonnelle Moukoubi from Gabon, who joined the Africa Rice Center to do her PhD work under the supervision of Dr Moussa Sié. Yonnelle is a 2008 UNESCO-L'ORÉAL laureate.
- Dr Susumu Abe from Japan, PhD in Soil Fertility Agronomy, under the supervision of Dr Sylvester Oikeh. Dr Abe obtained his PhD degree in Agricultural Science from the United Graduate School of Agricultural Sciences, Tottori University, Japan.
- Wilfried ANAGONOU, Senior Finance and Administrative Assistant

### On dit "Bye-Bye"

- Mr David Millar, Science Writer on 31 May