

SECTION ONE:
Opening session:
official speeches

Opening remarks and workshop objectives

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Policies and strategies for promoting rice production and food security in SSA

At WARDA we value our partners in carrying out core business – rice research and development for contributing to food security and poverty reduction in SSA. Thus, the Center counts on people – like you – to carry out special responsibilities and play important roles in the development processes of your countries or for a third country.

Accordingly, we are happy that more than 200 persons from all over Africa registered for this workshop. However, due to logistic limitations we could only bring 65 participants from 20 countries to this workshop.

The invited participants are practitioners from different fields in agriculture, policy and food-security-related programs (Governmental as well as Non-governmental). They were selected at macro or micro levels to represent various professional disciplines and experiences.

We have come to Cotonou, to discuss and come up with recommendations for Promoting Rice Production thus Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa within the context of national, regional and international policies.

There are good reasons for the choice of this workshop, briefly:

- Rice is fast becoming a major food and a source of livelihood for small-scale farmers in SSA. Today rice is consumed as an important food in more than 40 SSA countries
- Demand for rice in West and Central Africa is growing at the rate of 6% per annum—faster than anywhere else in the world, while per capita consumption in Eastern and Southern Africa has reached 15 kg
- For sub-Saharan Africa, rice consumption has grown by 5.3% over the past five years

- In a continent where more than 315 million people – that is four out of every 10 people – go hungry, with the growing importance of rice both as food and cash crop, promoting its production and marketing provides a major opportunity for poverty reduction and to assuring food security SSA. This is the core of our work at WARDA.

While it has been easy for some of our governments to enact policies that favour rice imports, it has been difficult to support on a sustainable basis strategies to support domestic rice production and marketing. Indeed, the economists in the departments of planning, research and academic institutions in most of our countries have not included the cost of failing to invest in rice production in Africa in their decision models. Perhaps this is an addition to the many questions that participants at this workshop will help us to answer.

Given this background, the objectives of this workshop are as follows:

1. Highlight the impact of trade liberalization on the institutions and infrastructures required for competitive rice sector development in SSA
2. Draw lessons from specific country and sub-regional economic and trade organizations, and their effects on domestic rice production
3. Compare rice policies and their implementation across countries and draw lessons from their effects on food security
4. Facilitate the exchange of lessons and best practices from African and Asian countries for targeting the development and transfer of rice production and post-harvest technologies.

Expected outputs and outcomes of the workshop

In SSA, macro and sectoral policies affect the competitiveness of rice production and food security in general.

When we talk about macro-policies, we refer to the following:

- Exchange rate policy
- Fiscal policy
- Monetary policy

Under sectoral: let us take agriculture as an example:

- Marketing and pricing policies
- Trade policies
- Infrastructure policies
- Poverty alleviation and social sector policies
- Health policies
- Education policies
- Population

By the end of this workshop, we expect to achieve the following outputs:

- Status of rice policies and research in SSA, i.e. what we know now, where we are, what lessons have been learnt, which particular areas need more (policy) research
- Prioritised research and action plans
- Formation or strengthening of a common platform for rice policy research and advocacy
- Publication of selected papers in an international journal or as a high-profile reference book.

It is very important to understand, that this workshop does not intend to focus on a discussion of conceptual approaches, but rather intends to serve as a tool to bridge theory and practice. Thus, we have brought together academicians, policy makers and civil society.

The workshop shall address the following themes and questions:

Theme 1: Common agricultural policy and market integration

- How are the regional economic, common market and policy organizations (e.g ECOWAS, UEMOA) functioning to enhance food security and domestic rice production on a competitive basis?
- What lessons can we draw from these regional organizations for promoting food security and, in particular, competitive rice production and markets within the sub-regions?

- How can policy research and advocacy contribute to improving rice competitiveness and what are the priority research areas (national and regional)?

Theme 2: Achieving competitiveness for domestic rice production

- How can farmers, countries or production systems within countries and regions achieve competitive advantage?
- Which exogenous and endogenous factors are affecting rice producers' competitiveness?
- What types of policies and strategies need to be put in place to assure competitive rice production?
- What is the impact of new rice technologies on livelihoods, welfare and food security?

Theme 3: Policy variables for achieving competitiveness

- What are the macroeconomic variables or factors needed to gain competitive advantage?
- Which types of import and export policies need to be put in place?
- What are the appropriate institutions and infrastructure required?
- At the micro-economic level, which policies keep costs down and give remunerative prices to producers?

This three-day workshop shall proceed as follows:

Day 1:

- Opening Session
- Session 1: Common agricultural policy and market integration
- Session 2: Achieving competitiveness for domestic rice production

Day 2:

- Session 3: Policy variables for achieving competitiveness
- Session 4: Policy variables for achieving competitiveness
- Break out-group work

Day 3:

- Break out-group work
- Session 5: Conclusions and recommendations
- Presentation of Group Reports including conclusions and recommendations
- Day 4: Field Trip to Songhai, PVO