

Workshop Summary

1. Introduction

The African Rice Center (WARDA) held a three-day workshop from 7–9 November 2005 at the Palais de congrès, Cotonou, Benin. This important gathering was made possible thanks to the financial assistance of the Canada Fund for Africa. The workshop on rice policy and food security in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) was attended by over 70 participants from 16 countries, including the agricultural and rural development ministers, official delegations or representatives from Benin, Cameroon, The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo. Also present were representatives of various research institutes and donors in Africa. During the workshop, many presentations were delivered in plenary session. Following this plenary session two separate working groups were formed to continue discussions on particular policy research and advocacy issues, food security and poverty reduction themes and several other relevant themes identified by the participants. The closing plenary session translated the results of the discussions into resolutions/recommendations, a synthesis and commitments for the way forward.

The Director General of WARDA, Dr Kanayo Nwanze, stated in his opening speech that, based on the efforts and strategies for promoting rice production in sub-Saharan Africa, there was a need to review and formulate practical policies on the increase of rice production in Africa so as to meet the ever growing demand for rice. These policies will play a major role not only in shaping the development of the rice sector, but also to ensure food security and poverty reduction in Africa. Highlighting the objectives and expected outcome of the workshop, WARDA's policy economist Dr Patrick Kormawa stated that the outcomes expected from the participants include identifying priority research activities and intervention areas for dissemination by WARDA in collaboration with partners from both public and private organizations, including civil society organizations (CSOs). Delivering the keynote address, the Minister of agriculture and rural development of Nigeria, represented by the Director of the National Cereal Research Institute (NCRI) Dr Anthony A. Ochigbo, enjoined the participants to give their best towards the success of the workshop as success achieved is success for all.

Dr Kormawa introduced the workshop by indicating that rice is fast becoming an important staple food in more than 40 SSA countries while consumption has grown by 5.3% over the past five years in SSA. He recalled that for most

economists the cost of not investing in rice production in Africa has never been included in their competitive model, suggesting this as an addition to the many questions that participants at the workshop will help to answer. The workshop was being held to serve as a tool to bridge theory and practice rather than focus on discussion of conceptual approaches.

2. Attendance

A total of 62 participants attended from 16 countries:

- Benin
- Burkina Faso
- Cameroon
- Central African Republic
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Ethiopia
- Ghana
- Guinea
- Nigeria
- Niger
- Mali
- Philippines
- Senegal
- Sierra Leone
- The Gambia
- Togo
- United Kingdom

In addition there were five representatives present from the following international organizations: PNUD, FAO, Warwick University, Sasakawa Global 2000 and USAID.

3. Objectives and methodology of the workshop

3.1. Workshop objectives

Given this background, the workshop objectives and expected outcomes were stated to include:

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

3.2. Workshop methodology

- 1) Country presentations
- 2) More discussions
- 3) Working sessions by country teams
- 4) Plenary session to discuss group findings and recommendations

3.3. Workshop themes and questions

The workshop addressed the following themes and questions:

a) 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)?

b) 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?

c) 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?

3.4. Workshop outputs

The workshop aimed at achieving 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
- Prioritized 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.

4. Official opening of the workshop

The conference was open by H.E. the Honorable Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of Benin Republic, who conveyed the greetings of the President for the Republic of Benin to the workshop participants. He emphasized the importance of the workshop through the following important points: rice policy strategy of Benin, challenge for increasing agriculture production, production, consumption of rice in Benin, and relationship between production

and consumption. He also highlighted the deficit of rice (55,000 tonnes) in Benin and asked how local rice could be made more competitive with imported rice. Major issues raised included seed supply for effective distribution to farmers, the quality of local rice and the revival of the rice programme in Benin with a road map with clear indicators. He concluded his speech by reiterating two fundamental questions: 1) how to make local rice production satisfy domestic consumption, and 2) how to make local rice more competitive with imported rice.

The second official ceremonial speech was made by the Honorable Dr Winfred Nii Okai Hammond (Deputy Minister Special Projects, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ghana), who represented the Minister of Food and Agriculture, Republic of Ghana. He noted that rice is increasingly becoming an important staple cereal due to rising populations, rapid urbanization, and increasing per capita consumption that hovers around 26–30kg/annum. Further statistics show that milled rice production in Ghana in the decade (1995–2004) averaged 150,000 tonnes (t) to give a self-sufficiency ratio of about 35%, while the shortfall in local production is supplemented by large imports (350,000–400,000 t) that negatively affect the trade balance deficit. In addition, Ghana's currency tariff on imported rice is 20%, while those of Nigeria and UEMOA countries are 100% and 10%, respectively. He gave information on the plans of member states of ECOWAS as regards the systematic reduction of tariff rates until the desired levels are achieved by 2007, and the likely effect on member countries. He concluded by highlighting the way forward for Ghana, the present policy and programmes of the Government on rice (prominent among which are the measures on increased mechanization, inland valley development and improved seed variety development) and on support received from development partners

The Honorable Yankubu Touray, Secretary of State, Ministry of Agriculture, represented the Honorable Minister of Agriculture of The Gambia. He emphasized the need to make appropriate technologies available with supportive policies, and stated there was no reason why the region should import cheaper rice from India, China, the USA, etc. while it can be produced in the region. All the potential the region has in rice production will not be realized without supportive policies.

The representative of the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of the Republic of Togo, Dr CA Agbobzi (Director General ITRA, Togo) thanked WARDA for this timely initiative which provides a forum for simultaneous discussion of issues related to food security, food self sufficiency, the smallholder farmers who are striving to improve their lives; and the millions of dollars that

the region is spending on rice imports. Dr Agbobzi hoped the workshop would arrive at conclusions and recommendations on a regional approach to rice policy which will enhance the competitiveness of local rice. He declared that the Government of Togo will support any initiative coming out of the workshop with the aim of increasing the income of millions of poor rice farmers and improving the competitiveness of local rice vis à vis imported rice.

The fifth opening speech came from the representative of the Honorable Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Guinea. Dr Sekou Beavogui said rice is a major staple food in Guinea where per capita consumption is between 90 kg and 110 kg per annum, Guinea has the highest per capita rice consumption in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) after Madagascar. The six hundred thousand tonnes of rice produced every year are not sufficient to meet growing demand; thus necessitating importation of about 300,000 tonnes to fill the gap.

The Government of Guinea is currently revising its “*lettre de politique de développement agricole (LPDA)*” with significant rice sector policy initiatives, which include intensification of rice production, improved access to inputs, small scale mechanization and institutional and human capacity development. In addition, the Government of Guinea is very pleased with its excellent partnership with WARDA, which has made Guinea a successful example with regard to the dissemination of the NERICA.

Dr Takow Julius Agbor (Provincial Chief of the Centre for Scientific Research and Innovation), the representative of the Minister of Scientific Research and Innovation of Cameroon, informed the audience about the importance of rice in Cameroon in terms of consumption and production. In spite of six to 10 provinces being major producers of the crop, rice production is still far below consumption. Giving further statistics, he observed that rice production increased from 80,000 tonnes to 110,000 tonnes during the mid- and late eighties, but dropped to as low as 60,000 tonnes and 78,500 tonnes in the years 1999 and 2002, respectively. Consequently, rice importation to the country increased hugely. This embarrassing situation forced the Government and its agencies to start developing reversal strategies. In concluding, he promised to hand over the conference deliberations and outcomes personally to the Hon. Minister for his country.

Finally, Dr AA Ochigbo, Director of the National Cereals Research Institute (NCRI), Badeggi Nigeria, who represented the Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, highlighted the agricultural policy changes of the Obasanjo

administration which are geared towards laying a solid foundation for sustained increase in agricultural productivity and enhancing output necessary for growth. Prominent among these policies is the Presidential Initiative on Increased Rice Production Processing and Export. The primary objective of the initiative is to enhance household food security and income, eliminate imports and generate exportable surpluses. To attain this fit, the Nigerian government through the mobilization of the stockholders is expected to produce 6 million tonnes of milled rice from 10.3 million tonnes of paddy in 2005, expand by year 2007 the area of rice cultivation to about 3 million hectares to yield about 15 million tonnes of paddy or 9.0 million tonnes of milled rice. In addition a 100% import duty, as well as a 10% levy has been placed on imported rice to further encourage local rice production. The major impact of the Presidential Rice Initiative policy has been the substantial increase in productivity per hectare and area planted under rice through introduction of high yielding varieties of rice and the R-Box technology. These, together with adequate publicity given to the project, have given rise to increased national output of over 0.8 million tonnes, a declining trend in import bills, conservation of foreign exchange, enhanced employment, incomes and living standards for farmers and stakeholders as well as an increase in other downstream business in the industry.

5. Keynote and country presentation highlights

5.1. Agenda Item 1: Common agricultural policy and market integration

This session started soon after the official statements. The session was chaired by Dr Winfred Nii Okai Hammond, Deputy Minister Special Projects, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Republic of Ghana and two rapporteurs, Drs Aliou Diagne (WARDA) and Victor Okoruwa (University of Ibadan), were selected.

5.1.1. Main discussion points

Questions, concerns and contributions were raised by participants during the open discussion. One important issue raised was that private sector-led agricultural development is welcome, but how do we ensure that this happens. The answer was that there will certainly be a need to develop country specific strategies. But, it is necessary to create a conducive macroeconomic environment where prices of finance and commodities, legislative framework, etc. are predictable.

It was also highlighted that land is a serious constraint in Africa. An example was given from Malawi where successful immigrant farmers were given land by the local chief but were asked to leave by farmers indigenous to the village

with the view to taking over the lucrative farming enterprise. A similar question on land was asked following the presentation from Sierra Leone and drew the response that it is difficult to generalize. Firstly, land is indeed a problem in many eastern and southern African countries due to population pressure and soil degradation. Secondly, land tenure systems in some countries of southern Africa create serious problems. For example, the land reform initiative in Zimbabwe, which was launched to redress the inequalities created by colonial heritage, has created uncertainty resulting in a severe shortfall in agricultural production. The country, which was once a breadbasket and source of quality seed in Africa, is now having problems in feeding itself. The situation in South Africa and Namibia is tense. Land tenure insecurity is discouraging private sector investment in many countries.

The presentation from FAO also raised several interesting discussions related to: (a) FAO's strategy to increase rice production (b) FAO strategy to promote mechanization for rice production, (c) FAO's effort to mainstream gender in all development projects. The presenter highlighted that FAO embarked on a Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) in 1994. The programme is premised on the belief that proven technology is available for easy transfer to improve smallholder agricultural production and productivity. This programme has been successful and in some countries it has passed from pilot project into a National Programme for Food Security. As regards mechanization: in the context of SPFS and other FAO supported projects, the drive is to develop appropriate technology, e.g. treadle pumps that are sustainable both in terms of cost and in terms of their production at local level. Gender mainstreaming in all development projects and programmes is a major preoccupation of FAO which has a Women and Population Division in its structure.

Discussion also turned to understanding why off-farm activities should undermine (rice) agricultural production in Africa. On this, the presenters stated that it may not be universally true. However, food-insecure farmers in many countries are forced to supplement their income through off-farm employment. While this opportunity may be welcome, the only opportunity for many farmers, e.g. in Malawi, for off-farm employment is on commercial farms. Because the farming calendar is more or less the same for both commercial and subsistence farming, small farmers are usually unable to attend their own crops when their presence is most needed. This leads again to reduced income and creates another vicious circle.

Some participants stated that farmers are confused by many pronouncements: first with declarations like the Lagos Plan of Action and now with the Maputo Declaration regarding increasing budgetary allocation to agriculture to 10%. There was no lack of political statement but lack of concrete political action. The Lagos Plan of Action had the good intention of integrating the African economy through the creation of Regional Economic Communities. However, progress has been slow and at times countries are engaged in undermining each other's political stability. The Maputo Declaration is on the correct lines and the AU and the NEPAD Secretariat, with the help of FAO and other partners, are developing a budget tracking system to monitor the compliance of countries with the Maputo declaration. A progress report on the system's development is expected to be presented in the next Summit of African Heads of Government and State.

Other views expressed included questioning whether land tenure is necessarily a major obstacle to food security; it may rather be the lack of funds to cultivate the land. An individual may decide to leave a parcel of land for a period of years (59 or 99 years) or value it and then count it as the community contribution. Also, land expansion is possible in some countries. Apart from failed policy, other constraints to agricultural development were identified as: lack of focus and approach by operators of the policy, inconsistent monitoring and evaluation, and poor institutional support.

Maputo Declaration: with regard to the commitment made by countries to allocate 10% of their budget to agricultural development, we are disconnecting between this commitment and the importance attached to agriculture in country poverty reduction strategy papers. In many cases, agriculture is not identified as a priority or does not form a key priority. This suggests that a lot more works need to be done to likely increased research for agriculture. Now that many donors are moving towards direct budgetary support this issue has particular importance. On the question of facilitating private sector investment, there is a need to give attention to removing disincentives as well as providing incentives. Changes in regulations governing marketing in Kenya for example, is now allowing the sale of small products of seeds and fertilizer which are in great demand by small scale farmers. With regard to capacity development, there are opportunities to explore the expertise and resources of the private sector. The example of the rice phenomenes in Bangladesh was given by Tim Chancelor: the major private sector partner provided straining programmes for input suppliers in order to ensure the effective delivery of the technology.

5.2. *Agenda Item 2: Achieving competitiveness for domestic rice production*

Chairman of the session was Netoyo Laomaibao (CILSS), assisted by rapporteurs Dr T.T.Awoyemi (University of Ibadan) and Akahoua S. N'cho (Africa Rice Center).

5.2.1. *Main discussion points*

Major points discussed after the presentation of papers related to the implications of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) on local production of rice in SSA. A burning issue was that of rice competitiveness, raised by Prof. JC Umeh (Nigeria) who wanted to know the place of comparative advantage in WA production processes, specifically if WA countries are equally endowed in rice production. Questions relating to adoption studies, particularly for rice varieties, were also raised.

Other important discussion points focused on gender issues affecting land property rights of women and allocation of farm resources, particularly in the development of the lowland scheme for rice production. Poverty reduction aspects were also considered when a participant pointed out that poverty is not only a monetary issue but also takes into account many other criteria such as the psychological aspects. Is credit without interest rates a good and sustainable practice? If groups are benefiting, is it not better to levy a small interest charge and put that into investment (research, extension, infrastructure, school, clinics increase credit time, etc.)?

It was pointed out that the whole world was gathering for WTO negotiations and the question was put if it is not wise that the region throws its weight behind the placement of rice on a special production list?

5.3. *Agenda item 3: Policy variables for achieving competitiveness*

5.3.1. *Question and discussion session*

The major issue generating comments was that of West African countries having comparative advantage in rice production compared with the situation in Asia. Comments on tariffs were also made and suggestions made on attaining the most acceptable tariffs to help stimulate local production.

Chairman: Yankuba Touray, Secretary of State, Ministry of Agriculture, The Gambia

Rapporteurs: Alphonse Singbo, agroeconomist, PAPA/INRA ; Godwin Olufemi, Watershed Initiative, Nigeria.

A total of eight presentations were made during this session:

- two on rice policies affecting the rice sector in Benin
- trade liberalization in the rice sector in Côte d'Ivoire
- rice policies in Senegal
- rice policies in Niger
- two on promoting the rice chain in West Africa
- the impact of various policies to promote the Nigerian rice sector.

The key elements of this session were the presentations advocating strategies to promote local rice production.

Theme 1: *Impact of trade liberalization on the rice sector: a case study of Côte d'Ivoire – Dr Aliou Diagne, Impact Economist, Africa Rice Center (WARDA)*

This presentation assessed the environmental and economic impact of world trade liberalization measures adopted since 1994 on the Côte d'Ivoire rice sector. Results of the study showed that through domestic trade liberalisation and liberalization measures implemented within the framework of structural adjustment policies from the World Bank and the IMF, the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) of WTO and the Common Agricultural Policy of UEMOA have evolved within a liberalized policy and economic environment. The results have shown that these liberalization measures implemented since 1994 have had a significant impact on the consumer price of local rice (+28%). However, these measures did not have a significant impact on either the producer price of local rice or the consumer price of imported rice. These results show that rice importers or retailers have transmitted to rice consumers the benefits of low taxes and restrictions eliminated on imported rice. Domestic liberalization combined with WTO liberalisation measures increased the price of local rice by 35%.

The presentation showed also that domestic trade liberalization measures and policy reforms have reduced local rice consumption by 28%. The reduction in local rice consumption increased constantly from a low level of 133,000 tonnes in 1994 to reach a peak of about 244,000 tonnes in 1997 and drop to a level of 220,000 tonnes in 2000. The reductions in consumption of local and imported rice resulting from WTO liberalization measures are much lower. With regard to local rice production, it is only WTO liberalization measures that have an impact on local rice supply. Without the liberalization measures, local rice supply would have been 4% lower than its current level over the period of 1994-2000.

The impact on the welfare of rice consumers and producers was also analyzed. Results indicated that due to the instability of upland rice production systems practiced by the majority of small-scale rice producers, new land is cleared and put into cultivation every year; such practices contribute to environmental degradation, specifically deforestation. However, the immediate impact of domestic trade liberalization on deforestation is nil in the first two years (1994 and 1995). Forest land cleared reduced by 5,573 hectares during the third year (1996).

Theme 2: *Rice policy advocacy in Benin: Initiatives from the Benin Rice Producers' Concertation Committee (CCR) – Pascal Gbenou*

CCR Benin is a network of rice producers' organizations created in 2003 following a forum of rice producers in Benin. The objectives of the committee are to submit to the Benin government an action plan relating to the promotion and organization of the rice chain and to propose alternatives in terms of rice policy. Intervention points are:

- Assist in setting up support services to rice producers, test some initiatives on rice processing and commercialization, participation of producers' organizations in the dissemination of improved rice seed, formulation of training needs and assistance in rice producers' coalition building.
- Put in place a network of rice stakeholders and task force on rice policies: work in close collaboration with rice producers' networks in Benin, active participation in the ROPPA programme on rice in West Africa, collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture for the implementation of the action plan, implementation of studies on themes affecting the development of Benin's rice sector, organization of meetings with stakeholders for the elaboration of propositions of policies.

Five axes of reflexion and priority action are tackled by the CCR within the framework of activities on rice policies:

- Review of rice import conditions
- Reorientation of Japanese rice food aid
- Advocacy for a land development policy
- Promotion of local rice
- Campaign for rice seed supply

The specific recommendations formulated for action by Africa Rice Center (WARDA):

- Help the CCR in the analysis and proposal of rice policies for Benin
- Involve the CCR and rice producers' organizations in WARDA's advocacy platform on rice policies in Africa
- Establishment of networks, in collaboration with rice producers' associations, to transfer experience in dissemination and multiplication of seed to rice producers.

Theme 3: *Support Policies of the Rice Sector in Senegal – Ousmane Ly*

Rice consumption in Senegal represents 34% of the volume of cereals. Rice consumption is estimated at 54% and 24% in urban and rural areas respectively. Rice demand is estimated at 400,000 tonnes/year while domestic production stagnates at only 200,000 tonnes/year. The major axes of the various rice policies pursued are:

- Political will to ensure food security and agriculture sector development
- Subsidy of agricultural inputs from 2003 to 2006
- Definition of a reference framework for development of an agriculture policy in 2004; the weak points are:
 - sector liberalization lead to the impoverishment of small scale producers in favor of large scale ones
 - delay in inputs supply.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen rice sector financing
- Exemption from import duties of all spare parts and equipment to be used in the irrigated schemes
- Improvement of marketing channels
- Extend support measures to include subsidies.

Theme 4: *Contribution of rice production to food security in Niger – Ayouba Hassane*

The Federation of the Unions of Niger Rice Producers Cooperatives (FUCOPRI) was created in 2001 to promote development of the rice sector in Niger. FUCOPRI aims at reaching this objective through its participation in and coordination of

all stakeholders' action plans. FUCOPRI aims at cultural, social, and economic development of its members by the improvement of the conditions of supply, production and commercialization through the enhancement of organizational capacities. FUCOPRI comprises nine unions, with 37 cooperatives involving a total of 20,937 producers.

Rice represents only 3% of all cereal production. This production is estimated at 54,000 tonnes/year, roughly a third of total rice demand. To reduce the risks of food insecurity and poverty, irrigation is a national priority for development strategies and irrigable potential is about 270,000 ha. Rice straw is the principal forage source for big ruminants, particularly in Niger. Rice bran is also used as a feeding supplement for animals, making rice production a means of sustaining animal husbandry.

Major ongoing supporting policies for the promotion of the rice sector are the following:

- Reduction of energy cost by 30% on the irrigated schemes; sales of agricultural inputs (fertilizers, agricultural equipments) at moderate prices.
- Establishment of a task force – the *opération de sauvetage de la filière*
- Take into account the rice chain in national food security strategy
- Compulsory quota regime consisting of purchasing local rice equivalent to 10% of the quantity of imported rice.

Policy measures that could contribute to supporting local rice commercialization are:

- Limits on rice imports to the level that covers the deficit in domestic rice production
- Establishment of seasonal credit at a preferential rate
- Reinforcing socio-professional organization to ensure an effective rice commercialization system
- All State rice purchases must be taken from domestic rice production stock.

Consideration is needed for the following topics:

- In a context of increased costs of production, state withdrawal, and market liberalization, which types of organizations should be put in place to revitalize the irrigated schemes?

- How to intensify agricultural production in a context of demographic pressure, mechanization of agricultural households, and impoverishment of rice farmers.

Theme 5: *Advocacy for the promotion and interdependent marketing of local rice in West Africa (ROPPA)*

ROPPA, a network of producers in 10 West African countries, was created in 2000 to enable better restructuring of intervention actions in West Africa. Its aim is to defend producers' interests in West Africa and to facilitate the development of family farms and peasant farming. The objectives of ROPPA are:

- 1) Set up a representative organization of producers (both men and women) which is functional and reliable
- 2) Reinforce the capacity of its members to understand organization of farmers, to act by themselves and in collaboration with others to improve their livelihoods
- 3) Conduct advocacy action and lobby in favor of family farms, food security of rural households, State food sovereignty, and interdependent regional and international agricultural trade
- 4) Promote agricultural products generated by family farms by taking part in national, regional and international agricultural fairs (FIARA, SIA...), and by staging an information campaign on the food and nutritional quality of these agricultural products.

Changes expected by ROPPA are:

- Through the regional economic integration institutions, our States – individually and/or collectively – should exercise their rights to define policies and measures adopted for the promotion of the strategic rice sector
- Support measures and anti-dumping measures introduced
- Creation of an enabling environment for promotion of rice production
- Healthy food for all consumers.

Following various ROPPA meetings, the following observations have been made:

- There is still room for improvement in rice production systems in West African countries. High potential is still unexploited, the level of adoption of new technologies and cultural practices is low, and high performing factors of production are still lacking.

- The problematic of the rice sector in West Africa is not only economic and technical but it is essentially political, making it necessary to mobilize and advocate favorable change in international and regional policies relating to the rice sector.

ROPPA proposes:

- Support from WARDA to reinforce the arguments set out by stakeholders
- Establishment, within the framework of ECOWAS, of policies and agricultural research tools focusing on rice,
- Establishment of a strong collaborative relationship between WARDA and farmers' associations.

Theme 6: *Campaign for rice sector in West Africa: kicking down the door – Oxfam Québec*

Millions of poor farmers in developing countries cannot earn a living because of cheap, often dumped, food imports. The case of the world's most important basic food—rice—shows the seriousness of the problem. Rich countries have long used the IMF and World Bank and aggressive bilateral trade deals to push open the doors into poor countries' markets for a flood of cheap rice, including heavily subsidized rice from the US. Now rich countries plan to use the binding rules of the WTO to kick down those doors altogether. But trade rules must promote development, not undermine it. Any new WTO deal must ensure that poor countries can regulate trade to promote food security and rural livelihoods.

Theme 7: *Impact of support measures and protection of rice sector in Nigeria*

1. Support Measures on Rice

- Increasing efficiency of rice production in terms of land, labor and capital
- Increasing efficiency of rice processing and marketing
- Reducing cost of local rice

2. The internal roadblocks are classified in these questions

- **Political will:** why are there still doubts in the mind of farmers as to the strength of political will to perform or implement policies either in spirit or letter?
- **Corrupt practices:** some government officials and bureaucrats use corrupt practices which make policy implementation on these measures very difficult – for instance, in the distribution of fertilizers, why are these fertilizers either sold out, given out to non-farmers or diverted to destinations for which they were not originally intended?
- **Waivers:** in terms of tariffs, why are there duty waivers still secured by some influential individuals and organizations when the law is meant to serve everyone?
- **Porosity of the borders:** why do we still see imported rice in all nooks and crannies of the country even during the period when there have been absolute bans on rice importation? Where does the duty of the Customs lie with regard to trade facilitation and security of our borders?

3. WTO's Multilateral Rules

Global policies constitute a serious wedge and impediment to the will to progress in the South, particularly Africa. For as long as market access remains unattainable by our farmers and their products, there will be no incentive or motivation to move further into agriculture.

The Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), courtesy of the Uruguay round of world trade talks, has been implicated in hindering the performance of agriculture in Africa. Global trade policies allow the rich countries (European Union and US) to spend billions of dollars in subsidizing their farmers to overproduce. These subsidized products are then dumped on to the markets of developing and poor countries at cheap prices that undercut the price of locally grown products. For example, in 2003 the US government spent 1.3bn USD subsidizing its rice farmers – a crop that cost 1.8bn USD to grow. Because of these massive subsidies, the US rice industry can export rice at 34 per cent less than the cost of production. Poor farmers in developing countries simply cannot compete.

Besides these heavy subsidies, trade rules are lopsided in favour of the North. All kinds of measures are put in place by developed countries to hinder the South's

access to their markets while the South is asked to leave borders wide open. The rules are made in such a way that the South's raw materials are accepted but finished products are banned using administrative and technical barriers. The result is that the South continues to donate jobs and generate employment in the developed world where 10 further end products are researched and derived from a single raw material, thereby incapacitating the South's farmers who are producing despite feeble infrastructure, poor technology and subsistence methods. A prime example is that of cotton and the present state of West African textile industries. Furthermore, why does heavily subsidized rice continue to account for more than 70% of food aid in Africa when local rice farmers cannot get the requisite payment for their labor on the land?

4. Regional Trade Agreements (typified by the EPA)

- A significant trade agreement with debilitating consequences for rice and other agricultural commodities is the EPA which came in courtesy of the Cotonou Agreement and is being presently negotiated between the EU on one hand and the African, Pacific and Caribbean countries on the other. ECOWAS is leading the sub-region in the ongoing negotiations.
- The EPA has necessitated rapid action to create a Common External Tariff (CET) under a roadmap hurriedly adopted by ECOWAS Ministers of Trade in Ghana. Some observers have questioned the rationale behind both the speed and the reason the EU had to quickly resurrect the Cotonou Agreement immediately after seeing the failure of Cancun which more or less favored Africa and her other developing-country allies.

EPA is a free trade agreement with the following implications for the sub-region:

- Opening of borders and the removal of tariffs at the start of its implementation by January 2008
- A CET that looks like a forced marriage of ECOWAS countries, which have not been able to implement the Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) that came into force with the signing of the ECOWAS Protocol in 1975; have no common currency in place; no fully functional court of justice for adjudication of commercial disagreements or breaking of rules; and weak regional parliaments to make requisite laws to foster regional integration.

- Sudden adoption of the UEMOA 20% tariff rate which does not have sufficient capacity and cannot protect the region's farmers
- A well written ECOWAP which, however, does not reflect the democratic inputs, interests and concerns of local farmers in the region
- In the case of Nigeria, which has tariffs as high as 150% in some commodities, the EPA has consequences not only for rice farmers but for the economy, given that about 24% of government revenue/budget is dependent on import tax collected by Customs.
- Where then will the funds meant to assist local farmers as a policy measure come from, especially under an economy almost totally dependent on oil?
- Who is pursuing us in the EPA negotiations?
- Why this unprecedented speed? Why don't we sit back and review our regional integration efforts and create synergies for inward unity before scouting for integration with the outside world. Charity, they say, begins at home
- The CET adopted also remains a disincentive for the promotion of local production of strategic crops such as rice. Through unfair competition, the CET's trade liberalization threatens the sustainable livelihoods of millions in Nigeria who depend on agriculture
- Studies have shown that the revenues of governments will also be suffocated, i.e. Nigeria will lose up to USD 427 million in revenue.

The arguments are these:

- If the borders are opened and tariffs reduced and finally removed as is being proposed by the EPA, is there any hope for rice farmers both in Nigeria and other ECOWAS countries who are already dazed by the frustrations of keeping their livelihoods?
- Is there any hope for food security in the sub-region when we are just emerging from the delusions that visited countries like Niger in recent times?
- Would our support measures to local farmers be relevant any longer in the face of undue competition coming from EU farmers?

Of course, this last would be the beginning of the collapse of every kind of support measures for which our farmers have been going caps in hands to our helpless governments.

Amid all these calculated and deliberate ravaging and devastating policies, one must commend the intentions and commitment of governments to boost local rice production over the years. The policy battle enunciated with the table above is clear indication of Nigerian government resolve not only to industrialize but to protect livelihoods of citizens, creation of jobs for teeming school leavers, etc; and it must be put on record that the Nigerian government is the only government in the whole of Africa that can still use import bans and prohibitions against potential flooding of the local market with foreign rice at the whims and caprices of developed nations and their cohort-messengers.

The way forward

If local rice production is to take its rightful place and respond to support measures and policies, then:

- **Our agricultural policies must wake up to the realities of unfair competition in the global trade environment**
- **Our trade policies must be forced into a beneficial marriage with our agricultural policies so as to respond to yearnings for market access**
- **The above two policies must be congruent with our overall national development strategy or the poverty reduction strategy as a creed for meeting the MDG**
- **ECOWAS must link up with other like-minded regional blocks and groupings, such as the G90, G22, etc., within the developing economies for a fight against dumping of rice in the sub-region**
- **There must be concerted efforts to ensure that rice for the region is placed in the special product list or sensitive product line of the WTO. The lessons of Cancun must not be forgotten in a hurry – rice farmers’ freedom is possible**
- **There must be political will on the part of governments to effectively implement support policies for rice farmers to the letter. At the same time, governments should avoid policy reversals and inconsistencies that drain the purse of taxpayers’ funds**
- **The parliaments in the region must awake to realities and pass legislation supportive to local farmers as happens in the developed economies where the legislature does not allow the executive to tamper with the welfare of farmers in recognition of the fact that farmers supported them to power. Lawmakers must formulate anti-dumping legislation and develop a credible plan to address the commodity crisis so that farmers can receive fair returns for their rice.**

- We must continue the fight against subsidy by the West, but should they continue there is no crime on our part in subsidizing our local production of rice if the funds are there—and they should be there since rice constitutes a staple food on which we spend millions of dollars on imports every year. Others are heavily subsidizing their local production of rice. It is only when Nigeria subsidizes petrol costs that the World Bank and IMF will cry foul to subsidy
- EPA in almost all its ramifications is deadly to the economy of West Africa with regard to our agricultural products where we possess our only comparative advantage. We must discontinue the negotiation in its present form that does not recognize non-reciprocity, trade preference and safeguard measures which are tools *ab initio* recognized by the same WTO. We cannot afford the consequences of opening up our borders to influx of goods and unrestrained import surge
- In the same vein, a regional CET, even at the present fifth tariff band of 50% which Nigeria is currently requesting, is not enough to protect our rice and other agricultural commodity sectors; we must therefore look for a higher protective tariff.

Conclusion

Rice can help our economies if we have the will to play complementary roles in holding our governments to demands to return to agriculture as a sector for sustaining our future.

If an ECOWAS CET is imperative at this time, then we must begin to reflect on:

- What is the most important agricultural sector or sub-sector that will be affected by this partnership?
- What are the disaggregated roles of men and women involved in this trade who will be affected?
- Who are the people (especially women and youths) that will be affected by this pact and what remedy or restitution is available?
- What are the major impacts of the tariff abolishment?
- Why must we abolish or reduce tariffs especially with the emergence of EPA?
- EPA started by preaching integration; what is the dimension of such integration? Is it for regional integration in terms of sub-regional integration or the pressured so-called integration within the global economy?
- Is it possible to dwell in a CET for the sub-region and refuse the EPA?
- What then are the implications of a CET adapted to facilitate EPA?