

Synthesis Report

11th Biennial Consultative Meeting of the AfricaRice National Experts Committee (NEC) 11-12 September 2019, Cairo and Sakha Kafr El Sheikh, Egypt

INTRODUCTION

The 11th Biennial Consultative Meeting of the National Experts Committee (NEC) of the Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice) was held on the 11-12 September 2019, in Cairo and Sakha Kafr El Sheikh, Egypt, under the aegis of His Excellency Prof Dr Ezzaldin Abusteit, Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation of the Republic of Egypt, who is currently Chairman of the AfricaRice Council of Ministers (CoM).

The 11th NEC meeting was chaired by the President of the Agricultural Research Center (ARC) of Egypt, Dr Mohamed Soliman, in his capacity as Chairman of the NEC. He was assisted by the Director General (DG) of the Senegalese Institute of Agricultural Research (ISRA), Dr Alioune Fall.

The objectives of the NEC meeting were as follows: (i) Delineation of possible roles and functions of the governance organs of AfricaRice within the context of a single global rice research-for-development organization; and (ii) Establishment of a partnership framework to strengthen collaboration between Egypt's ARC, AfricaRice and the other National Agricultural Research Institutions (NARIs) of AfricaRice member countries to increase rice production in Africa.

Presence

Out of 27 AfricaRice member countries, 20 member countries were represented either by the DGs of the NARIs or by their designated representatives: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Gabon, Guinea Conakry, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Senegal, The Gambia, Togo, and Uganda. (*Annex 1: List of Participants*)

The following seven member countries were unable to attend the meeting and apologies were received: Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, Central African Republic, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone.

Observers

The observers invited to the meeting were as follows: (i) Dr Grégoire Baní, DG of the Regional Hub for Applied Research for the Development of Agricultural Systems in Central Africa (PRASAC), (ii) Dr Peter Anaadumba, FAO Representative, Head of South-South Cooperation, Africa Regional Office (iii) Dr Matthew Morell, IRRI DG (iv) ARC and AfricaRice staff members and (v) Aly Khan Jamal from Dalberg Advisors – the firm that supports AfricaRice and IRRI in the unification process.

MEETING PROCEEDINGS (DAY 1 - 11 September 2019, Cairo)

Opening ceremony

The Chairman of the NEC, Dr Mohamed Soliman, extended a warm welcome to the DGs of the NARIs of AfricaRice member countries as well as to the observers, who attended the NEC meeting. He stressed the importance given to the rice sector in all AfricaRice member countries; the need to strengthen the partnership among the NARIs of AfricaRice member countries with the support of AfricaRice, IRRI and JICA, to better address the challenges of the African rice sector, and the research and training capacity of his institution, ARC, and AfricaRice, to support the establishment of this partnership.

The DG of AfricaRice, Dr Harold Roy-Macauley, in turn welcomed the members of the NEC, observers, and all other participants. He thanked the Government of Egypt and in particular, His Excellency, the Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation as well as the ARC President of Egypt, for hosting the 11th NEC meeting.

Rapporteurs

The DGs of the NARIs of Togo, Dr Yao Lombo, and Liberia, Mrs. Paulette Findley, were appointed as rapporteurs in French and English, respectively. They were assisted by AfricaRice staff members.

Adoption of agenda and report of the 10th Biennial meeting of the NEC

The agenda of the 11th Biennial meeting was adopted without observations. The report of the 10th biennial meeting held in the Gambia in 2018 was also adopted with reservations to include a short report on the outcomes of the workshop of the Global Research Alliance (GRA) that was held in parallel to the NEC. Observations were made on the concerted intervention of CGIAR Centers in projects in member states, as part of the discussions on the 'Implementation of the recommendations of the 10th Biennial Meeting of the NEC.

Presentations

The following three presentations were made and served as a basis for discussions on the main objectives of the meeting:

- Towards the concept of the "ONE CGIAR" - by Dr Etienne Duveiller, AfricaRice Deputy Director General and Director of Research (DDG-DR)
- The AfricaRice-IRRI Alliance and Implications for AfricaRice Governance - by Dr Harold Roy-Macauley, AfricaRice DG (complemented by Dr Matthew Morell, IRRI DG)
- Framework for strengthening partnerships between the Egyptian ARC, the other NARIs in AfricaRice member countries and AfricaRice - by Dr. Raafat El-Namaky, Breeder at the Rice Research and Training Centre (RRTC) of ARC

Working Groups on the presentations

Three groups of participants worked in two sessions for in-depth discussions on the presentations, guided by terms of reference (*TOR - Annex 2*) for each session. The results of the Working Group discussions are presented in *Annex 3*.

Address by the Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation to the NEC

At the end of the first day, the Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation addressed the NEC participants. His speech focused on (i) the expertise developed by Egypt in rice research and training; (ii) the need to strengthen collaboration between African countries for economies of scale and (iii) Egypt's offer to share its expertise and experience with other countries in rice research and training through bilateral agreements.

Meeting of DGs in Closed Session

The DGs met in a closed session chaired by Egypt's Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation. The introductory remarks of the Minister focused on (i) the establishment of model farms in African countries in order to share Egypt's experiences in agriculture with African states through bilateral agreements between governments, (ii) possibilities of establishing training programs and (iii) the need to work with international research institutions such as AfricaRice to achieve the objectives. The DGs welcomed the opportunity to benefit from Egyptian expertise.

PROCEEDINGS DAY 2 – 12 SEPTEMBER 2019 IN SAKHA KAFR EL SHEIKH

Visit of the facilities and fields of the RRTC: Participants visited RRTC rice field experiments and demonstrations showcasing Egypt's research capacity, particularly in hybrid rice. The participants also had the opportunity to meet and discuss with about sixty students who were being trained at RRTC.

Presentations at RRTC

The following two presentations were made in the meeting room:

- Rice program in Egypt and on hybrid rice and capacity building activities – by Dr Mahmoud Abouyoussef, Director of the RRTC.
- Scaling hybrid rice with seed enterprises in rice hubs in the countries - by Dr Sidi Sanyang, AfricaRice Rice Sector Development Program Leader

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NEC

The results of the group work were translated into the following five recommendations, which were approved by the NEC.

Recommendation 1

The accelerated transformation of the rice sector in Africa to meet the challenges of rice self-sufficiency and reduce the rice import bill in Africa must involve the establishment and implementation of a single rice research for development program with a sufficiently strong and convincing value proposition. AfricaRice and IRRI are two main CGIAR Centers involved in rice research for development in Africa. Both are recognized by stakeholders for their work to improve the performance of the rice value chain in Africa as well as by financial partners interested in improving the rice sector. These two Centers, through their scientific products and knowledge generated by the research they conduct, in partnership with other stakeholders in the national agricultural research systems (NARS), already respond to the challenges of the rice sector in Africa. The two Centers have, therefore, significant comparative advantages, which if combined, would allow them to develop a sufficiently strong and convincing value proposition and a single research program for rice development, as well as mechanisms, providing value more money, which will help contribute significantly, efficiently and effectively to the transformation of the rice sector in Africa.

The NEC recommends that AfricaRice and IRRI establish an alliance with a single global rice research for development organization as the end point, to contribute to an accelerated transformation of the rice sector in Africa for the benefit of rice value chain actors as well as governments interested in rice production in Africa. The establishment of the single global rice research for development organization must involve a unification process that will be led by both institutions and will involve the necessary analysis and due diligence. Moreover, this single global rice development research organization to be established must fully engage with the GCIAR System Organization (CSO).

Recommendation 2

AfricaRice is the only Center in the CGIAR System Organization that has a unique governance system in which (i) the institution is owned by the governments of the member countries that are represented by the AfricaRice Council of Ministers (CoM) – which is its highest governing body, (ii) the CoM with the technical support of the NEC approves the AfricaRice Strategic Program, (iii) the Director General of AfricaRice is appointed from a member country and is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Center. This governance system of AfricaRice has advantages, especially in terms of political influence, through the recognition of the institution's actions by member states. The NEC believes that this situation could bring added value to the functioning of the single global rice research for development organization, particularly as regards the influence of African governments, to facilitate the implementation of the rice transformation agenda in Africa.

The NEC recommends that AfricaRice should ensure that in the unification process, the single global rice research for development organization will maintain a strong African identity with the following characteristics : (i) an African component that will maintain the AfricaRice brand, African leadership, and the CoM as the main oversight and advisory body for Africa, in structuring the global organization; (ii) a single and strong African strategy and program that will meet the transformational needs of the rice sector in Africa, (iii) approval of the African strategy and program by AfricaRice COM.

Recommendation 3

The research strategy and agenda of the global rice research for development organization should be relevant to the current challenges and transformational needs of the rice sector, including the widening gap between local production and demand for rice in Africa and the sub-optimal performance of the rice value chain in Africa.

The NEC recommends that AfricaRice should ensure that the research strategy and agenda of the global rice research for development organization address the needs of the transformation of the rice sector by (i) drawing on new economies of scale in research for development to strengthen the research capacity of NARIs, (ii) improving the livelihoods of small farmers and creating opportunities for youth and empowering women in rural communities; iii) reducing member countries' rice import bills.

Recommendation 4

The establishment and implementation of a strategy and research program for rice development requires significant investments for it to contribute effectively and efficiently to the accelerated transformation of the rice sector in Africa.

The NEC recommends that international investors and governments of AfricaRice member-states commit themselves to the establishment of a common funding facility with

sufficient and sustained funding to ensure (i) the proper functioning of the global rice research for development organization, (ii) the proper functioning of NARS partners and (iii) the optimal delivery of outputs, outcomes and impacts related to the transformation of the rice sector in Africa.

Recommendation 5

It is recognized that efficient and effective institutional and programmatic partnerships could be essential to increase rice production and improve rice value chains at a pace that will significantly reduce the widening gap between rice production by African countries and the consumption rates and rice import bills for the benefit of governments and rice value chain actors.

The NEC recommends that NARIs in AfricaRice member countries, based on comparative advantages, establish among themselves and with technical inputs from AfricaRice, research and training partnership mechanisms to increase rice production and improve the performance of the rice value chain in AfricaRice member countries.

MOTION OF THANKS

Thanking the Government and people of Egypt

The NEC recommended a special motion of thanks to the Government and people of Egypt for their warm welcome to the participants, the excellent visit to the Rice Research and Training Center (RRTC) of ARC, Kafr El Sheikh, and the excellent facilities made available to the organizers during the 11th NEC meeting.

Congratulations to the Director General of AfricaRice and his staff

The NEC noted the excellent work done by AfricaRice to raise awareness among the NEC members on (i) the ongoing developments at the level of the CGIAR System Organization, (ii) progress made on the unification process between AfricaRice and IRRI, (iii) ideas for a partnership framework that could be put in place that will strengthen relations among AfricaRice member countries.

Done on 12 September 2019 in Sakha Kafr El Sheikh, Egypt
The AfricaRice National Experts Committee



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