

SYNTHESIS REPORT

10th Biennial Consultative Meeting of the AfricaRice National Experts Committee (NEC) 20 September 2017, Serrekunda, The Gambia

INTRODUCTION

The 10th Biennial Consultative Meeting of the AfricaRice National Experts Committee (NEC) was organized on 20 September 2017, in Serrekunda, the Gambia, under the aegis of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of The Gambia. The meeting was chaired by the Director General (DG) of the Senegalese Institute of Agricultural Research (ISRA), Dr Alioune Fall, as Senegal currently holds the Chairmanship of AfricaRice.

The 10th NEC meeting was held in conjunction with the Preliminary Workshop of the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases (GRA), which followed immediately after the NEC meeting, on 21 September 2017. Five members of the GRA delegation – Japan (current GRA Chair), France, New Zealand, Switzerland and the Netherlands – were in attendance.

The main objectives of the NEC meeting were as follows: (1) examine the status of implementation of recommendations of the 9th Biennial Consultative Meeting of the NEC; (2) review AfricaRice research for development activities since the 30th Ordinary meeting of the Council of Ministers of AfricaRice, held in Kampala, Uganda, on the 22 and 23 August 2016, with focus on the following key issues:

- (i) Status of payment of member country contributions;
- (ii) Enhancing the participation of AfricaRice and partners in country investment programs;
- (iii) Strengthening the rice seed value chains in member countries;
- (iv) Capacity development needs of National Agricultural Research Institutions (NARI), with respect to the rice value chains.

The expected output of the meeting are recommendations related to the four issues mentioned above, which will help AfricaRice and its partners enhance their performance to better respond to challenges of the rice sector in member countries.

PRESENCE

Member States

The following 23 member countries were present: Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo and Uganda.

Apologies were received from the following three countries that were unable to attend the meeting: Burkina Faso, Egypt, and Nigeria.

Observers

Representatives of the following four countries (non –member) attended as observers: Malawi, Namibia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Representatives of donor agencies, research and development partners, farmers' organization and the private sector were also in attendance, and these include: FAO, AfDB, IFAD, CORAF/WECARD, CIRAD, INRA, Global Research Alliance (GRA), GAN-LOGIS Enterprise, and ROPPA.

PROCEEDINGS

Opening ceremony

The Opening Ceremony was attended by four Ministers of the Republic of The Gambia: Hon. Omar Amadou Jallow, Minister of Agriculture (Titular Ministry of AfricaRice in the Gambia); Hon. Amadou Sanneh, Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs; Hon. Lamin B. Dibba, Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources, and Hon. James Gomez, Minister of Fisheries and Water Resources.

The Chair of NEC, Dr Alioune Fall, in welcoming participants to the meeting, highlighted the growing importance of the rice sector in all AfricaRice member countries, and, therefore, the increasing relevance of AfricaRice as an institution mandated by its member states to boost the rice sector. He described the role of NEC, which is the technical arm of the Council of Ministers of AfricaRice, as one of ensuring that the strategic vision of AfricaRice, adopted by the COM, is appropriately implemented. On behalf of the NEC, he thanked the DG of the NARI of The Gambia, Dr Ansumana Jarju, for kindly accepting to take part in the organization of the NEC meeting in The Gambia.

The DG of AfricaRice, Dr Harold Roy-Macauley, also extended a warm welcome to all the participants, and thanked the government of The Gambia, particularly the Honorable Minister of Agriculture, for agreeing to host the 10th NEC meeting.

The 10th NEC meeting was officially opened by the Hon. Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of The Gambia. In his opening address, the Honorable Minister highlighted the important role that AfricaRice has played in supporting The Gambia, especially in the introduction in The Gambia of improved rice technologies and capacity development of rice value chain actors. He advocated for continued support to and the demonstration of strong ownership of AfricaRice, which he reminded participants, is an important and common tool of member countries. He concluded by a strong endorsement of the application of Mozambique to join AfricaRice and advised the NEC to support the application.

Adoption of the Agenda

The Agenda was adopted with modifications, which included suppression of two agenda items that were integrated into other agenda items and adjustment of timelines.

Rapporteurs

The DGs of Chad and Sierra Leone, Drs Koye and Kargbo, were selected as French and English rapporteurs, respectively. They were supported by AfricaRice Staff members, Savitri Mohapatra and Karim Traore.

Presentations

The following presentations, highlighting important issues to be discussed, were made:

- Status of implementation of recommendations of the 9th NEC Meeting, by AfricaRice Director of Strategic Partnerships, Dr Samuel Bruce-Oliver;

- Activities and achievements of AfricaRice since the 30th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers of AfricaRice held in Kampala, Uganda, 22 – 23 August 2016, by the DG of AfricaRice, Dr Harold Roy-Macauley;
- Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) and plans to achieve rice self-sufficiency in Africa, by the AfDB Director of Agriculture and Agro-Industry, Dr Chiji Ojukwu;
- Continental investment plan for enhancing rice self-sufficiency in Africa (CIPRISSA) by the Advisor to the DG of AfricaRice, Dr Marcel Nwalozie;
- Rice seed value chain and Public-Private Partnership model and plans for rice seed supplies, by AfricaRice Seed System Specialist, Dr Amadou Beye;
- New Capacity Development initiative of rice value chain actors and involvement of NARIs by AfricaRice Head of Capacity Development, Dr Khady Nani Drame

A statement was made by the IFAD Director for West Africa, Dr Ides de Villebois, on opportunities for AfricaRice and national programs that exist, in strengthening their collaboration with IFAD country projects.

Recommendations

The discussions that ensued resulted in the 10th NEC making a set of recommendations, which are geared towards improvement of the Center's performance. At the end, the meeting also passed two motions.

1. Carry out strong advocacy to member state authorities for payment of annual membership dues and arrears

In view of the precarious financial situation of AfricaRice, mainly due to decline in funding level, especially from the CGIAR, and in order to accelerate payment of annual membership dues and arrears, and to demonstrate ownership by member states, the NEC recommended that:

- (i) One of the resolutions of the COM meeting held in Kampala, Uganda, in August 2016, was that Management should prepare an advocacy tool for facilitating advocacy for payment of country contributions and arrears. AfricaRice management should transmit to the DGs of NARIs of members states country factsheets, which it is developing for every member country, and which comprise information on benefits derived by member countries from partnering with AfricaRice, in terms of knowledge products and services, funding of research and development activities, capacity development programs for research scientists as well as information on status of membership contribution. This document can be used by the DGs to lobby their respective government officials including titular Ministers and Ministers of Finance, to pay country contributions and arrears due to AfricaRice by 31 December 2017.
- (ii) AfricaRice and national partners should engage with farmers' organizations to assist in such advocacy efforts.

2. Integrate the activities of Africa-wide Rice Task Forces, Rice Sector Development Hubs and Innovation Platforms (rice impact infrastructure) into country investment projects

Recognizing the need to increase the effectiveness and sustain the activities of the impact infrastructure put in place by AfricaRice, which helps the rice stakeholders to come together and generate, evaluate and scale out innovation along the rice value chain, and the opportunities that exist for this within

country development projects, the NEC recommended that AfricaRice and their partners in member states should ensure that these important mechanisms be integrated into country investment projects.

3. Provide strong support to the implementation of the TAAT program and establishment of the continental investment plan on rice self-sufficiency in Africa (CIPRiSSA)

The NEC affirmed the potential value of the following initiatives:

- (i) The African Development Bank-funded program on Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT), which aims at enhancing the dissemination of scalable technologies in countries;
- (ii) CIPRiSSA, a policy support tool developed by AfricaRice and its national partners to provide information on priority areas for investment along the rice value chain, investment levels, the returns of investment, private sector involvement and policies, which are needed to assist African countries in achieving rice self-sufficiency by 2025, and reduce the prevailing huge import bills,

In cognizance of these, the NEC recommended that:

- (i) Member countries should be proactive in approaching the AfDB in order to benefit from the TAAT resources;
- (ii) Member countries should engage with AfricaRice and take ownership of CIPRiSSA in order to reach their rice self-sufficiency objectives by 2025;
- (iii) Member countries, with the support of AfricaRice, should express their interest to development partners and donors for supporting the implementation of these two initiatives.

4. Provide strong support to member states to enhance the performance of the rice seed value chain

The resourcing of quality seed in sufficient quantities continues to be a major bottleneck for countries. The NEC recommended that:

- (i) AfricaRice should sensitize member countries on the public-private partnerships model presented at the 10th NEC meeting and should encourage each country to test the model for its suitability to specific conditions of each country;
- (ii) AfricaRice should provide technical support to member countries for making the rice seed value chain more efficient, effective, and sustainable;
- (iii) AfricaRice in partnership with national and regional institutions including the National Centers of Specialization (NCS) and Regional Centers of Excellence (RCE) on rice, established within the framework of the World Bank and COFAF/WECARD facilitated and coordinated West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP), should jointly strengthen their efforts to encourage harmony and synergy among the various players in the rice seed value chain.

5. Provide support in enhancing capacity development of rice value chain actors in member states

In view of the urgent need to pursue enhancing capacity development of rice value chain actors, the NEC recommended that AfricaRice and its national partners should:

- (i) Explore integrating capacity development activities within country investment programs;

- (ii) Leverage resources by linking up with the youth employment programs of development partners, such as AfDB and AGRA among others;
- (iii) Enhance reporting, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms to capture in-country learning transfer and spillover effects.

Motions

Motion 1: Congratulations to AfricaRice Director General and staff

The NEC noted the excellent work done by AfricaRice in generating and providing rice knowledge, products and services to its member countries despite the financial challenges encountered; and recommended that the DG and the staff members of AfricaRice be congratulated.

Motion2: Thanks to the Government and people of The Gambia

The NEC recommended a special vote of thanks to the Government and people of The Gambia for their warm hospitality extended to all the dignitaries and participants, and also for the excellent facilities and assistance offered to the organizers of the 10th NEC meeting.

Done in Banjul, 21 September 2017

The AfricaRice National Experts Committee