

The promise of perennial rice to accelerate rice self-sufficiency in Africa while reducing production costs and GHG emissions

Speaker: Prof. Erik J. Sacks, University of Illinois, USA

Professor Erik Sacks is a geneticist and plant breeder with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

A native New Yorker, he obtained his BS from Cornell University. His graduate studies were at UC Davis, where he obtained an MS in horticulture and a PhD in genetics, having conducted research on the genetics of fruit color in strawberry and interspecific crossability in tomato.

After post-docs at the Ohio State University's OARDC in Wooster and back at UC Davis, he landed his first job at the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines, leading the Perennial Upland Rice project. Subsequently, he worked at HortResearch in New Zealand on blueberries, at USDA-ARS in Mississippi on cotton and at Mendel Biotechnology Inc on Miscanthus, before joining the faculty of the University of Illinois in 2010.

Major themes of his research have been on the use of crop wild relatives, germplasm conservation and the development of new crops. His lab currently works on Miscanthus, sugarcane and rice.

