

Improved management practices

- Participants from Gabon have benefited from a series of training workshops on integrated rice management (IRM), which aim to enrich researchers' and technicians' knowledge of IRM. This will help to bridge gaps that currently exist between actual farmers' yields and attainable yields through better crop management, and to fully exploit the potential of improved varieties.
- AfricaRice's manuals on IRM, based on the participatory learning and action-research (PLAR) approach developed by the Center, were used by the facilitators. Participants were also exposed to AfricaRice's training videos and radio programs.
- As part of a donor-funded project in 2014, AfricaRice procured and delivered to Gabon two power tillers, two reapers, two rice milling machines, and two threshers for use by stakeholders in the rice sector development hubs.

Policy advice

- The policy of the government is focused on improving domestic rice production to reduce Gabon's dependence on imports. National partners from Gabon have participated in the training courses of the AfricaRice-coordinated Policy Task Force for research on policy advice and impact assessment.

Africa-wide rice task force activities

- Gabon has been an active member and benefited from the activities and funding of the six Africa-wide Rice Task Forces coordinated by AfricaRice – Breeding, Agronomy, Gender, Mechanization, Policy, and Processing & Value Addition.
- The Task Forces have provided a unique opportunity for Gabon's researchers to interact and partner with their counterparts from other AfricaRice member countries.
- Funds contributed to Gabon through the Task Forces have complemented government allocations significantly and ensured the continuation of research and the training of scientists and value chain actors.

Rice Hubs and Innovation Platforms

- Two rice sector development hubs have been identified by ONADER - Province Ngounié (upland/lowland) and Province Nyanga (upland/lowland).
- The rice hubs serve as field laboratories where research outputs and products are being tested, adapted and integrated – with feedback provided to researchers on technology performance.

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Gabon - AfricaRice Partnership

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- ▶ Gabon joined AfricaRice (ex-WARDA) in 2009.
- ▶ The Office national du développement rural (ONADER) is one of the most important national partners of AfricaRice.
- ▶ As a member country, Gabon takes part in statutory meetings of the AfricaRice Council of Ministers, which is the Center's highest governing body.
- ▶ Gabon is also a member of the AfricaRice National Experts Committee.

“Rice is global and it is big business. Rice is life in Africa.”
 -- Dr Harold Roy-Macauley,
 AfricaRice Director General



Contributions by AfricaRice to Gabon

- ▶ Between 2010 and 2016, Gabon has benefited from 2 donor-funded projects, coordinated by AfricaRice.
- ▶ AfricaRice, in partnership with ONADER, has contributed to boosting Gabon's rice sector in terms of policy and technical advice, improved seed, cropping practices and processing technologies, capacity development and support to rice value chain development.

Capacity strengthening

- ▶ Between 2009 and 2016, 2 PhD and 1 MSc scholars from Gabon were trained. About 30 researchers and value chain actors from Gabon have participated in group training workshops, strengthening the country's capacity for rice research and development.

IMPORTANCE OF RICE IN GABON

Rice is widely consumed in urban areas in Gabon, which is the smallest rice-producing country in the Central African sub-region. There is great potential for rice cultivation in Gabon because the country has large flood plains and lowlands suitable for rice production and an annual precipitation exceeding 2,000 mm.

Rice has been grown primarily in the area around Tchibanga in southwestern Gabon. Although the area under rice cultivation is very small, paddy yield (2.7 t/ha in 2014) is among the highest in the sub-region.

However, more than 95% of the rice available in Gabon is imported. The government is therefore prioritizing rural development and is promoting the cultivation of upland rice as well as focusing on the development of rice irrigation schemes under its food security strategy. It plans to have at least 5 ha of rice in every province under rice cultivation.

Within Gabon's Emergency Strategic Plan, rice is a strategic crop. As part of this, the government has been promoting rice cultivation by developing infrastructure. For instance, it has developed a rice irrigation scheme of 3,500 ha with the support of the African Development Bank to help rice farmers grow improved rice varieties, including NERICA varieties.

After Gabon became a member of AfricaRice in 2009, ONADER has benefitted from several collaborative research activities. In line with Gabon's strategy to boost rice production, AfricaRice and ONADER have been collaborating to develop improved rice varieties and accompanying technologies to increase rice productivity in the country.

Rice Statistics for Selected Indicators

Source: FAOSTAT <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/QC> (accessed May 2017)

Indicator	2014	2015	2016	Average 2001-2010	Annual growth rate, 2001-2010 (%)
Paddy production (t)	1,646	1,712	1,781	1,206	3.2
Area (ha)	600	611	622	514.8	1.0
Yield (t/ha)	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.3	2.2
Consumption (t)	87,077	90,432	93,917	55,999	3.3
Import (t)	63,161	64,373	65,607	50,522	1.21

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Gabon-AfricaRice Partnership: Achievements and Impacts

Improved varieties

- With technical support from AfricaRice, ONADER promoted participatory variety selection (PVS) for upland and lowland NERICA varieties.
- Total area covered by NERICA varieties in Gabon increased from about 80 ha in 2009 to about 100 ha in 2013.
- More than 20 farmers were trained in rice seed production and certification. In 2014, Gabon produced 4.5 t of certified seed of seven varieties (NERICA 1, NERICA 4, NERICA 11, NERICA 12, NERICA 14, and NERICA 17) which were distributed to 180 farmers.