

For the conference itself, the organizing committee received a total of 430 abstracts for consideration, out of which 94 papers and 30 posters were selected for presentation. Many interesting presentations, discussions, and posters were made throughout the conference and these covered six sub-themes which were structured around two main plenary sessions and sixteen (16) parallel sessions.

Major presentations were made during the plenary sessions and noted as follows:

- Prof. Willis Oluoch-Kosura: 'Increasing Productivity and Competitiveness in African Agriculture and the role of Agricultural Economists';
- Dr Monty Jones. Keynote Address: 'Agricultural Growth, Poverty Reduction and Millennium Development Goals in Africa.
- Keijiro Otsuka: 'Advancing Technical Change in African Agriculture: Public Policy Issues and Strategic Choices'. RIPS/FASID/IAAE.

### Centers responsible for NRM Programs in WCA agree their plans

Through the Accra Office of the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the CG Centers and the related Challenge programs met in Accra (Ghana) on 17–20 April 2007 to discuss their joint actions. The Inland Valley Consortium (IVC) and the Africa Rice Center (WARDA) were present. The Coordinator of the Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Program (based in the FARA office in Accra) and the Basin Coordinator for the Challenge Program on Water and Food (CPW & F) were present. The Brazilian Research Organization's (Embrapa) representation in Accra also attended the meeting.

Three (3) major Natural Resources Management Research Programs with a minimum of four (4) outputs have been agreed by the CGIAR Centers in West and Central Africa. The scientists involved agreed on a log frame and decided to come together to write a proposal on climate change so that they can collectively look for funding through the REPCA. The existing projects were modified to capture the collective interest of the Centers. Areas of synergies between the SSA CP and the CPW & F were clearly mapped out.

### Message from the Coordinator

The second part of the year has witnessed many activities which have impacted positively on the Regional Plan for WCA. The challenge still remains of how to attract enough funds to carry out the proposed research activities.

In August the Coordination office was able to re-submit a revised Plan to the Science Council through the Alliance Office. The Science Council re-iterated that because the Regional Plans are not considered as Medium Term Plans (MTPs) they did not evaluate the scientific content of the manuscript presented. Therefore, WCA (and ESA) are expected to develop scientifically-sound MTPs for submission and evaluation by March next 2008.

The Alliance Office was able to raise \$50,000 from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). We have proposed to use the funds to support field research activities which were proposed by the Natural Resources management (NRM) Group, and those working on germplasm conservation, management and use, as well as the proposed project on integrated rice-fruit and vegetables in the Gaya region of Niger led by ICRISAT. Understandably, because the funds arrived late, the commencement of work has been re-programmed for January 2008. CIDA is inviting the coordination office to identify and submit fresh proposals for consideration and funding for WCA. This is very positive and we are expected to pursue this more vigorously.

In the latter part of the year the Plan was presented at many important fora. And the following are noted:

1. June 2007: CIAT-IRRI-WARDA Alignment Meeting
2. July 2007: External Review Panel on the EU-funded Projects
3. August 2007: African Association of Agric. Economists Meeting, Accra, Ghana.
4. September 2007: Executive and Finance Committee (EFC) of the WARDA Board of Trustees, Abuja, Nigeria
5. September 2007: National Executive Committee (NEC) and WARDA Council of Ministers, Abuja, Nigeria.

Funding proposals are being sent to the European Union through the Alliance office for the coordination unit to be adequately resourced so as to be able to carry out its functions. While it is time to thank all and sundry for their contributions towards the realization of the plan, it is also important to remind you that more challenges lie ahead of us in the years to come

### Implementation Timelines for 2007

| Date           | Proposed Program  | Status                  |
|----------------|---|-------------------------|
| January 2007   | Identification of interim Coordinator, and interaction with focal persons   | Achieved                |
| February 2007  | Letters to FARA and CORAF to serve on SC  | Achieved                |
| February 2007  | Letters to Focal Persons to interact with respective Centers on evolving rolling MTPs   | Achieved                |
| March 2007     | Briefing WARDA Board of Trustees (BOT)  | Achieved                |
| March 2007     | Projects 2, 3 and 4 to meet and fine-tune projects and develop log frames   | Delayed                 |
| March 2007     | Coordination meeting on identification and formation and briefing of Technical Committee  | Delayed                 |
| April 2007     | Projects 1a and 5c commencement of work   | Achieved                |
| May 2007       | Synthesis and finalizing MTP for Alliance Executive<br>• Briefing CORAF AGM (Abidjan)<br>• Meeting of The Steering Committee to approve the Technical Committee | No CORAF AGM took place |
| June 2007      | Side Event at FARA AGM  | Achieved                |
| June 2007      | Submission of MTP document to SC  | Achieved                |
| July 2007      | Briefing of in-house scientists (IITA, WARDA and Bioversity) on MTP progress<br>Briefing All Africa Agric Economists Association (Accra)                        | Outstanding             |
| August 2007    | Briefing IITA and other Ibadan staff on MTP processes   | Achieved                |
| September 2007 | Task Forces/Technical committee and SC Meeting  | Outstanding             |
| October 2007   | Annual Report Writing and Preparations for AGM  | Outstanding             |
| November 2007  | Attend AGM (China) and Annual Report writing  |                         |
| December 2007  |   |                         |

Alliance Office  
C/o International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)  
Via del Serafico, 200, 00142 Rome Italy Tel:06 54591 (switchboard)  
Chief Alliance Officer: Anne-Marie Izac; Sr. Program Officer: Kerry Wright Platais  
Email: a.izac@cgiar.org ; k.platais@cgiar.org



## CGIAR Regional Plan for Collective Action in West & Central Africa

**Alliance**  
of the CGIAR Centers

Vol. 2, February 2008

c/o Africa Rice Center (WARDA)  
01 BP 2031, Cotonou, Benin  
Tel: (+229) 21 35 01 88  
Fax: (+229) 21 35 05 56  
s.keya@cgiar.org or l.narteh@cgiar.org

## FARA endorses the Regional Plans for Collective Action

Both Regional Plans for Collective Action in West and Central Africa and in Eastern and Southern Africa have received the blessing of the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA). The Alliance Office was officially notified on 16 July 2007 by FARA's Executive Director Dr Monty Jones that "FARA is pleased to endorse the two CGIAR Regional Plans for Collective Action as instruments that are conducive to promoting the competitiveness and productivity of African agriculture as set out in the Comprehensive African Agricultural Program (CAADP) Pillar IV and as being in compliance with the spirit of the Framework for African Productivity (FAAP)."

Centers in the ESA and WCA regions had worked over the previous two years to identify areas where the various CGIAR Centers operating in Africa could create synergies and complementarities in their programs. The Executive Director noted that FARA recognized that in the past it had not always been possible for the CGIAR Centers to deliver optimally because they had tended to be isolated from the mainstream African agenda for agricultural research for development. This had been recognized by the Centers themselves, as a result of the Inter-academy council (IAC) Study and the Sub-Saharan Africa Task Force of the CGIAR.

WARDA, as the coordinating center for the WCA Regional Plan, is pleased with the declaration by FARA. From the coordination office we note that, while the endorsement fortifies the Centers' resolve to clearly link their programs and work in harmony together in Africa, we are equally challenged by the new opportunities brought by this endorsement by FARA. As Dr Jones noted, "now that there are clear African priorities set at national, sub-regional and regional levels by the NARS, Sub-Regional Organizations (SROs) and FARA, respectively, the CGIAR Centers are seeking to align themselves with the African agenda through the Regional Plans for Collective Action in Eastern and Southern Africa and in West and Central Africa, respectively. FARA notes that these Regional Plans represent a credible advance in the CGIAR's commitment to African priorities, through collective action initiated to specifically address regional priorities". The coordination unit congratulates all of the centers whose continued efforts supported the development of the Plans up to this stage.

### CAADP and FAAP provide opportunities for better integration of regional research

FARA has been mandated by the African Union (AU) and AU-NEPAD to take the lead in developing a framework for achieving the goals and objectives of Pillar IV of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP). The Framework for African Agricultural Productivity (FAAP), developed by FARA, provided principles and guidelines for implementing CAADP Pillar IV to strengthen agricultural knowledge systems that can deliver profitable and sustainable technologies. FARA has set a priority in ensuring that a paradigm shift takes place, away from linear approaches to technology generation and delivery towards more truly integrated agricultural research approaches that work with the diversity of stakeholders that exist in Africa, and employing principles of subsidiarity. FARA recognizes that the CGIAR Centers are making substantial contributions to African agricultural development through research and capacity building.

FAAP sets out nine principles that, if adopted, will lead to an evolution in and reform of agricultural research and related services. It identifies a number of areas in which the CGIAR centers can make significant contributions. These include:

- Bringing best practices, data, knowledge and expertise from other regions of the world to bear on African issues.
- Providing research-based, relevant information and data for training, and curricula and course development.
- Providing specialized expertise in cutting-edge sciences including biosciences, social sciences and policy analysis.

- Creating critical mass and building capacity through collaborative research.
- Enabling cross-country and cross-continent replications and comparisons to inform African research and development.

The Coordination Unit thanks FARA and Dr Monty Jones for the kind gesture, and expects that in the years ahead it should be possible to derive fruitful results from this endorsement, through fund raising, information sharing, capacity development and constructive engagement with our constituents.

## Regional Plans discussed at 3rd FARA General Assembly

Notes from the FARA GA Meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, 10–16 June, 2007.

1. **CGIAR Booth:** The booths were displayed around the perimeter of the lunchtime dining hall. The CGIAR booth was honored by the visit of the Minister of Agriculture from South Africa, who was received by Joachim Voss and a delegation of CGIAR scientists from participating Centers. All CGIAR Centers present in Johannesburg participated in this collective action. Particular thanks are due to Liz Ogutu (ILRI), who manned the CGIAR booth throughout, Grace Ndungu (ILRI), who set it up, and Lance Narteh (WARDA) who also helped.
2. **Regional Plans:** The Regional Plans were presented in one of the main plenary sessions by Dennis Garrity (see attached file) and his presentation was very well received. Additionally, presentations/interventions on the Regional Plan were requested during the SSA-CP side session, and the FARA-Bioversity ABIA side session.
3. **FARA and the Regional Plans:** Dr Monty Jones and Ralph von Kaufmann from FARA met with a CGIAR delegation consisting of the DGs of ILRI, ICRAF and CIAT, as well as Bruce Scott and Ravi Prabhu (Regional Plan Coordinator for ESA) to discuss future collaboration. This was a very constructive meeting during which FARA indicated its agreement in principle to endorsing the Regional Plans, and even seeking support for them from AU/NEPAD. The possibility of FARA membership of these two bodies was also discussed. On the whole, relations with the CG Centers were assessed as being generally positive.
4. **Continued collaboration between ESA and WCA Regional Plans:** the Directors General of WARDA, ILRI, ICRAF, Mohamed Bakarr, Bruce Scott, Lawrence Narteh (Regional Plan Coordinator for WCA) and Ravi Prabhu had a lunch meeting on collaboration across the two Regional Plans. The WCA process and governance is quite different from that of ESA. The WCA plan is both more formal and is more oriented to the single SRO CORAF with which it deals, and to System Priorities. In ESA, it is much less formal and more oriented towards the CAADP Pillar IV (and the system priorities). Accordingly, the DG of WARDA Dr Papa Seck felt it would be useful if Dr Prabhu were to visit Cotonou to understand the WCA approach. The need for additional funding for the Regional Plans was also discussed.

On the whole, FARA week was a very useful platform for discussion of a more political/corporate nature. It would seem that there is a gap with respect to a science-oriented meeting that addresses the big development challenges/opportunities of the region.

## Uniting to address rice research In Africa

The importance of rice research and development in contributing to attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was highlighted when the three CGIAR Centers working on rice met on 27–29 June 2007, in Cotonou, Benin. The meeting, which attracted forty-four (44) rice research scientists, principally from the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and Africa Rice Center (WARDA), ended with a signed declaration by the three centers to forge closer collaboration on working in Africa. The three Centers and partners proposed the formation of the Sub-Saharan Africa Rice Consortium (SARC) that will be the implementing mechanism for the programmatically-aligned rice agenda.

The leaders at the meeting noted that there was a need to collectively align their research and development programs, given that the current world rice situation has grave implications for sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

The following factors were cited as the main reasons why SSA needs to strive for higher rice production.

- World rice reserves are at the lowest level since 1983–84
- World rice prices are rising and are expected to double in the next couple of years
- Africa accounts for only 13% of the world population, but 32% of world rice imports
- About 40% of SSA's demand for rice is being met by imports
- The new consortium (SARC) has been formed to serve as the platform by which the three centers can collectively execute the rice research and development agenda in Africa.
- The objectives of SARC are to:
  - Maximize the level of coordination among the three Centers and their interaction with NARES in the rice sector in Africa
  - Provide better access of farmers to improved seeds and technologies
  - Develop a critical mass of trained scientists, thereby enhancing Africa's capacity in rice research
  - Improve knowledge sharing and training
  - Achieve increased economies of scale through reduced transaction costs in rice research in Africa and globally
  - Maximize possible spillover benefits in Asia and Latin America in terms of germplasm use.

The three Deputy Director Generals (DDGs) highlighted the strategic role rice plays in the economies of African countries. For his part Dr Ren Wang (the then DDG, Research of IRRI) noted that the precarious nature of the international rice market was sufficient reason why major rice consumers should strive to meet their consumption needs through local production. He added that declining soil fertility and the looming water crisis as a result of climate change and urbanization will also add to this urgency for increased rice production by major rice consumers. He told the meeting that IRRI's Medium Term Plan (MTP) specifically aims to increase rice production by 30% in East and Southern Africa (ESA) within 10 years. Dr F. Correa of CIAT noted that rice is a fairly new staple in Latin American countries (LAC), with per capita consumption approaching 30 kg/per person in year 2000. However, the benefits of rice to producers and consumers in LAC have been estimated at more than USD 800 million per annum. CIAT has contributed immensely to the success of the rice sector in LAC because, out of 400 rice varieties released in Latin America in the past 35 years, at least 80% carry CIAT's rice germplasm.

Five main areas of rice research and development were identified for consortium activities. These are:

1. Plant Breeding
2. Post-harvest Technologies
3. Seed Systems and Extension
4. Socioeconomics and Policy Support, and
5. Natural Resource Management.

A communiqué was issued by the three Directors General (August 2007) to this effect.

## Creating Nodal Centers of Excellence in WCA

Dr Raymond Vodouhe, the West Africa Coordinator of Bioversity International based in Cotonou, Benin, presented a paper entitled 'Establishing a Regional Collaboration Mechanism for Plant Genetic Resources Management in West and Central Africa' to a meeting of 37 steering committee members drawn from West and Central Africa. Representatives of Uganda and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) were also present.

They met on 23–25 April 2007 under the auspices of the African Rice Initiative (ARI), based in WARDA, which is leading the development and dissemination of the seed of the NERICA rice varieties. The presentation was aimed at fostering closer working relations with the core group of scientists working on genetic resources conservation in West and Central Africa, so that members better appreciate the roles they have to play in the Regional Plans for West and Central Africa.

Dr Vodouhe traced the formation of the Genetic Resources Network for West and Central Africa (GRENEWCA) in Ibadan, Nigeria (2004) by CORAF/WECARD in collaboration with IPGRI/Bioversity, FAO and other CG Centres (IITA, WARDA, ICRAF, ICRAF, ILRI etc. He explained that the Regional Plan for Collective Action (WCA) was to be used as the platform for the conservation and enhancement of genetic diversity and also to be linked with the CGIAR Challenge Programmes in WCA. The Nodal Centres of Excellence (NCE) would be used to strengthen the partnership between CG Centres and National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) with respect to planning and implementation of genetic resources use and conservation.

The Bioversity Coordinator noted that in WCA:

- Gene-banking capacity, both in terms of physical and human resources in various countries in the sub-region, is generally weak
- That very few countries in the sub-region are able to make significant commitments towards supporting research, conservation and use of genetic resources
- Consequently, genetic resources are being lost (from fields, farms and gene banks) at a fast rate
- Countries of the sub-region are not benefiting optimally from their rich and diverse genetic resources due to lack of appropriate policies, regulatory instruments, and resources

It was for these reasons that regional conferences (Ibadan and Ouagadougou) were organized and then recommended the establishment of a regional mechanism to arrest the genetic erosion in the sub region by sharing responsibility for plant genetic resources management among countries.

GRENEWCA will assist national plant genetic resources (PGR) programs in WCA in the conservation and documentation of their collections, train national scientists and technicians in PGR management, and support the development of national policies for PGR conservation and use.

In conclusion, Dr Vodouhe noted that today's socio-political environment in West and Central Africa is conducive for the initiation of the idea of Nodal Centers for Excellence. He was

happy that regional initiatives were taking place to support research and agricultural development (NEPAD, FARA, CORAF strategy etc. Today, policymakers in many countries are convinced of the importance of agro-biodiversity (ABD) for food security, health and economy development. He sought the continued support and close collaboration of the principal institutions such as FARA, ECOWAS, CEMAC, CORAF/WECARD, NARS and the CG Centers represented.

## West Africa Plan submitted to the Science Council

Africa Rice Center (WARDA) submitted the final Regional Plan for Collective Action in West and Central Africa to the Science Council on 15 August 2007 on behalf of the 13 Centers collaborating on the WCA Plan.

It had been fully revised following the earlier Science Council comments in July 2006 and had further benefited from renewed consultation with a wide range of stakeholders in West and Central Africa.

In a cover note, WARDA noted that the plan consolidated five Programs and 15 aligned Projects, which are closely aligned with CGIAR System Priorities. It followed a fully consultative process undertaken in close collaboration with collaborating CGIAR Centers. In the interim, the WCA research agenda had been developed based on the System Priorities.

The revised strategic plan of FARA and the priorities of the sub-regional organizations including CORAF/WECARD were fully taken into account as a result of consultation and their enthusiastic participation in the development process for the Regional Plan. Indeed the process of consultation brought the CGIAR Centers into closer contact with new partners and strengthened existing relationships, in particular with FARA. Involvement in the process of the ESA REPCA further enhanced the WARDA links with ASARECA.

In tandem with the Regional Plan discussions, WARDA–IRRI–CIAT have engaged in scientific program alignment discussions aimed at improving the efficiency of research into rice-related topics in Africa. This commodity focus alignment has shown tangible steps in both ESA and WCA. A joint IRRI–WARDA project amounting to \$1.5m for ESA has been approved for implementation starting in 2008. Another joint IRRI–WARDA project funded by the Gatsby Foundation (GBP 85,000) on rice germplasm collection will cover four ESA countries.

## Regional Plans presented at AAAE2.

The Coordinator for the West and Central Africa (WCA) Secretariat Dr Lawrence Narteh made a presentation on the trends and achievements of the Regional Plan in Africa at the second African Association of Agricultural Economists in Accra, Ghana on 20–22 August 2007.

The joint presentation on 'Progress and Implementation of SSA Regional Plans' was made on behalf of Drs Ravi Prabhu (ESA) and Shellemiah Keya (WCA). The WCA coordinator said the Plan was a means by which the CG Centers could respond to current demands and a mechanism by which Centers in Africa could act in unison. The programmatic structures for the Plans and the basic differences and similarities between the ESA and WCA Plans were discussed. The meeting was told that fund raising strategies were being unfolded and that Africa's economists were expected to play important roles in all major programs, for which the Coordinator called for their support. Their focal point for the WCA plan was announced as Dr Ousemane Badiane (IFPRI).