



ON DIT quoi?

A newsletter from Africa Rice Center (WARDA)

Charting the research agenda

The Research Days of the Africa Rice Center (WARDA) for 2008 were held, 12–15 November, at the Cotonou Headquarters. Scientists from Cotonou, Ibadan, St Louis and Bouake took active part in this annual research review and planning meeting.

Special invitees included the Chair of the WARDA Board Program Committee Dr Emmanuel Owusu-Bennoah and representatives from INRAB, JIRCAS, IITA and other partner organizations.

Themes and projects were discussed in the overall context of the EPMR and WARDA's new vision. A special feature of the Research Days this year was the presence of both the Outgoing and the Incoming ADG-RD.

As this was the last Research Days organized under the research leadership of Dr Keya, the DG thanked him profusely for his wisdom and experience that have enriched WARDA over the last few years and helped it to pass successfully its fifth EPMR.

WARDA/IITA corporate service alignment on track

The implementation process of the WARDA/IITA corporate service alignment, scheduled for September-December 2007, is on track. All corporate service functions in Cotonou – Human Resources, Finance, Planning and Budgeting, Information Technology, Operations and Administration – are now under WARDA management.

Canada assures strong support

The DG visited Canada, 5-10 November, to meet with donors and partners. During this visit, which was organized under the guidance of the Board Chair Mr Gaston Grenier, the DG was assured that Canada would continue to give strong support to WARDA.

Dr Seck met with the representatives of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), including the PanAfrican Group and the Bilateral Program for West Africa. At CIDA, Dr Seck made a presentation titled "Agricultural research: can it fight against poverty and hunger in Africa", which

received a lot of attention, especially regarding the increasing importance of rice in Africa.

Dr Seck also visited McGill University, University of Laval, Ministry of Natural Resources (NRCAN) and UPA farmers' association, among others, to explore areas of collaboration.

Several suggestions were made on possible research partnerships between Canadian research institutions and WARDA. WARDA scientists are following up on these suggestions.

Revitalizing WARDA- France research collaboration

A high-level meeting between WARDA and the French research institutions (CIRAD and IRD) was held, 11-12 October, in Montpellier, France, to explore the possibility of bringing in French expertise to assist WARDA in addressing some of the issues recommended by EPMR.

Joint research proposals were initiated and an agreement between the two organizations to formalize the new partnership is being developed.

The WARDA delegation comprised Drs Seck, Wopereis, Kiepe, Bruce-Oliver, Sere, Sié, and Ndjiondjop.

Liberian Minister visits WARDA-Cotonou

His Excellency Dr Christopher Toe, Minister of Agriculture, Government of Liberia, visited WARDA on 2 October to hold comprehensive discussions on technical assistance that the Center can give to help restore the rice research and development program in Liberia, which is emerging from years of civil conflicts.

Dr Toe, accompanied by his Director of Research, had a tour of the experimental fields and laboratories at WARDA. At the end of his visit, Dr Toe stated that he was impressed not only with the knowledge of the WARDA scientists, but also with their willingness to help Liberia's reconstruction of agriculture. "I look forward to renewed cooperation between WARDA and Liberia," he said.

Rice value chain partnership with VECO

WARDA welcomed a visit by a team from the Belgian NGO Vredeseilanden/Iles de Paix, headed by its director Jan Aertsen, and a representative rice buyer from the Belgian supermarket chain Colruyt.

The objective of the mission was to identify how the collaboration between WARDA and VECO (Vredeseilanden Country Office) could be strengthened with regard to developing the rice value chain in Benin.

Training course

A 1-month training course titled "Research Capacity Development for Evaluation of NERICAs in West Africa" is under way at WARDA-Cotonou, 15 November to 14 December, under the supervision of Dr Y Sokei, JICA Visiting Scientist working with ARI.

The course is funded through Nagoya University by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Eleven participants from six West African countries are taking part in this course.

ISRA DG visits WARDA-Saint Louis

The Director General of the Senegalese Institute of Agricultural Research (ISRA) visited WARDA-Saint Louis, Senegal on 17 September. He was accompanied by the ISRA Scientific and Regional Directors.

On behalf of WARDA, Dr Karim Traoré gave an overall presentation on WARDA's activities, followed by subject-specific presentations from individual scientists based at WARDA-Saint Louis. The delegation also had a tour of the laboratories and field experiments and participated in extensive discussions with WARDA staff.

SWIHA workshop

An international conference "From research to action: mitigating HIV/AIDS impacts on agriculture and food security in West Africa", was organized as part of the Systemwide Initiative on HIV/AIDS and Agriculture (SWIHA), 1-4 October, in Cotonou, Benin.

The conference was hosted by WARDA with strong support from CTA, CIDA, PSI-Benin/KfW, and IDRC. It brought together about 120 participants from 20 African countries as well as from other parts of the world, representing policy-makers and front-line practitioners in HIV/AIDS and food security programs from research, development, donor community, NGOs and media.

A key component of the conference was a visit to the Songhai Center, where the participants were able to have a first-hand view of agro-based micro-enterprises that hold promise for HIV/AIDS-affected farming communities.

Dr Seck pays a special visit to Uganda

Uganda is the first country from Eastern Africa to join WARDA. Therefore, the DG visited Uganda, 25-26 October, to convey WARDA's appreciation to the Government and to discuss themes for joint research with the national system.

Dr Seck was warmly received by the Minister of Agriculture who spoke glowingly about the contribution of NERICA to Uganda. In the absence of the Vice-President of Uganda who is a great promoter of NERICA in the country, Dr Seck met with his Director of Cabinet. He also had fruitful discussions with the Director General of NARO.

During this visit, Dr Seck took the opportunity to meet with the Executive Secretary of ASARECA, who is based in Uganda. The Executive Secretary assured him that he would strongly encourage other East African countries to join WARDA and advocate for the development of the rice sector in the region.

My family!

On dit Bravo to Boubakary Cissé

For successfully finishing his training in upland rice breeding techniques in Japan and at IRRI, in the Philippines

On dit Welcome aboard to Marco Wopereis and Aguibou Tall

The WARDA family warmly welcomes Dr Marco Wopereis, new ADG-RD and Mr Aguibou Tall, new DAF, who will take up their respective functions in December. WARDA looks forward to a mutually rewarding association with them.

On dit Au-revoir

The WARDA family bade a fond farewell to Koen Geerts, ADG-CS; Joseph Kouakou, Accountant; Pefery Coulibaly, IT Manager; and Mariam Coulibaly, Data Management Assistant and wished them success in their future endeavors.

On dit Hearty Congratulations

Ndri Brice, Research Assistant for his wedding on 22 December

"The Power of One Degree"
At 211 degrees, water is hot.
At 212 degrees, it boils.
And with boiling water, comes steam.
And with steam, you can power a train.

Applying one extra degree of temperature to water means the difference between something that is simply very hot and something that generates enough force to power a machine – a beautifully uncomplicated metaphor that ideally should feed our every endeavor – consistently pushing us to make the extra effort in every task, action and effort we undertake. Two-twelve serves as a forceful drill sergeant with its motivating and focused message while adhering to a scientific law – a natural law. It reminds us that seemingly small things can often make tremendous differences and will benefit us for the rest of our lives.

Let the number 212 serve as your constant reminder. It's your new way of thinking – your new way of acting. Write it down and leave it wherever it might serve you best.

It's time to turn up the heat. Go to work.
-- Submitted by Heather Grey, HR Manager

With heavy heart...

It is with great shock and great sadness that we (the Board Chair, Dr. Gaston Grenier, Dr Shellemiah Keya, Dr Marco Wopereis, WARDA staff and I) learnt about the sudden death of our dear colleague Mahaman Moussa. I saw him late last week and was indeed encouraged that he had been discharged from the hospital before I left Cotonou.

We have lost a very capable, reliable and highly dedicated member of the WARDA family. We will always remember Mahaman. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

- Message from the DG

