



THIRD AFRICA RICE CONGRESS
21–24 October 2013, Yaoundé, Cameroon
Declaration

The third Africa Rice Congress, entitled ‘Rice Science for Food Security through Smallholder and Agri-business Development in Africa’, was organized by the Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) under the aegis of the Cameroonian Government and in collaboration with the Cameroonian Institute of Agricultural Research for Development from 21 to 24 October 2013 in Yaoundé (the first was held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 2006 and the second in Bamako, Mali in 2010). A large share of the work reported at the Congress was the fruit of research conducted within the context of the CGIAR Research Program on Rice, the Global Rice Science Partnership (GRiSP, involving many national and international partners). AfricaRice is leading the implementation of GRiSP in Africa, while GRiSP is led globally by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI). The Congress provided the opportunity to discuss institutional innovations, policies and key investments needed to significantly increase rice production, processing and marketing in Africa, thereby developing competitive and equitable rice value chains, reducing imports and enhancing regional trade.

The Congress was opened by Her Excellency Dr Madeleine Tchuinte, Minister of Scientific Research and Innovation of the Republic of Cameroon on behalf of His Excellency M. Philémon Yang, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cameroon. During the opening ceremony, Assistant Director-General of FAO Dr Ren Wang presented FAO’s New Vision for the sustainable development of the rice sector in Africa. The chair of the Board of Trustees of AfricaRice, Dr Peter Matlon highlighted the importance of rice research. He thanked the donors and sponsors, paid tribute to the outstanding services of Dr Papa Seck as former Director General of AfricaRice, and introduced Dr Adama Traoré as the AfricaRice Interim Director General. Next, he presented a plaque of appreciation to the President of the Republic of Cameroon and Head of State, His Excellency M. Paul Biya for the support of the Cameroon Government to raising rice productivity.

The first 2 days of the Congress allowed participants to discuss scientific progress through presentations and poster talks in five parallel sessions. Private sector and research and development partners showcased their work in booths that were open throughout the Congress. A special space was dedicated to locally fabricated small-scale agricultural machinery. A ‘Cameroon Rice Day’ was organized on 23 October, allowing participants to visit the IRAD research facilities at Nkolbisson, Yaoundé. The last day of the Congress included, among others, a Ministerial Policy Dialogue, involving ministers from Chad, Cameroon, The Gambia, Mali and Senegal, where the issue of land tenure in relation to private investment was highlighted; and a plenary discussion on key issues coming out of the mini-symposia (world café).

The more than 650 participants from 60 countries (35 African countries) included rice farmers, seed producers, rice processors, input dealers, agricultural machinery manufacturers and representatives from agricultural ministries, national and international rice research and extension communities, non-governmental organizations, the donor community and other development partners.

During the closing ceremony, the chair of AfricaRice's Council of Ministers, His Excellency Dr Ngarera Rimadjita, Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation of the Republic of Chad, presented a distinguished service award to Dr Seck.

The Congress in its deliberations noted:

- The now rapid growth in rice production in sub-Saharan Africa (8.4% per year) resulting from key investments made by farmers, governments, the private sector and the donor community following the 2007–2008 global food crisis;
- That despite this rapid growth, the African continent continues to rely heavily on the rice world market to satisfy increasing consumption demand for rice, with imports reaching 12 million tonnes of milled rice in 2012, costing more than US\$ 5 billion;
- That long-term food security in sub-Saharan Africa cannot depend on rice imports and that the African continent has the resources to feed itself in terms of rice and eventually to export rice;
- The importance of protecting Africa's rice farmers and urban consumers from world price fluctuations and inequitable trade;
- The tremendous employment challenge in sub-Saharan Africa, with 330 million young people expected to enter the job market over the next 15 years and the opportunity that rice-sector development can offer for job and income creation, particularly in rural areas;
- That Africa's rice sector depends primarily on the efforts of small-scale resource-poor farmers and that development of the sector needs to create win-win opportunities for all involved in the value chain, in particular for women and youth;
- The importance of value-adding and demand-lifting investments to improve the competitiveness of local rice vis-à-vis imported rice and that such measures will often need to precede supply-shifting investments;

As a follow-up on a recommendations formulated at the 2nd Africa Rice Congress, the 3rd Congress confirmed:

- The progress being made by the scientific community since the 2nd Africa Rice Congress and the growing attention paid to quality-enhancing and marketing research;
- The establishment of six thematic Africa-wide Rice Research Task Forces, convened by AfricaRice,;
- The need to more rapidly diffuse existing rice technologies and innovations by strengthening and linking rice research and development efforts across the continent;
- The continued shortfall in human resources in rice research and extension in Africa.

The Congress formulated the following recommendations for governments, farmer organizations, civil society, private sector, R&D partners, regional economic communities and donors:

Investments in Africa's rice sector

- Invest in modernization and mechanization of Africa's farming and in aggregation of farm output, while safeguarding land rights of smallholders and improving livelihoods;
- Strengthen farmer organizations to ensure that farmers capture a fair share of value added in the value chain;
- Stimulate the development of public-private partnerships and small-scale enterprises, and provide technical and business training to Africa's rapidly growing cadre of unemployed youth to find jobs in the rice sector;
- Combine supply-shifting, demand-lifting and value-adding investments to ensure rapid and sustainable development of affordable rice and rice-based products for different consumers;
- Consider the establishment of strategic regional rice reserves, relying on national stocks, but with coordination at the regional level to reduce price volatility;

- Establish minimum and maximum import tariffs agreed upon at the regional level that allow for raising import tariffs in times of low world market prices and vice-versa;
- Develop sustainable seed systems through coherent policies, strategies and functional public–private partnerships.

Investments in rice R&D and capacity-building

- Foster greater regional and international collaboration on the development and diffusion of improved varieties, ecological intensification of rice farming, and management of abiotic and biotic stresses in the face of climate change to sustainably increase rice production;
- Establish world-class research infrastructure in Africa to evaluate rice genetic material for major stresses and consumer demands, and ensure that progress made worldwide in rice genetics and breeding can be captured;
- Strengthen and expand the rice sector development hub network and facilitate rice knowledge exchange to achieve greater and more rapid impact across the rice value chain;
- Urge African governments and their development partners to substantially strengthen the retention and training of new research and extension staff, while updating agricultural curricula in vocational training schools and universities;
- Urge African governments to comply with the Maputo Declaration and increase the proportion of their national budgets to scientific research to levels commensurate with international standards;
- Acknowledge AfricaRice as leading the Africa component of GRiSP to enable the pooling of resources, building capacity and aligning of national and international rice research agendas;
- Ask FAO to stimulate national, regional and global partnerships to develop Africa’s rice sector, as part of the efforts of the Coalition of African Rice Development (CARD) and under the overall umbrella of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

Participants commended the Congress organizers for their efforts, and thanked the Government and people of Cameroon, and the principal sponsors of the Congress — Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP–EU (CTA), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Global Rice Science Partnership (GRiSP), West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF/WECARD), Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture, Pôle Régional de Recherche Appliquée au Développement des Systèmes Agricoles d’Afrique Centrale (CEMAC-PRASAC), Ecobank, Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA).

Yaoundé, 24 October 2013

(END)