

Foreword

The Second Africa Rice Congress was held in Bamako, Mali, from 22 to 26 March 2010. Co-organized by the Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice) and the Institut d'Economie Rurale (IER), Mali, the Congress had 505 participants from across the world. This event followed the trend started with the First Africa Rice Congress, held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania from 31 July to 4 August, 2006.

The Bamako Congress was hosted and supported by the Government of Mali. The Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali, His Excellency Modibo Sidibé, inaugurated the Congress on behalf of the President, His Excellency M Amadou Toumani Touré.

With the theme of Innovations and Partnerships to Realize Africa's Rice Potential, the Congress had three keynote presentations, one round table discussion and 59 oral presentations.

The Bamako Congress consolidated the gains made by African countries after the food crisis of 2008. It strengthened partnerships and put in perspective the achievements registered by different countries after the crisis. It discussed the challenges that lie ahead.

AfricaRice had predicted the 2008 food crisis before it happened and had communicated to the policy makers of our member states during the Council of Ministers Meeting of 2007. The crisis shook many national governments and they strengthened policy measures initiated to overcome the emergency situation. As a result of the policy support initiatives started by many countries, increase in rice production was recorded in 2009 and 2010. The strong participation at the Africa Rice Congress held at Bamako indicates that the African countries were serious about increasing rice production and preventing the recurrence of another crisis.

The potential for increasing rice production in Africa is immense. The continent uses only 4% of its water resources and only 3.9 Mha of its 130 Mha of lowlands have been cultivated. If the current area under rice was to be increased by 15% while avoiding harmful deforestation, then Africa could be self-sufficient and be able to export rice. For this to happen, there is need for strong partnerships. We need a holistic investment approach and public-private partnerships to develop Africa's rice sector across the entire value chain, creating trust and benefits for all stakeholders, from seed to plate.

AfricaRice is committed to strengthening partnerships with all stakeholders in the rice value chain. Partnership is a continuous process. While AfricaRice can provide strategic research, the national partners should lead the impact process. AfricaRice has a research presence in almost all the African countries growing rice – 24 member states and 11 other countries.

Only by raising rice production in Africa can we hope to avoid depending on the vagaries of the international market for imports. Rice has become a strategic commodity to fuel economic growth and to contribute toward hunger and poverty reduction across the continent.

The Second Africa Rice Congress approved the idea of a Global Rice Science Partnership (GRiSP). There was demand for re-starting the task force mechanisms which had invigorated rice research in Africa earlier. The Congress also expressed the strong need for strengthening the scientific capacity for rice research in Africa.

This Proceedings covers the events of the Congress in detail. The Proceedings includes the report of the Congress, resolutions, three keynote papers and 30 papers received from presenters. In addition, eight papers received are not being published in the Proceedings as of now since they are being considered for publication by the Crop Science journal.

Breaking from the past, the Proceedings for the Second Africa Rice Congress is being published online. There will not be a print edition. Publishing online gives greater flexibility – more papers can be added as they come. It also offers ease of access, to either the Proceedings as a whole or to a single paper in the volume. And most important, since the online edition does not have an ISBN number, authors can develop their papers further for submission to other journals.

I would like to thank the Malian government authorities for their invaluable support in organizing this successful Congress.

Dr Papa Abdoulaye Seck
Director General
Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice)
4 August 2011