

Partners in the Multi Agency Partnerships for Technical Change in West African Agriculture

Nigeria Workshop March 2000: Final Report

FIRST DAY

Attendance

There were about 16 participants at the workshop out of the 25 who were invited. The rather low turnout may be attributed to the setback the workshop preparation suffered in the wake of the Kaduna crisis. However, there was good representation with 4 from the ADPs, 3 NGOs, a representative from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, 2 researchers from the universities, a large scale farmer and some journalists. The attendance list is attached with addresses.

Keynote Address

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Dr. A. Anono gave the Keynote address on behalf of the Honourable Commissioner for Agriculture, Plateau state, Mr. S.L. Wazhi. The speech was very comprehensive and relevant. It highlighted the need for all stakeholders in rice production to form partnership for the attainment of their set objectives. This will encourage farmers as well as other stakeholders to be involved in the diagnosis and possible solution of local production problems. It is clear that NGOs have a role here which is to stimulate community based activities through their grass root mobilisation approach.

He noted that the current removal of the ban on the importation of rice and the dwindling resources of the ADPs have negatively affected rice production in the country. He hoped that the workshop will come up with resolutions that will ensure the smooth formation of multi – agency partnerships in rice production.

Objectives of the Workshop

The objectives of the workshop were as follows:

- To create avenues for interaction between all stakeholders in rice production.
- To explore the perspectives of selected stakeholders on the dissemination of new technologies in rice production.
- To create awareness for the forthcoming national rice survey among stakeholders.

Participants were encouraged to speak openly on all issues that are relevant to the attainment of the goals of MAPs and the workshop.

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Presentation on MAPs

Dr. Roger Blench gave some background information on MAPs. The need for MAPs arose due to a perception of poor communication between researchers and farmers. The concept of MAPs was originally not based on any specific crop. However, rice became the target crop for testing the concept due to its importance as the staple of most countries in the sub-region. ODI was invited by WARDA to help solve the problem of dissemination of information to rice farmers of the sub-region. Though on-farm trials have been used as a methodology to tackle the problem, these have remained largely unsuccessful because field selections and agronomic practices are still in the hands of the researcher and not the farmer. This high level of control is remote from the situation of the farmer whose practice will reflect risk aversion. The advantages of MAPs over conventional systems will be that all stakeholders will discuss the problems and the farmers will better articulate their ideas and present them to the researchers. The key thing in MAPs is to create a better responsiveness from both farmers and researchers. There is a major role for intermediary agencies such as NGOs in the smooth operations of MAPs. Dr. Blench mentioned that WARDA was conducting trials with interspecific crosses of African and Asian rice and that these may be of very great importance in the future.

Discussion

A question was asked about the problems associated with growing hybrid crops of high input demands. Dr. Blench responded that WARDA is aware of this problem and is researching along such lines and there is no need for fear as we await a rice revolution given the advance on biotechnology as it affects the cross between the hardy African rice and the high yielding Asian rice. Such inter specific hybrids can be reproduced from saved seed, thereby obviating the problem of uncertain input supply. A question was asked about location specificity for rice and what is being done by WARDA so that rice can be grown in all the ecological zones. In a response to the question, Dr. Blench reported that in fact rice is now successfully grown in all the ecological zones and WARDA has developed several varieties adaptable to each zone. WARDA has stations in each ecological zone and have adopted a new strategy of testing low, medium and high input varieties. A question was raised on the dumping of imported rice with the lifting of a ban on its importation. A change in policy on rice importation was advocated by some participants. Dr. Blench informed the workshop that Nigeria is a signatory to the international trade agreement and therefore it will be difficult to ban the importation of the commodity. However, a way out is to encourage the production of quality rice in terms of processing and simple techniques such as destoning. The government can subsidise the importation of such machines.

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Presentation by WOFAN (Women Farmers Advancement Network): Mr. Abdulsalam Ibrahim

The goal of WOFAN is sustainable improvement in the quality of life of the rural women. They work with community groups through community based facilitators (CBF). Each CBF oversees a minimum of two groups of ten rural people. WOFAN works with international and national NGOs such as UNDP, DEC, ADPs and others. WOFAN is not directly involved in rice production but are studying an interesting rice marketing situation in Garko. Steps have been taken to have discussions with the NGO and rice farmers in four villages.

Presentation on status Report on Relationship with WARDA and PADP: Mr. John Habu, Director Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

Mr. Habu gave a historical overview of an excellent working relationship with WARDA pre –1996. Since National Cereals Research Institute (NCRI) was given the mandate to breed and release rice seeds, the system has been in suspension. This is compounded by the lack of activity on the part of the National Seed Service. Participants were all agreed that there was need to mobilise farmer organisations, NGOs and ADPs to lobby government for change in policy which should allow international institutes to deal directly with farmers, ADPs and NGOs. A larger workshop was advocated where the findings on MAPs research and related issues can be discussed and the views formally presented to the government.

Presentation by Deputy Director (Seeds), BNARDA: Mr. James Ijirbo

Mr. Ijirbo observed that the National Seed Programme is functioning at an extremely low level and it is good to speak truthfully about it. However, he also admitted that farmers themselves can source their seeds, especially for the variety 'mass'. This is said to be very popular with marketers though the yield is considered to be low. It is said to have long grains, desirable for milling. The ADP has also set up a community seed project whereby selected farmers are given seeds to multiply for other farmers. Participants urged Mr. Ijirbo to make known both his feelings and those of the workshop at the forthcoming workshop on seeds.

Presentation by Development Exchange Centre (DEC), Bauchi: Mr. Yusuf Isheni

Mr. Isheni gave the main objective of DEC as : to assist rural and urban women to improve the conditions of their lives through skills training, micro credit delivery, information sharing and project funding for women groups. He reported problems encountered by members of some women groups involved in rice production such as poor quality seeds, non-availability of technical advice on rice production. He had come to the workshop for possible solutions to these problems. He was told that the workshop provides an opportunity for networking and interaction with experts on rice. He was also encouraged to take pre- season training for the women seriously.

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SECOND DAY, 22nd MARCH, 2000

Presentation by Plateau ADP: Mr. Musa Dalang

Mr. Dalang gave a synopsis of rice production in Plateau state. He noted that rice, which was initially grown only in the southern part of the state, is now grown in all over the state largely due to the collaboration between farmers, PADP and research institutes like IITA, WARDA and NCRI. The release of upland varieties like FAROs 46,48 and 49 from IITA lead to an expansion of rice cultivation in drier parts of the state. Demand by farmers led to the release of an excellent upland variety known as FARO 27. However FAROs 44, 37 and BG 90 do better in the southern part of the state.

He observed that constraints to production include lack of access to tractors, weed problems, inadequate input supply and slowing down of extension delivery services. He suggested the following measures to improve rice production in the country.

- A national survey to determine the status of rice production in the country
- A national workshop to study the outcome of the survey. Representatives of all stakeholders in rice production should be invited to the workshop which should be done using participatory methodologies.
- MAPs activities on rice production be co-ordinated by a body under the auspices of EDO and comprising representatives of relevant stakeholders.

Presentation by Large Scale Farmer: Mr. N.Y. Longmut

Mr. Longmut stated that he was led into rice production in 1983 due to the desire to supplement his salary income given the incentive and challenge given to all the staffers of the ADP to actually undertake farming as a kind of promotion for the profession. He started with one hectare and gradually increased his farmholding to over 50 hectares. By 1987 he was already trying some of the new varieties as FAROs 37 and 35 for seed production. He was so successful that he became a farmer others would come to for advice. As the scope of his farm was increasing he had to approach NACB and NAIC for loan and insurance. Initially he had wonderful cooperation from both institutions, and later with NSS, but in time of crisis as flooding that destroyed his farms on 2 occasions, he found these companies not very helpful even with the advantage of being well connected in the farming industry and as an ADP senior official. There were occasions he had to use threats to get their attention and cooperation. He also encountered problems with seeds collected from NSS which were either unviable, or of poor quality. He was also a victim of unexpected government policies and bureaucracy.

In conclusion he stated that farmers are always interested in new varieties and are even prepared to steal in order to secure planting material. Therefore, research into new varieties should continue. The problem of weeds needs to be addressed and large-scale farming requires close supervision and good management. He added that it is advisable to always start a farming business on a small scale and let the farm expand itself without much borrowing and that MAPs has to be coordinated by a body if its gains are to be sustained.

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Field Report on Countries with MAP in rice production: Dr. Roger Blench

Ghana and Mali where the MAPs is also being undertaken with 20 million and 5 million people respectively are less densely populated than Nigeria. Therefore urban demand for cereals is also much smaller in these countries. Competition between imported and locally produced rice in Ghana has been going on for ten years. In Ghana, as in Nigeria, rice is grown in all the ecological zones including the dry coastal areas. There dead rice schemes are found in both the south and north of Ghana. These schemes have collapsed but rice is now cultivated mainly by smallholder farmers. African rice is widely cultivated, not for the market, but traditional ceremonies. Government has been disinvesting in rice production. Another interesting development in Ghana is the establishment of the University of Development Studies which has a good practical field training for students at the village level for three months every year. Like in Nigeria, Ghana has a problem of adulterated seeds. Sample of seeds are being collected and sent to WARDA for accession and characterisation. The same thing

is being done in Mali and it should be possible in Nigeria if some the farmers' seed problems are to be tackled realistically.

The situation in Mali is quite different because rice has been cultivated in the deep valleys of the River Niger for a long time. Mali has an efficient rice production and extension system. Two of the biggest rice schemes in Africa are in Mali one of which has been in operation since before the second world war, based on tenant farmers. A highly effective village-based system of medium-sized pumps, supplied on credit, are controlled by the villagers who contract the maintenance of the pumps to local garages. The pumps were initially bought with EC loans but today in some of the villages there is much prosperity and the villagers no longer need the loans. They are even able to raise sufficient funds for social projects such as building magnificent mosques.

Dr. Blench also gave a report on the rice production system in Ganawuri, south of Jos, where no fertilisers, herbicides and insecticides are used. Large ridges and tie-ridges are used for weeds control and 'green-manuring'. This system will be the subject of a paper which will circulated to members when it is ready. Finally, Dr. Blench drew the attention of participants to the following:

That there is good documentation at WARDA for all stakeholders in rice production to avail themselves to.

That it is desirable for networking on rice to start to coordinate all the information.

Short Discussion on Field Report

A participant asked whether the survey will be local or national. Dr. Blench affirmed that the rice survey will indeed be national as stated in the objectives of the workshop. A participant asked whether the trend in Ghana of the ultimate privatisation can be predicted for Nigeria. Dr. Blench responded that the policy is successful in Ghana because of the effectiveness of farmer organisations which has taken over the functions of poorly managed public institutions.

A participant commenting on the possibility of encouraging the use of animal traction in rice production reported that the issue will be discussed at a national workshop coming up soon in Jalingo. Ecosystems Development Organisation was encouraged to attend the workshop and make MAPs known there.

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Resolutions

At the end of the workshop participants resolved the following:

- Government should be encouraged to either reconsider its policy on importation of rice *or* make producer friendly policies on local rice production and related issues.
- Government is encouraged to decentralise input supply systems and research dissemination.
- A national network should be established to bring together all stakeholders in the rice industry to articulate ideas on common interest
- The workshop recognises the need for a national rice survey and the need to put in place a continuous monitoring system to ensure sustainability.
- Increase effort should be put in alerting WARDA on the developments in rice production with the view of building a closer relationship.

Closing Remarks

Dr. Blench thanked participants for their good contributions. Ecosystems Development Organisation also greatly appreciated the contribution made by ODI in sponsoring this awareness workshop. Participants were encouraged to see themselves as ambassadors of MAPs. EDO informed the workshop that the networking that has started will continue and relevant information brochures on MAPs will be prepared and distributed.

Dr. A.C. Odunze on behalf of the participants thanked ODI and EDO for organising a timely workshop as this one. He said Dr. Blench deserved to be thanked personally for his contribution in promoting the MAPs concept.