

**Partners for Rice  
Opening Remarks  
2<sup>nd</sup> CARD General Meeting**

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3 June 2009

Thank you: Madam Sadako Ogata, President of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA); Mr. Kenzo Oshima, Senior Vice President of JICA; and Dr. Namanga Ngongi, President of AGRA.

We are here today to strengthen the invaluable cooperation of our two organizations, AGRA and JICA.

We are united in our resolve to help end Africa's food crisis, specifically through helping our smallholder rice farmers to double their production.

The demand for rice in sub-Saharan Africa is increasing at double the rate of population growth;

Consumption is growing faster than that of any other major food staple.

Africa has been unable to keep up with this demand.

Instead, it imports nearly half of the rice consumed.

The price tag is high, and not just in Africa. Since the onset of the food crisis, the global price of rice has more than doubled.

On a worldwide basis, there is the need to rebuild buffer stocks to stabilize the balance of supply and demand for rice.

A second, and sustainable, Green Revolution is needed in the rice bowls of the world.

A first Green Revolution is needed in Africa.

AGRA and JICA are committed to working together toward that goal.

The potential for increased rice production in Africa is huge.

But realizing this potential requires complementary changes on a number of levels:

Africa needs trained rice breeders – most African countries have none.

Smallholder farmers need better access to improved seeds, fertilizers, and options for processing and marketing their harvests.

This is a highly achievable goal. It is within our grasp.

Hunger can be made history in Africa simply by doing the things we already know how to do.

We see new potential for dramatic improvements in African agriculture.

NERICA, the New Rice for Africa, is high-yielding and has enormous potential to be adapted and grown in a wide range of rice-growing environment, not just paddies, but also in highlands – in places that no one before thought possible with no irrigation.

About an hour's drive from Kampala, Uganda, you'll find Hadji Wanonda, a farmer who grows Nerica's on his one-acre plot of land.

For years, Hadji planted cassava, maize and a few other crops for his family to eat.

Now with Nerica's provided by a local agricultural research institute working with several local seed companies, he can make up to US\$800 in a three month period selling his harvest in the local markets.

This represents a massive increase in income for him and, more recently, Hadji has been able to employ local men and women to help out with farm work.

AGRA has seen similar transformations take place in the lives of other smallholder farmers who gained access to hybrid seed of maize, improved varieties of cassava, and other crops developed by national and international research groups.

The evidence is clear that when Africa's farmers are given the chance to increase their yields through improved seed and small amounts of fertilizer, they are eager to take advantage of the opportunity and they can produce remarkable results.

If this kind of public research working in collaboration with local private businesses and farmer associations could be applied more widely, Africa could become far more self-sufficient in rice, and use this increased productivity to help end the hunger afflicting some 300 million Africans.

Nerica was a cross between an African and Asian rice variety.

It proved to be highly resilient, productive, and flexible as platform for further development and change.

So, too, will be AGRA's partnership with JICA.

Cooperation between Africa and Asia can and will open new possibilities for food security in Africa and the world.

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