

Summary of the CARD Regional Workshop on Best Practices and Pilot Initiative for improved Rice Seed sector

1. Best Practices

Analyses on the best practices were presented on; i) Integration of NRDS into overarching development frameworks (three cases), and ii) Interventions in Rice Value Chain (five cases). The presentations were followed by comments to improve the draft analysis. The followings are the general observations and critical comments.

<NRDS integration into overarching development frameworks>

- “Priority on Rice” is not the necessary condition for success. The scope should be that the rice needs to take “fair share” in the economy considering economic contribution and food security.
- Analysis should look more carefully at champions/ drivers for the integration.
- Important contributing factors to success are that; the NRDS came before CAADP investment plan (in Madagascar, Guinea, and Uganda), and NRDS was more solid and quality document.
- Also the whole process of NRDS development was owned by the government of CARD countries, and this will ensure the sustainability (Capacity will stay in the countries)

<Interventions in Rice Value Chain>

- Overall compliments were given to the analysis on its depth, usefulness, and the diverse areas and approaches of cases giving complementarity.
- Usefulness of the scalability assessment framework was confirmed through the best practice analysis.
- Inclusion of remaining challenges and constraints in the analysis on each case is useful for other countries to learn deeper.

Way Forward

- IFAD and the CARD secretariat will agree on the process and the schedule for way forward
- A suggestion was made that the scalability assessment should be presented in the International Rice Congress to be held in October 2014. The CARD secretariat will negotiate with IRRI on this matter.

2. CARD Pilot Initiative for Improved Rice Seed Sector

Draft Rice Seed Development Strategies were presented by participating countries, and comments were given on them. The followings are general observations and critical points to be followed up;

<Improving the Draft Rice Seed Development Strategy>

- The good progress was made in exercises to draft Rice Seed Development Strategy by all the country teams despite the limited time for the preparation and the working week. Nonetheless, the draft Rice Seed Development Strategies need to be further improved, specifically in the following aspects;
 - Rice Seed Development Strategies should clearly state how the document is positioned in the existing and overall legal & policy framework, and sector strategies in the respective country. The difference between laws, policies and strategies shall be well recognized.
 - The role of public sector should be clarified and articulated in the document, especially in the section of strategic principle (what the public sector should and will do, and what should be left for private sector, how these roles will change over the period of time).
 - Goals and targets need to be reviewed from realistic and sensible viewpoints. (e.g. (i) The informal sector and their contribution should be taken account in planning of even formal sector seed production and it should be explicitly stated in the strategic principle, (ii) The expectable yields vary at the different stage of seed production in planning the production, since more intensive care is needed for breeder and foundation seeds)
 - The Rice Seed Development Strategy should be composed of the combination of various approaches depending on varieties (upland vs lowland), geographical locations (access to markets and infrastructure), and types of farming styles (intensive commercial vs subsistence). For instance, certified seeds cannot be the best options in everywhere, given the different needs and financial capacity of farmers, and the limited resources and capacity of the government (production and supply of certified seed is costly, thus the 100 % coverage by certified seeds is unrealistic at least for a short term). Quality declared seeds and community production are worth considering in remote areas where private sectors don't come in and rice production is for self-/local consumption.
 - Full attention shall be paid to markets and seed consumers in planning approaches and strategies in rice seed supply of different varieties, and in different areas (the strategies should be tailored in a seed-users-oriented manner). How to apply different strategies in different areas/ circumstances and on different target groups need to be clearly stated in the "strategic principles" section
 - In the target setting, the Rice Seed Development Strategies should have interim targets/ milestones.
 - Problem analysis and identification of intervention options need to be done more deeply. Instead of looking at symptoms, causes of problems need to be analyzed in identifying the possible intervention options for solution.
 - Possible interventions to improve the seed situation should include options that countries can start implementing with what are already available. Do not make only wish list, but make

assets- and opportunity-based options for solution. This is important from self-reliance and sustainability viewpoints.

- Suggested intervention options need to be categorized into short-, medium-, and long-term options. Assets-/ opportunity-based solutions are likely to come under the short-term category.
 - Suggested intervention options shall be prioritized, since it is impossible to implement everything at the same time.
 - Possible interventions need to be put in the action plan. (this exercise will follow the development of Rice Seed Development Strategy though)
 - Private sector needs to be further involved in the process. Improving communication with them is the first step, and the country team should come up with effective mechanism for better communication. Madagascar is planning innovative methods, such as selection of a few seed value chain, identification of key players and interaction with them through interviewing and/or focus group to understand rice seed value chain and private sectors' needs and how the actors inter-act each other. This idea can give implications to other countries in planning their own approaches for more involvement of private sector players. At any rate, it is important to sincerely communicate with them and reflect their views in the Rice Seed Development Strategy, to win the trust from private sector, and establish win-win situation for rice seed sector development.
- Above revision and review of the draft Rice Seed Development Strategy calls for more intensive work, thus the CARD Secretariat will support country teams in conducting another round of working week. Points mentioned above should be informed to the technical team members at each country by the delegates participated in the CARD regional workshop, and reviewed in each country, prior to/ at the second round of working week.
 - In continuing the work at national level, more stakeholders need to be involved. For instance, country offices of development partners can significantly contribute to improve the draft Rice Seed Development Strategy with their good knowledge on the country's contexts. Their involvement is also useful in fund mobilization stage that will follow later. Since they might not be able to work throughout working weeks, the country technical teams might as well identify key resource persons and invite them to share their views at the beginning of the working week so that the team can learn their perspective and opinions on issues and solutions, and utilize them in revising the draft.

<Quality issue>

- It was recognized that the good quality of seeds is the bottom line. Increasing the production of bad quality seed does not help, thus the quality assurance of seeds should come before increasing seed supply (even though draft Seed Strategy from many countries talks about the target production of the seeds, quality concern is not sufficiently addressed)
- Improving the quality of seeds will stimulate the seed consumption (Promotion and trainings are not sufficient) since the quality seed will ensure the higher profitability of rice farming
- In improving "seed quality", the following points needs to be taken into account;

- A number of stakeholders are involved in the seed production and supply, and all stakeholders have to properly do what they are supposed to do, in order to make sufficient quality seeds accessible by farmers in a timely manner.
- Issues in quality assurance are scattered across the seed production and supply chain, and every party should self-critically review and reflect the quality assurance measures taken under the one's jurisdiction and try one's best to improve it under one's responsibility (Blaming other stakeholders is not constructive or professional. For instance, foundation seed producers can improve the purity of breeder seeds and maintain the quality, even when the quality of supplied breeder seeds is not good enough). This **self-critical attitude** and **professional responsibility** are so important, because in most countries participating in this CARD seed pilot initiative does not have functional evaluation and feedback mechanism in terms of seed quality (feedback and improvement-enforcing mechanism from seed users (rice farmers) to certified seed suppliers, from certified seed suppliers to certified seed producers, from certified seed producers to foundation seed producers, or from foundation seed producers to breeder seed producers).
- Quality control at the stage of certified seed production requires more work, human resources and cost, given larger production and cultivated areas. Therefore, it is reasonable to make intensive efforts in controlling the quality of seeds at the breeder and foundation seed production stages. The role of National Agriculture Research Systems (NARS) is very important in this regard, since they are responsible of maintenance and supply of breeder and foundation seeds in many countries.
- It should be well recognized that the issue of low seed quality is composed of two aspects; seed health and seed purity. Facility and equipment such as cold storage can maintain the seed quality in terms of seed health, but does not affect at all the seed purity. Also the budget increase and recruitment of additional officers alone do not automatically solve the seed purity issue.
- Assurance of the seed purity calls for proper monitoring, and identification and removal of off-types. Officers in charge of seed production (including researchers) should make more frequent on-field observations for control of off-types, so that the purity of breeder and foundation seeds are improved, as well as the capacity of technicians and workers will be strengthened. (Importance of quality control work at the field should be recognized: seeds are produced in the fields, not in laboratories or offices).
- Quality control measures and strategies for improvement should be discussed considering the different traits and natures of breeder seeds, foundation seeds, registered seeds and certified seeds. In some countries the strategies are discussed without considering differences among different seeds.
- A critical question was raised on the role of researchers; whether researchers should produce seeds. In reality, many African countries cannot employ officers specialized in one or two tasks due to limited resources, thus government officials often have to take on multiple tasks. Given this reality, researchers should recognize that assuring the quality of seeds produced and provided by public institutions that they belong to or they supervise is their responsibility. This is a responsibility borne to professionals who are involved in the seed production and supply

chain and aware of the criticalness of the seed quality issue. **Professional attitude** in seed production is the key for solution.

<Importance of Scaling-up mindset >

It was pointed out that the participants of this regional workshop are a community of practices that provide opportunities for South-South Cooperation and knowledge sharing. Since the scaling up concept can enhance the mutual learning, scale-up mind set should be kept throughout the whole process of the development of Rice Seed Development Strategy. Utilization of the scalability assessment framework must be beneficial, when you have good practice in seed production, and it will help getting buy-in.

<Action Points>

CARD Secretariat:

- Setting up forum for sharing among countries and between countries and SC members, where documents can be shared and discussion can be continued for mutual learning. Draft Rice Seed Development Strategies, together with Working Tools would be shared in the forum if countries do not have objection.
- Research on best practices in rice seed production and supply.
- Mapping of regional initiatives related to seeds and shared with countries that are participating in the CARD Pilot Initiative for Improved Rice Seed Sector.

CARD Steering Committee Members:

- Proof reading of the draft rice seed development strategies to see the technical justifiability of targets, strategies and figures used for the target setting. Send suggestions together with other specific comments on the drafts to the CARD secretariat so that contributions are forwarded to the respective country teams.
- Each Steering Committee member shall send the CARD Secretariat possible contributions and their roles in the Rice Seed Pilot Initiative especially to help country level exercise. The CARD secretariat will forward it to country technical teams.
- All Steering Committee members shall report the result of the regional workshop to their offices in 10 countries participating in the CARD Rice Seed Pilot Initiative, so that country teams can get national level supports from country offices of the CARD Steering Committee members.