

Co-chair's Summary of Eighth General Meeting of CARD

The eighth meeting of CARD's stakeholders was held online between 6th and 7th of October 2021. The meeting was attended by focal points and representatives from 32 CARD member countries, CARD steering committee members, and South-South Cooperation partners. Through a hybrid mode, the representatives and focal points of the member countries participated together from a physical location at their respective countries.

While the main objective of the meeting is to share information on the progress of CARD activities especially the preparation and implementation of the national and regional rice development strategies, in the member countries; intensive discussions on designing a comprehensive framework for monitoring and evaluation and how industrialization could help advance rice sector in African context were also aimed at.

The sessions were chaired by two SC members (ECOWAS and IsDB) and a country focal point (Tanzania). The meeting acknowledged that the goal of re-doubling rice production during the second phase of the CARD initiative is very pertinent in addressing the rising consumption demand and in reducing the import dependence for rice in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The meeting observed that a 70% increase in area under rice cultivation and 17% increment in yield levels contributed to achieving the CARD's goal of doubling rice production in SSA; from 14 million tons to 28 million tons during its first phase (2008-2018). Since continuation of such rapid expansion of area under rice cultivation may not be feasible during the second phase (2020-2030); the meeting proposed that CARD shall emphasize more on enhancing on-farm productivity. Improving smallholder rice farmers' access to technologies and critical inputs such as water, seeds, fertilizers, finance, and appropriate machineries should therefore serve as one of the main enablers.

CARD has also embraced a R.I.C.E approach that involves building **Resilience** in production and supply, promoting **Industrialization** along the rice value chain, sharpening **Competitiveness** of local rice production, and reinforcing **Empowerment** of all its stakeholders inclusive of women and youth along the rice value chain. The meeting asserted

that the R.I.C.E approach will render sustainability to the impacts of doubling the rice production in Africa.

Stakeholders hence need to help African governments make sensible prioritization and set realistic targets in increasing rice production. In this context, one of the major deliverables of the CARD initiative is to establish National Rice Development Strategy (NRDS) in member countries. NRDS not only sets out the targets and approaches, but also serves as a narrative for policy directions for rice value chain development in CARD member countries.

To further integrate the rice sector development, the second phase of CARD additionally guides regional economic communities (RECs) in preparing and implementing Regional Rice Development Strategy (RRDS) and generates synergies in investments and resource utilization amongst member countries.

GM8 assessed the progress made in (1) developing and implementing NRDS in member countries and (2) developing and implementing RRDS in ECOWAS and EAC region. The meeting also deliberated quite extensively on a new 'monitoring and evaluation' framework for the CARD initiative. In addition, the GM8 held two separate panel discussions on (a) the implications of RRDS and (b) the prospects of industrialization of the rice value chain in SSA. The outcomes of these sessions shall be briefly summarized as follows: -

1. Progress in preparing and implementing National Rice Development Strategy (NRDS):

With the induction of 9 new countries under the second phase, the CARD's membership now includes 32 rice growing African countries. Since the launch of the phase 2, the CARD activities were therefore directed at **revising the NRDS that had expired** in the veteran member countries and at **preparing the NRDS afresh** in the new member countries.

Despite the devastating impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the logistics and regulations in arranging face-to-face meetings with NRDS taskforce members and Ministry officials in the member countries, CARD was able to successfully provide technical assistance in drafting and validating the NRDS (often referred to as 'second-NRDS or NRDS-II') in 16 member

countries. NRDS preparation in 5 other member countries are in the final stages, and are waiting for the approval by the governments. Among the 9 new countries, three countries, Angola, Niger and Sudan, already completed their NRDS.

Through their NRDS-II, most of the CARD member countries have set **achieving self-sufficiency in rice production** as their goal. This trend reflects the increasing pressure of rice importation on the governments and the growing importance of ensuring food security through **rice-based food systems**.

As alluded earlier, the NRDS-II of several member countries acknowledges the challenges in sustainably expanding the area under rice cultivation and hence largely prioritize on enhancing on-farm productivity through facilitation of access to appropriate inputs and technologies.

In those member countries where the NRDS-II has already been validated, the implementation has begun through on-going rice-related projects and new budget allocations from the government and development partners on distribution of inputs (such as seeds and fertilizers).

2. Progress in preparing and implementing the Regional Rice Development Strategy (RRDS):

The meeting acknowledged that the ultimate purpose of RRDS shall be to **streamline the rice value chain developmental activities and markets** within a given regional economic community (REC). Given the importance of rice in food security and trade, almost all the RECs in Africa have expressed interest in joining the second phase of CARD as its SC members.

These include East African Community (EAC), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and Southern African Development Community (SADC). While RECs such as COMESA, ECCAS and SADC are yet to begin the process of

setting up their RRDS; ECOWAS and EAC have started making significant progress in preparing their RRDS.

The strategic framework for rice value chain development in the ECOWAS region is narrated through its 'Rice Offensive' program. ECOWAS aims to achieve regional self-sufficiency in rice production and has drawn out an action plan for a five-year period, 2020-2025. The meeting observed that besides CARD, other agencies such as GIZ, Gates Foundation, AfricaRice, WB, IsDB and other partners are also involved in the implementation of ECOWAS' strategies on rice sector development.

ECOWAS is planning to institutionalize the implementation of its strategies through '**ECOWAS Rice Observatory (ERO)**'. Housed within the ECOWAS commission at Abuja, Nigeria; the ERO will coordinate investments and offer policy recommendations to key decision-makers. ERO will be governed by a board comprised of development partners, institutions and national chapters. The national chapters will align the aspirations of NRDS in member countries and ensure Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) standards.

EAC has started the process of designing their RRDS by first setting up an EAC Regional Rice Platform (ERRP) that includes representations from both public and private sectors. CARD has provided technical assistance to the platform members in analysing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to rice sector development in member countries and the region at large.

EAC intends to focus on improving the **on-farm productivity and regional trade** through improved coordination of research, policies and investments along the rice value chain. Through further technical and financial support from CARD and other development partners, the EAC's rice development strategy (EARDS) is expected to be drafted and validated by 2022.

3. Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

Although CARD was able to achieve its overall target of doubling rice production in its first phase; one of the key lessons learnt from its performance evaluation exercise was lack of a clear set of indicators that could help track the progress of NRDS implementation at country- and regional levels.

In consultations with steering committee members and NRDS taskforce members of its member countries, the CARD Secretariat developed and presented a new M&E framework at initiative-, regional- and country levels. It consists of a common set of indicators for tracking the overall progress of the CARD at all the three levels. These include (1) total paddy production, (2) area under rice cultivation, (3) average yield from across the ecosystems, and (4) rice self-sufficiency rate.

In addition, a separate set of two indicators each under the four (R, I, C and E) components are included for tracking the progress on NRDS and RRDS implementation at the country level. These include (R-1) area under irrigation, (R-2) quantity of seeds of resilient rice varieties produced, (I-1) industrial milling capacity, (I-2) mechanization level in rice production, (C-1) share of local rice in the mainstream markets, (C-2) quantity of seeds of high yielding varieties produced, (E-1) smallholder farmers' accessibility to financial services, and (E-2) smallholder farmers' accessibility to training and technical services.

CARD Secretariat also presented an operational plan for tracking the indicators at country level and cumulatively at regional and continental level. The plan will rely on collection of secondary data from FAO and national bureaus of statistics and line ministries, and primary data by engaging enumerators (where necessary) for setting baselines and tracking the targets under each indicator.

Through an annual review meeting at country level, the taskforce members will assess the progress made under the M&E framework and feed the validated data onto the CARD

website for wider-sharing. CARD Secretariat sought additional funds from SC members and other stakeholders for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation.

The meeting expressed some concerns on the availability of primary data, methodologies, technical and financial support for data collection. The meeting also raised some reservations on the reliability of 'share of local rice' and 'industrial milling capacity' as indicators; and requested the CARD Secretariat to reexamine before finalizing them. By and large, the meeting appreciated the efforts made by the CARD Secretariat and approved the CARD's new M&E framework.

4. Panel discussions

4a) Regional Rice Development Strategy

Given the insufficiency in local rice production, regional economic blocs in Africa are facing challenges in regulating the trading of rice from both within and outside their region. One of the objectives of the second phase of CARD was to streamline and attain synergies amongst the rice value chain development activities in CARD member countries in the regional economic communities (RECs). CARD provides technical and financial assistance in drawing and implementing a roadmap in alignment with the overarching vision of the RECs on integrating the national economies and markets.

A group of panelists deliberated on the progress and significance of developing and implementing the RRDS towards the goal of doubling rice production in Africa. The discussions concluded that (1) the RRDS should help member countries build synergies on rice value chain development, and thereby help achieve the targets set under their NRDSs, (2) reforms leading to increased movements of capital (public and private investments) and technologies (including seeds, machineries) can help regional economic blocs 'integrate rice development and trade' amongst member countries and the rest of Africa, and (3) CARD and other development partners should help those RECs that haven't yet developed their RRDS prepare by 2022-23, through technical and financial assistance.

The meeting asserted that engagement of RECs in developing and implementing RRDS shall open new vistas in rice production, investments, trade and policies in Africa.

4b) Promoting industrialization along the rice value chain

Industrialization is an important element of CARD's R.I.C.E approach. It implies engagement of rural and urban enterprises (small, medium and large) in production, processing, value addition and marketing of the locally produced rice in CARD member countries. The panel discussions at GM8 focused on how industrialization could help transform the rice sector in Africa.

The panelists concluded that (1) industrialization would imply enhancement of the competitiveness of locally produced rice through higher productivity, quality enhancement, job creation and wider socio-economic transformation, (2) lower scale of economies (production, aggregation and processing), inadequate private investments and insufficient financing mechanisms for private sector act as major bottlenecks for industrialization, (3) these weaknesses could be addressed through political will, infrastructure upgrading, incentives, productivity-enhancing technologies, building skills, and (4) a holistic integration of value chain actors from across the food systems and other economic sectors will make the industrialization more effective, resilient, inclusive and sustainable.

5. Other activities of CARD

Besides providing technical assistance in preparing and implementing the NRDS and RRDS in member countries, CARD Secretariat successfully organized a webinar on the impacts of COVID-19 on rice value chain development and competitiveness on 25th of February, 2021. The webinar was opened by Hon. Minister Gaoussou Toure, Ministry of Rice Promotion, Cote d'Ivoire and attended by about 250 participants.

In partnership with Agriculture Policy Research in Africa (APRA), CARD engaged NRDS task force members from Eastern Africa at East Africa Rice Conference 2021. The conference provided an opportunity for the taskforce members to discuss and share experiences on the

challenges and emerging opportunities in rice sector development and efforts that will be required ensure adequate domestic production to fulfill the ever-increasing demand for rice.

CARD also partnered with IRRI and engaged NRDS taskforces from member countries in an independent dialog under UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS). The dialog brought together a range of stakeholders across the food system, from producers to value chain actors, consumers and policymakers, to respond to the challenges in building sustainable rice value chain in a post-COVID 19 context.

Way Forward:

CARD will improve coordination developmental activities along the rice value chain in all the member countries by engaging CARD-SC members and other development partners at country level. CARD will provide technical assistance to taskforce members in those countries where NRDS is not yet prepared and validated. In countries where NRDS-II is already validated, CARD will assist taskforce identify gaps in funding and develop bankable project concepts, the execution of which will lead to concrete implementation of the NRDS-II at country level.

At regional level, CARD will work closely with ERO Secretariat and develop projects, build partnerships, and mobilize resources for ECOWAS' regional action plan. CARD will extend technical assistance to EAC Secretariat in preparing and validating East African Regional Rice Development Strategy (ERDS). Upon validation, CARD will support East African Rice Platform in developing project concepts for implementing the ERDS. With additional financial support from SC members and other development partners, CARD will support COMESA, ECCAS and SADC in preparing a roadmap for rice development in their respective regions.

CARD will review the new M&E framework based on the suggestions made at the meeting. By engaging the NRDS taskforce members in each member country and region, baselines and targets for indicators (Overall and R.I.C.E.) will be decided, in accordance with the aspirations of the NRDS and RRDS respectively. Where necessary, enumerators will be engaged for setting the baselines and tracking the progression at periodic intervals. CARD

will also organize annual review meetings in member countries to apprise the progress on implementation through the M&E framework. The results will be shared with the stakeholders to make informed decisions to gear and sustain NRDS implementation in member countries.

The meeting vowed to strengthen partnerships amongst African governments, private sector, Steering Committee members, South-South Collaboration partners, regional economic blocs and other development partners and institutions towards achieving CARD's goal of re-doubling the rice production in Sub-Saharan Africa.