

11 March 2026  
Antananarivo, Madagascar

## The 10<sup>th</sup> CARD General Meeting Co-chairs' Summary

The 10<sup>th</sup> General Meeting (GM10) of Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD) was organized by CARD Secretariat during March 10-11, 2026, at Novotel Hotel in Antananarivo, Madagascar. NRDS focal points and delegates from 30 of 32 member countries and representatives from CARD's steering committee organizations namely African Development Bank (AfDB), AfricaRice, African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), AGRA, African Union (AUDA-NEPAD), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences (JIRCAS), World Bank, World Food Program (WFP), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) were present.

Mr. Tolojanahary L. Rakotondranaivo the NRDS Focal point and Director for Department of Crop Production, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in Madagascar chaired the proceedings on day-1 and Mr. Mohammed Abakar, Director for Agriculture and Rural Development in ECCAS and Mr. Tobie Ondo Manga, Inspector General, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Cameroon co-chaired on day-2.

### Opening

Mr. Tolojanahary L. Rakotondranaivo warmly welcomed the participants to Madagascar. He asserted **doubling rice production in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)** as the central theme of the meeting and urged the participants to learn from each other and strengthen cooperation for attaining self-sufficiency in rice.

Delivering the keynote Speech; Mr. Hiroyuki Yamaguchi, the Vice President of JICA, explained how CARD's goal of doubling rice production in SSA is aligned with AU's Kampala CAADP declaration on building resilient and sustainable agrifood systems to meet the food security needs of 2.5 billion people in Africa by 2050. Citing the impacts of recent global shocks such as COVID 19 and other geopolitical unrests on mobility, supply chains, and government expenditures; Mr. Yamaguchi highlighted the need for a holistic approach for

improving resilience through increased rice productivity and grain quality and reducing climate vulnerability and market volatility. He assured JICA's continued support for rice sector development through technical cooperation and financial assistance on irrigation, production, mechanization, postharvest handling and marketing in CARD member countries. He appealed to the participants to share the progress made and lessons learnt and identify new areas of collaboration.

Dr. Jean Jacques Muhinda, Regional Director, East and Southern Africa, AGRA mentioned that besides addressing food security, the CARD's goal of doubling rice production could also create more jobs, induce economic growth, and promote resilience in Africa. Hence, strengthening rice sector development is important for improving macroeconomic and political stability in member countries. In this regard, the GM10 provides an opportunity for recalibration of strategies and renewed acceleration of implementation, he asserted. AGRA has invested more than 40 million USD in rice value chain development across member countries and regional blocs. Going forward, AGRA will additionally focus on facilitating rice-related policy and trade and position women and youth across the rice value chain through business incubation and capacity building activities.

Assuring a steadfast commitment from FAO; Dr. Meshack Malo, Deputy Regional Representative for Africa, asserted that given a growing rice import bill, self-sufficiency is a desirable goal under the NRDS. However, to ensure operationalization of the NRDS, the priorities need to be fully integrated into the National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP) by developing bankable business cases. He further called for strengthening of the coalition of stakeholders from across the SSA to collectively address challenges that extend beyond technologies, infrastructure and finance.

Underscoring technological solutions as a driving force for doubling rice production, Dr. Prem Bindraban, Deputy Director General and Director of Research and Innovation, AfricaRice outlined the importance of enhancing the impacts of Rice Science through cooperation and synergies among the value chain actors to attain self-sufficiency in member countries. Through Science Weeks, AfricaRice identifies the needs, designs business cases and creates social constructs by aligning institutions, value chain actors and supporters.

The General Meeting was officially opened by Mr. Tiana Fabien Randriambololona, Secretary General, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Madagascar. He thanked the CARD Secretariat for organizing the GM10 in Madagascar and extended a warm welcome to the participants on behalf of the people of Madagascar. Asserting Madagascar government's position on rice sector development, he expressed delight that the GM10 will unite other African countries and technical- and development partners around the concept of food security through rice sector development in Africa. He encouraged the participants to share progress and experiences through mutual respect, solidarity, and collective participation.

Highlighting the importance of rice sector development in Africa through CARD phase-2 (2019-2030); Mr. Shinjiro Amameishi, the General Coordinator of the CARD Secretariat informed the participants that the share of rice in total production of the four major staple food crops (including wheat, maize and cassava) and the share of rice imports in SSA has increased significantly since 2020. Although the area under rice cultivation in Africa is increasing faster than expected, the average yield level has not increased as expected under phase-2. Comparing with the speed and scale with which rice production increased during green revolution in Asia, Mr. Amameishi pointed out that national budget allocation for agriculture sector in Asian countries ranged between 15.4% and 9.6%, whereas in SSA it remains low at 2.55%. He stressed on the need for strong leadership and commitment from African leaders and stakeholders to achieve the CARD's goal of doubling rice production by 2030.

## Panel Discussions

On March the 9<sup>th</sup>, prior to day-1, the GM10 participants attended two parallel sessions of panel discussions on 4 thematic sessions: -

Deliberations on **climate change** highlighted the importance of adaptation measures for minimizing the negative impacts of rising temperatures on rice yields in CARD member countries. The panelists presented evidences on how technological improvements such as heat-tolerant varieties, integrated cultural practices, water-saving agronomic practices such as System of Rice Intensification (SRI), and community-based participatory approaches for land and water improvement in lowlands/swamps (Smart Valleys) could reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change on doubling the rice production.

The thematic session on **inclusive rice farming** emphasized that equitable rights, gender-responsive climate-smart innovations, inclusive infrastructure and extension services, and inclusive leadership are important for doubling and sustaining the rice production. Underscoring the concept of inclusion as an economic necessity, the panel called on the CARD member countries to utilize CARD's policy brief on inclusiveness and integrate the outlined actions into National- and Regional Rice Development Strategies (NRDS and RRDS).

Panel discussions on **marketing and trading** highlighted the need for market-driven approaches to doubling the rice production and value chain upgrading in CARD member countries. By presenting evidence, the panelists argued that domestic price insulation policies in several African countries are ineffective in protecting consumers from price volatility. On the contrary, the current price protection policies seem to aggravate domestic price volatility, especially when local and/or global rice production and supply wobble. The

panelists recommended rules-based policy reforms for improving rice trade at national, regional, and global levels.

Discussions on **enhancement of on-farm rice productivity** flagged up declining soil health due to phosphorous deficiency and limited access to fertilizers as major constraints in improving rice productivity across several CARD member countries. The panelists presented promising research and practical innovations, including improved rice varieties adapted to nutrient-poor soils, efficient fertilizer management techniques such as localized phosphorus application and integrated soil fertility management combining organic and mineral inputs. The participants acknowledged that these innovations have significant potential to improve yields, resilience, and sustainability of rice production systems. They also stressed the importance of strengthening collaboration amongst research institutions, governments, extension services and development partners to accelerate dissemination and scaling-up of these technologies.

## Agenda 1: Report of the previous 9<sup>th</sup> General Meeting and Progress of CARD's Phase-2

Mr. Amameishi, General Coordinator of the CARD Secretariat, provided an overview of the overall goal and targets for CARD phase-2 (2019-2030). Recalling the messages from the stakeholders at the previous ninth CARD's General Meeting (GM9), he elaborated on the progress made by the CARD Secretariat under each of the recommendations from the GM9. Outlining the Resilience (R), Industrialization (I), Competitiveness (C) and Empowerment (E) elements of the R.I.C.E. approach that CARD promotes in member countries, the General Coordinator highlighted the following: -

- Rice was harvested from a total of 18,177,700 Ha in SSA in 2024 against CARD's target of 18,666,667 Ha by 2030
- With an average yield of 2.11 t/Ha, the cumulative paddy production in SSA stood at 38,343,859 tons in 2024 against a targeted 56 million tons of paddy at 3.0 t/Ha by 2030
- The local rice production accounted for 58.3% of the total consumption (self-sufficiency rate) in 2023
- Based on the suggestions from 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of CARD Steering Committee (SC20); CARD Secretariat has: -
  - leveraged Annual Rice Sector Review Meeting (ARSRM) to garner financial and/or technical support from Rikolto, IRRI, IsDB, IFAD, WB and FAO in CARD member countries
  - encouraged private sector participation in the ARSRMs at country- and regional levels

- engaged African Union (AU) for augmenting alignment of NRDS and RRDS with continental agenda with Kampala CAADP declaration
- approached Steering Committee members with clear and specific plans (Concept Notes) from the member countries
- Since the SC20 meeting (July 2024): -
  - 9 more CARD member countries had validated their NRDS
  - 14 more member countries had elaborated concept notes for promoting implementation of their NRDS
  - The Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) framework has been established in 6 more member countries
  - A revised M&E methodology that accommodates flexibility in the choice of indicators (based on availability of secondary data in member countries) has been ushered-in
  - ARSRMs had been held in 11 member countries
  - CARD's phase-2 agenda is being promoted in ECOWAS through collaborations with ECOWAS Rice Observatory (ERO)
  - M&E activities and fund mobilization for EAC Rice Development Strategy (ERDS) implementation are facilitated through collaborations with EAC Rice Platform (ERP) and EAC Secretariat
  - Finalization and validation of regional strategies for ECCAS and SADC are in progress
  - Finalized a policy brief for 'Inclusive growth: Empowering women and youth in rice farming in Africa'
  - Resumed publishing monthly newsletter, with about 1,544 subscribers and stepped-up information-sharing through CARD's website which now has an average of 198 views/day

## Agenda 2: Achievements of NRDS formulation and implementation process and lessons learned

Representatives from seven CARD member countries namely Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania, where the progress on NRDS formulation and implementation processes are quite visible, shared their best practices and challenges. Besides a greater alignment with overarching strategic priorities of the agriculture sector, the NRDS in these countries have elaborated action/investment plans for achieving the goals and objectives. Market demand for the locally produced rice also provides a competitive edge in these countries.

Such factors provided them with a head start on mobilization of resources, private sector participation, institutional coordination, and value chain upgrading. The speakers however emphasized that several challenges such as climate change, inadequate human and technical capacities on research & extension, low adoption of improved technologies (especially seeds and machineries), weaker coordination among the rice value chain actors, and insufficient availability and quality of data impede the pace of rice sector development in their countries.

### Agenda 3: Updates on NRDS formulation and implementation from the rest of the CARD member countries

Representatives from the remaining 23 CARD member countries explained the status of NRDS formulation and implementation processes. While some countries are in an advanced stage of executing concept notes from their NRDS, a few countries are still in the process of formulating/validating their NRDS. The speakers mentioned that while they generally receive strong support from the government for the NRDS processes, there is a need for championing the intent with adequate institutional budget allocation for rice sector development.

Although most countries generally aim to achieve self-sufficiency in rice, inadequate actions on tackling climate-change related issues such as drought, floods, pest outbreaks, greenhouse gas (GHG) emission through rice production slow down the pace of rice sector development. With meager private sector participation and other competing priorities of socio-economic development, public-private partnerships in the rice value chains are presently scarce in several countries.

Going forward, the representatives nevertheless expressed confidence in gearing up the NRDS implementation in their respective countries. They shared information on several new rice-related projects under the CARD phase-2 that are sponsored by government, development partners and regional research institutions such as IRRI and AfricaRice. The speakers also revealed action plans for improving coordination among the rice value chain actors, arranging stakeholder platforms, conducting periodic M&E data collection, organizing Annual Rice Sector Review Meeting (ARSRM), and mobilizing resources from development partners for realizing the objectives of their NRDS.

### Agenda 4: How to accelerate CARD phase-2 Process

Mr. Amameishi reported that although the total rice production in CARD member countries has been steadily increasing, it remains at about 38.3 million tons in 2024. Given a target of 56 million tons by 2030 under CARD's phase-2, however, the current pace of growth in rice production is significantly below the expectation. One of the main reasons why rice production is not progressing at the expected rate is the low on-farm productivity, especially

under rainfed lowland environment. To accelerate CARD phase-2, it is essential to pursue productivity improvements. As presented by AfricaRice and IRRI, it requires leveraging research outcomes into tangible impacts at farm level and improving farmers' access to necessary inputs such as high-quality seeds.

Agricultural research and development (R&D) offer some of the highest rates of return among all the rural development investments. It is required to further strengthen R&D activities and implement many projects for technology extension. Each CARD member country should secure sufficient financial resources for advancing the NRDS process, meaning resource mobilization should be given the highest priority. National governments must ensure adequate budget, while also focusing efforts on securing external funding from development partners (DPs). It is also essential to promote rice value chain development through private investments.

Dr. Clement Adjorlolo of **AU-NEPAD** explained how CAADP framework aligns African countries towards a shared goal of securing a resilient, inclusive and sustainable agrifood system, by enhancing the political profile of agriculture and establishing national and regional planning systems. Under Kampala CAADP strategy and action plan (2026-2035), AU Seed and Biotechnology Program (ASBP) provides facilitates seed policy & regulation, seed production & distribution, and farmers' access to quality seeds. Dr. Clement stated that the ASBP Partnership Platform is open to the CARD initiative for accelerating the release of improved varieties, climate-resilient seeds, regional harmonization, and stronger seed systems across the member states.

Ms. Makiko Taguchi of **FAO** informed the participants that rice cultivation contributes 12.2% of the GHG emission from agriculture and yet also suffers from climate disasters. The global methane pledge, which has been signed by 160 countries, aims to reduce emissions by 30% during 2020-2030. Under FAO's Actions for Reduction of Methane (FARM), FAO supports a global multi-stakeholder Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) which promotes large-scale adoption of sustainable practices across production and supply chains and public policy development in Africa and Asia. Further scaling up and scaling out of the SRP activities shall help increase the rice production in SSA more sustainably.

Dr. Prem Bindraban of **AfricaRice** elaborated 3 intervention domains namely Agro-technologies, Business Opportunities and Social Constructs, that AfricaRice could accelerate rice production in SSA. AfricaRice promotes development of Smart Valleys and improved varieties as key important agro-technologies for intensifying rice production in inland valleys (Massive Scaling), generates business opportunities in seed production & distribution and parboiling of rice, and creates social constructs through policies, farmer organizations and knowledge centers across Africa.

Dr. Abdelbagi Ismail of **IRRI** emphasized the importance of establishing robust rice seed systems in CARD member countries to improve awareness, access, capacities and private

sector participation for replacing the old varieties with modern resilient and high yielding varieties – for doubling the rice production. He also outlined mitigation measures for reducing GHG emission through early-maturing, low-emitting rice varieties, and good agronomic practices such as direct seeding, alternate wetting and drying, laser leveling, proper water-, fertilizer- and solid waste management, and value addition.

Dr. Jean Jacques Muhinda of **AGRA** informed that the rice value chain is prioritized in 8 of the 12 countries in focus, namely Burkina Faso, Kenya, Ghana, Mozambique, Mali, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda. By strategically aligning the investments with that from public sector, private sector and other development partners; AGRA supports rice breeding, input distribution, inclusive finance, and access to markets at national level. At regional level, AGRA has been supporting ECOWAS, EAC, and COMESA through collaborative regional rice initiatives. He underlined the need to nurture a conducive ecosystem for rice value chain actors at national and regional levels to accelerate rice production in SSA.

Dr. Hitoshi Fujii of **JICA** outlined various project activities for rice sector development in SSA through technical cooperation, loans and grants. Broadly classifying CARD member countries based on (1) high consumption & production, (2) high consumption & low production, and (3) low consumption & production; Dr. Fujii proposed that countries should prioritize their interventions on value chain development in accordance with appropriate strategic trajectories. He also proposed that through mutualism and synergism, the member states in regional economic communities shall collectively address common issues such as seed production, mechanization, fertilizer distribution and climate change, and enable 'integrated input markets' for promoting private investments in rice value chain. He reasserted JICA's continued support for various sub-sectors and CARD-related rice projects in SSA and urged other SC members and national governments to increase their contributions to accelerate doubling of rice production in SSA.

## Agenda 5: Acceleration of Resource Mobilization of NRDS through M&E, ARSRM and other activities

Based on lessons learnt from phase-I (2008-2018), the CARD's phase-II activities have included annual monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of progress on implementation of the NRDS in member countries. By choosing M&E indicators for which secondary data are available, the NRDS taskforces in CARD member countries establish M&E frameworks that could effectively track the overall rice sector development, resilience (R), industrialization (I), competitiveness (C) and empowerment (E) of value chain actors in their respective countries.

The M&E results are then formally shared through an annual report to the stakeholders by organizing ARSRM. By bringing together the government officials, DPs and private sector; the ARSRM enables the stakeholders to make informed decisions, confirm their action plans, allocate more resources, announce further commitments, and collectively agree on

actions towards implementation of the NRDS. The M&E framework is already established in 26 (of 32) CARD member countries and is presently under preparation in the remaining 3 countries. Baseline data are established in 22 countries and are being collected in 7 countries. ARSRM has been organized in 11 member countries so far.

The presenters urged the participating representatives of member countries to sustainably patronize the M&E process and actively engage the stakeholders through ARSRM and other sensitization and resource mobilization avenues such as Agriculture Sector Working Group meetings, round table meeting of donors, and official visits to DPs' offices. The NRDS taskforce members were also requested to arrange official communications, through request letters from relevant line ministries to DPs, seeking funds for executing the project concept notes under the NRDS.

### Agenda 6: Promotion of Sub-regional Level Activities through RECs

Regional Economic Communities (RECs) play a pivotal role in convening the member states and aligning the NRDS, rice standards and investment priorities across their respective regions. Through structural and institutional coordination, the RECs also help ensure implementation of the Regional Rice Development Strategies (RRDS) within regional and continental frameworks.

The representatives from the RECs at GM10 acknowledged that CARD has played a vital role in formulating RRDS, and in organizing the ARSRM and other stakeholder meetings in the regional blocs. They however emphasized that more efforts are needed to enhance intra- and inter-regional rice trade and improve the competitiveness of the locally produced rice. Using RRDS as a stepping-stone, the CARD member countries were urged to leverage the opportunities provided by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and attract greater private sector investments in rice production, marketing and trading.

It was agreed that RECs could promote integration of the regional rice value chains by supporting cross-border aggregation, processing, quality assurance systems, and market information platforms. The presenters put forth a strong need to improve coordination, management, and feedback between national and sub-regional levels, by strengthening the technical and institutional capacities of the REC Secretariats.

### Agenda 8: Approval of New CARD Member Countries

Since the last GM (GM9 in July 2023), five new countries had formally expressed their interest in joining the CARD's phase-2 namely, Equatorial Guinea, Mauritania, Somalia, South Sudan and Zimbabwe. The stakeholders unanimously adopted the motion for new memberships for all the above five countries. The total number of CARD's member countries has henceforth increased from 32 to 37.

## Agenda 9: Next Steps

The tenth General Meeting (GM10) affirmed that although achieving the CARD Phase 2 target might seem quite ambitious, each CARD member country and REC must advance the NRDS and RRDS processes, by prioritizing lobbying for funding to realize the project concept notes, collecting and analyzing data based on the M&E framework, holding ARSRMs based on the results of M&E activities, and take other necessary policy actions for effective implementation of the NRDS.

The GM10 asserted that the CARD Secretariat must support resource mobilization for both the NRDS and RRDS through (a) national governments, (b) development partners (DPs), and (c) private sector investment. Each CARD member country and REC are required to broadly pursue possibilities from (a) to (c) with the support of the CARD Secretariat.

To promote sustainable rice development beyond 2030 (CARD's phase 2), the GM10 confirmed the need to enhance the leadership and ownership of NRDS taskforce in each CARD member country. In collaboration with relevant organizations at the continental and sub-regional levels such as the AUC, AUDA-NEPAD and RECs, the CARD Secretariat and the NRDS TF should ensure alignment of CARD Phase2 activities with continental agendas such as the Kampala CAADP Declaration.

At the regional level, it is desirable that the CARD Phase 2 process will be internalized within each REC, by capturing the RRDS' action plans under and Regional Agricultural Investment Plans (RAIP) and by reporting the ARSRM results to higher-level advisory bodies (sectoral councils, board meetings).

## Recommendations

The GM10 urged the stakeholders to gear up the promotion of CARD Phase 2 activities during the remaining period (2026-2030) by urging the following: -

### (a) CARD member countries

- Promote market-oriented production of rice through the NRDS
- Understand that resource mobilization, particularly on productivity improvements with particular attention to the rainfed lowland, should be promoted with highest priority
- Advance other NRDS processes, such as
  - lobbying for funding to realize project concept notes by approaching (a) national governments, (b) development partners (DPs), and (c) private sector investments
  - Conduct M&E activities by reviewing M&E framework if necessary, and collect and analyze data

- Hold ARSRMs and share the evidence with national and regional stakeholders to confirm progress, challenges, and make informed decisions on future actions towards achieving the goal

#### (b) CARD Secretariat

- Support the above-mentioned activities in CARD member countries
- Support sub-regional activities in close collaboration with RECs
- Promote sustainable rice development from a medium- to long-term perspective beyond 2030 by strengthening leadership and ownership of CARD member countries and RECs
- Strengthen relationship with relevant organizations at continental level such as AUC, AfCFTA Secretariat, etc. and ensure better alignments with continental agendas such as the Kampala CAADP Declaration
- Identify and disseminate key emerging thematic issues (such as climate change, GHG emission, and sustainable production and trading practices) that are critical for rice development in SSA

#### (c) Steering Committee members

##### RECs

- Complement and promote the NRDS process in Partner/Member states through RRDS
- Advance sub-regional level challenges on cross-border movements of goods (including both farm inputs and outputs), services and capital investments for integrating rice value chain development
- Report to higher-level advisory bodies (sectoral councils, board meetings, etc.) on ARSRM reports and other evidence-based policy actions on regional integration of the rice value chain

##### Development partners and research institutions

- Intensify collaborations with all CARD's Phase2 activities at both country and regional levels
- Robust involvement in CARD Phase2 through technical and financial support for implementing NRDS and RRDS activities including but not restricted to: -
  - Endorsing NRDS/RRDS-based project concept notes and other cross-cutting issues under sustainable food systems development
  - Country-based support for annual activities under the NRDS and RRDS, such as M&E data collection, organization of ARSRM for the stakeholders, and other policy dialogues on rice sector development