

Technical Report

Africa RISING

Sustainable Intensification of Key Farming Systems in the Sudano-Sahelian Zone

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Submitted to

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Introduction

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is supporting multi-stakeholder agricultural research projects to sustainably intensify key African farming systems as part of the U.S. government's 'Feed the Future' initiative to address global hunger and food security issues in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). It is also a way of bringing regional focus to the CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs) on Integrated Systems, especially CRPs 1.1 and 1.2.

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) is the lead institute for developing and implementing the Sudano-Sahelian zone project. This project primarily focuses on maize- and rice-based production systems in northern Ghana and sorghum-based production systems in southern Mali but is intended to result in spill-over effects to other similar agroecological zones. These two regions were chosen based on analysis of cropping systems, prevailing poverty, population levels, existing country development priorities, and the given potential for successfully improving agricultural productivity and livelihoods of the people.

The development of these regions will be based around research in best management practices for sustainable intensification of agricultural production. This requires well-coordinated efforts involving multiple donors, regional organizations, partner universities, the private sector, national and international agricultural research institutes, and non-government organizations (NGOs). The regional research approach will also provide the foundation for scaling-up and -out technologies through broad partnerships and links to country-based Feed the Future programs.

The project is part of a larger program that will be implemented in three larger geographical regions of Africa: eastern and southern Africa, Ethiopian Highlands, and the Sudano-Sahelian Zone of West Africa. The Program was given the title ***Africa RISING - Africa Research in Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation***.

The Project started in October 2011 when funds for year 1 were transferred to IITA.

Summary of progress during January to March 2012

Cross-systems activities

1. Organization of project design/inception workshop

The Project Coordination Unit, in close collaboration with USAID, organized a project design/inception workshop from 9-12 January in Tamale, Ghana. It was attended by representatives from donor agencies, regional agricultural research and development organization, the USAID missions from Ghana, Mali and West Africa, relevant ministries, research and extension organizations, NGOs, private sector, US universities, CGIAR centers, and other advanced national and international research institutions.

In addition to officially launching the project, the purpose of this workshop was to seek the interest and support of other donor agencies and the USAID missions. Other objectives were to agree upon the project's overall targets, purpose, expected outcomes and the required partners beyond the CGIAR and associated centers. The meeting could not reach agreement on all but proposed the following:

Project purpose

- Achieve enhanced livelihoods of rural populations, particularly of women and children, of the Sudano-Sahelian (savanna) zone of West Africa through sufficiently improved food, nutrition and, income security and conservation or enhancement of the natural resource base

Project objectives

- Identify, combine, and test (adapt and develop sustainable farming technologies and practices
- Effectively deliver and scale-out research outputs to end-users
- Effective management and linkages

Project outcomes

- Sustainable increase of whole farm productivity
- Improved on- and off-farm natural resource management
- Reduced vulnerability of target population (especially women and children) and farming systems to adverse environmental and economic changes
- Increased nutritional and economic levels of the target populations (especially women and children)
- One additional on functional partnerships, effective project management, and strengthened capacity (tbd)

It was decided to revise the objectives, outcomes, and the purpose; and try to harmonize them across the three regions after the workshops for the Ethiopian Highlands and the eastern/southern Africa projects. It should be noted that this is still not concluded.

It was also decided that a scientifically rigorous research design plan would be needed to ensure achievement of the outcomes. Jerry Glover assumed responsibility to coordinate a taskforce, which would prepare the research design plan and draw from CGIAR, NARS, and US university experts. The activity should be completed by 1 June. As the completion of this task would be achieved only after the start of the planting season in the two countries, it was decided to develop a fast track workplan until end of September 2012 (end of year 1) for quick-win activities on selected anchor sites.

IFPRI was charged with the site selection and characterization process for the longer term project. IFPRI will report separately on these activities.

The concept note should be revised and a logframe developed for years 2-5. USAID will write the introduction. This is in progress and will be concluded once the write-up of the introduction has been received.

The Coordinator was asked to establish a project Steering Committee whose membership and ToR have been discussed but not finally approved. The Steering Committee has not yet been established.

2. Sub-contracts with AfricaRice and ICRISAT

To allow the timely start of planning and implementation of the fast track workplan in the rice-based and sorghum/millet-based farming systems, IITA established sub-contracts with the two centers and released funds for the period February to April 2012.

3. Project staff recruitment and office establishment

In February, a systems agronomist was hired on a consultancy basis to lead the fast track workplan development and the revision of the concept note. Consultancy contracts were also signed with a project accountant and an interim project country coordinator who will take office in April to support the Project Coordinator. IITA and SARI also negotiated an agreement on the project office being hosted at SARI in Nyankpala, Tamale. From April 1 onwards, two rooms are assigned to the overall project management while additional two rooms will be used by IITA staff who will work on the maize-based systems. Under the same agreement, SARI seconds two scientists (agronomist and socio-economist) to IITA for implementation of the workplan in the maize-based systems. Project office equipment (computers, printers, furniture) have been ordered.

Farming systems based activities

1. Maize-based systems

A stakeholders' workshop was organized in Tamale on 28-29 March 2012. There were about 70 participants from national and international agricultural research institutes; universities; USAID mission in Ghana; development projects (Northern Rural Growth, Nandom Agricultural Project, and Rice Sector Support Project); local NGOs (Catholic Relief Services, Urban-Net, ACDEP, Cowpea Group, Seed PAG, Northern Guinea fowl Farmers' Association, and Yara Company); Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (SARI, Crops Research Institute, Food Research Institute, and Animal Research Institute); and the Ministries of Food and Agriculture and Health. Discussions included an agreement on the activities to be conducted within the fast track workplan, protocols, roles and responsibilities of partners, and timelines. Districts and communities for project implementation in the three regions were identified (Table 1).

Recruitment of additional project staff has been initiated.

Table 1. Africa RISING – Ghana: Districts and communities of maize-legume cropping systems activities

Region	District	Communities				
		1	2	3	4	5
Northern	1. West Gonja	Busunu	Sori No.1	Damongo Zongo	Joanokponto	Frafra No 4
	2. Sawlatiuna/Kalba	Jentilpe	Belma	Nakwabi	Ottayiri	Jindabo
	3. Yendi	Zakoli	Malzeri	Piong	Zang	Adibo
	4. Savelugu/Nanton	Duko	Libga	Kansheigu	Jana	Manguli
	5. Tolon/Kambungu	Kpachi	Tolon	Tingoli	Zugu	Dundo
Upper East	1. Bawku-West	Binaba	Tilli	Tanga	Googo	Yarigu
	2. Bongo	Dua	Yindongo	Namoo	Beo	Gowrie
	3. Talensi-Nabdam	Ningu	Sakote	Balungu	Baare	Winkongo
	4. Bawku Municipal	Binduri	Kardi	Nafkolga	Nayokor	Nikogo
Upper West	1. Wa East	Loggu	Bulenga	Kpalinye	Zinye	Naaha
	2. Sissala West	Sorbelle	Sibelle	Pulima	Jawali	Bullu
	3. Nadowli	Daffiama	Tabisese	Goriyiri	Kalsegra	Ombo
	4. Lawra	Naapal	Nandom Tanchara	Furo	Tuopari	Eremon Dazuri

2. Rice-based systems

AfricaRice organized a consultation meeting between AfricaRice and SARI, the lead national partner, at Tamale on 9-10 February, 2012. The partners agreed on the following:

- A logframe indicating the outcomes, outputs and activities up to September 2012;
- Project sites;
- Project implementation partners, their roles and responsibilities;
- Protocols for baseline, diagnostic and yield gap surveys
- Nutrient manager validation;
- Multi-stakeholder platform establishment;
- Community seed production, and
- Milestones and timelines for the seven activities identified for year 1.

Partners that will produce seeds under the project, as well as sources of foundation seeds for multiplication, were identified. AfricaRice trained Ghanaian partners on yield gap (two trainees) and diagnostic surveys (2 trainees) in Cotonou on 13-17 February 2012.

Sub-contracts between AfricaRice and its implementation partners (AVRDC, SARI) were signed and funds transferred accordingly for activities until end of April.

3. Sorghum/millet-based systems

In Mali, ICRISAT organized multi-stakeholder meetings in Bougouni (23 and 24 February 2012) and Koutiala (27 and 28 Feb 2012) to achieve a common understanding of the project goals and outcomes among key partners. The workshops yielded in a series of quick-win activities until September 2012. A set of partners and an initial listing of promising technologies were tested in the target sites, including an indication of their adoption.

Seeds of groundnut varieties were produced during the off-season on a 2-ha land to multiply seeds for farmer evaluations during 2012 in the project target areas. Quality sorghum seeds were acquired from certified seed producers for large-scale testing and mini-pack sales of seeds in the target regions of the project.

Methods for on-farm assessment of biomass were discussed with a range of experts, with a view towards assessing whole-farm productivity elements for use in modeling crop-livestock interactions. Discussions and seminars were held on local conventions for equitable land-use and improved natural resource management in southern Mali. Certain activities could only be initiated because of the evacuation of the ICRISAT lead scientist from Mali.

Links with other research and development projects

In Ghana, the Africa RISING project is linked to the following projects: N2-Africa, SANREM CRSP, Peanut CRSP, Drought Tolerant Maize for Africa, and the Rice Sector Support Project.

Lessons

The interest and commitment of the stakeholders in this project, including the government of Ghana, have been great and the project will build on this. The importance of effective communication and inclusiveness of all stakeholders for successful project implementation have also become clearer and will be a guiding principle.

The political instability in Mali has hindered effective implementation of some activities in the sorghum/millet based systems.

The various modifications made to the project after the Tamale workshop in January have given cause for concern on the partner side. The long process of the concept note revision and the development of the project logframe also caused discomfort.