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Report on Tanzania national rice conference held on 18th May 2021:

Key messages and outcomes

Introduction

Tanzania national rice conference, held on 18th May 2021 convened experts and stakeholders in Tanzania's rice sector to review the sector's performance and strategically plan for its future trajectory, given the importance of rice in the country.

The conference provided a platform to consolidate the efforts of key players in East Africa's rice sector to discuss six key themes mainly, (i) rice research and development, (ii) inclusive markets and value chains, (iii) gender and youth, (iv) integrated rice sector development in a changing climate, (v) inclusive finance and investment and (vi) agricultural policy reforms.

The conference, which was held in Julius Nyerere International Conference Centre, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania was attended by extension agents, farmers, traders, processors, NGOs, financial institutions, the media, and Ministry of Agriculture officials who were involved in coordinating the implementation of the second phase of the National Rice Development Strategy (NRDS II).



Figure 1: Conference participants just before the start of the national conference

The conference was organised by organisations including the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Agricultural Policy Research in Africa (APRA), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD), Africa Rice, and the Centre for African Bio-Entrepreneurship (CABE).

Tanzania national conference was held simultaneously with similar conferences in seven East African countries, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, and Mozambique. The conference participants virtually joined other East African participants in a regional conference which was held on 19th and 20th May.

The opening session

The participants were welcomed by Professor Aida Isinika, APRA Research lead Tanzania and MS Ridda Dailly, JICA, Dar-es-Salaam. Virtual opening remarks were relayed from Dr Abdelbagi Ismail, IRRI's regional representative for Africa and conference organising committee chair, and Dr Yusuke Haneshi, General Coordinator, CARD secretariat Eastern Africa. Ismail emphasized on the need to work together for a rice secure Africa while Yusuke spoke on the progress and pitfalls of implementing the National Rice Research Development Strategies (NRDS) in East Africa.



Figure 2: Aida Isinika gives opening remarks

The opening remarks set the pace for the conference whose objectives were: (i) to facilitate knowledge exchange on rice sector research and development at the national and regional levels (ii) to take stock of public, private and donor-supported initiatives to inform and improve policy implementation (iii) to provide room for stakeholders to identify new national, regional and global opportunities for multi-stakeholder collaboration to be self-sufficient in rice, increase food and nutrition security and alleviate poverty through inclusive and sustainable production and commercialisation of rice.

The national workshop was opened by Geoffrey Maregesi who represented professor Siza Tumbo, deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Tanzania. Maregesi noted the opportunities and challenges that face the rice sub-sector in Tanzania and highlighted the focus of the second NRDS II which is 'to sustain national self-sufficiency in rice production and contribute to regional self-sufficiency to make Tanzania a market leader in the region'. He pointed out the national strategic objectives and the priority areas of intervention which include improving climate resilience for the rice value chain, strengthening extension services, improving policy environment, and enhancing competitiveness of regional markets.

Thematic presentations, discussions, and suggested interventions

The opening session was followed by presentations across six key themes which were divided into two groups. The first theme which was *Tanzania rice Strategy* had two presentations *Rice Development Strategy (Phase II)* and *commercialisation of rice farming in Kilombero cluster*. The theme on *National rice research and development* had two presentations on *trends, achievements, and future direction of rice research in Tanzania*, and the *contribution of centres of excellence to regional rice development in Tanzania*. The two presentations on the theme *rice-based livelihoods: gender and youth integration* were *rice commercialisation and empowerment* and *the extent of youth participation and benefit in agricultural value chains*.



Figure 3: An underway plenary session

The theme *inclusive markets and value chains* had two presentations on building inclusive rice value chains in East Africa and inclusive value chain development in Tanzania. Under the theme *inclusive finance and investment* were presentations on *the implications for smallholder inclusion in meeting the agricultural value chain financing needs and financing agricultural value chains in Tanzania*. The final

presentation was on *rice sector development in a changing climate*. After the presentations were plenary and group discussion sessions which made recommendations as shown in table 2 below.

Table 1: Recommendations for rice value chain development in Tanzania

Theme	Key issues	Recommendations
1. Agricultural policy reforms	1) Less funding for rice development projects. 2) Lack of continuity between (ASDP I) and ASDP II) e.g., plans to consolidate QDS production and dissemination. 3) Changing food habits due to urbanization has increased the demand for rice.	1) Expedite the implementation of the government's plan under Tanzania Official Seed Certification Institution (TOSCI) to increase staff for QDS. 2) Strengthen collective marketing by cooperatives and farmer's groups. 3) Promote best practices to enhance productivity and commercialisation.
2. Rice research and development	1) High post-harvest losses. 2) Lack of farm roads limits mechanisation such as combine harvesters. 3) Lack of innovation in post-harvest processes, hence reducing the quality and shelf life of rice. 4) Low prices due to poor quality rice.	1) Expedite the Ministry of Agriculture's plan to post-harvest loss for various research on crops including rice. 2) Provide tax incentives to increase the importation of mills that can remove dust during rice polishing. 3) Monitoring of value chain actors by traders, processor, exporters, and government regulators to curb practices that compromise the quality of milled rice.
3. Inclusive markets and value chains	1) Lack of consistent supply of suitable varieties for different agroecological zones and markets. 2) Failure of different market models such as contract farming and warehouse receipt system.	1) Improve the seed system to provide area-specific varieties. 2) Promote SARO5 for trade (local and export); but develop alternative varieties to minimize risk of diseases; strengthen border markets.

Theme	Key issues	Recommendations
	<p>3) Uncoordinated marketing system and unharmonized measurements and standards.</p>	<p>3) Collect, clean, and preserve genetic characteristics of traditional varieties for future breeding programmes.</p> <p>4) Explore the implementation of block farming in a private sector and value chain context to address problems of uncoordinated marketing.</p>
<p>4. Rice based livelihoods – gender and youth integration.</p>	<p>1) Rice commercialisation empowers women but increases their workload.</p> <p>2) Difficulty for women to own land.</p> <p>3) Cultural factors limit women and youth from participating in the sector.</p> <p>4) Increased productivity due to more use of inputs, higher adoption of labour-intensive technologies such as Sustainable Rice Intensification (SRI) by the youth who do not fully benefit from commercialisation since they lack land and investment capital.</p> <p>5) Youth unemployment.</p> <p>6) Uncertainty along the value chain, hence making it not conducive for the youth to engage in rice production and marketing.</p>	<p>1) Address gender barriers by promoting dialogue and affirmative action across all levels.</p> <p>2) Advocate for the enforcement of existing laws and regulations that promote equality.</p> <p>3) Collaboration by government and value chain actors to strengthen rice marketing systems to minimize fluctuations in input supply and rice prices.</p>
<p>5. Inclusive finance and investment</p>	<p>1) Limited credit facilities to rice farmers.</p> <p>2) Poor access to technology and inputs due to limited finances.</p>	<p>1) TADB should influence other financial institutions to increase lending to smallholder rice farmers.</p>

Theme	Key issues	Recommendations
6. Integrated rice sector development in a changing climate	<p>1) High price of SARO5 seed which is highly accepted leading farmers to recycle seed.</p> <p>2) Low productivity due to recycling of seeds.</p> <p>3) SRI technologies perform well under irrigation but partial adopts and adapts to local conditions.</p>	<p>1) Promotion of Quality Declared Seed for rice (QDS) which are adapted to local conditions.</p> <p>2) Increasing irrigated area beyond the target of 2.2million by 2030.</p>

Conclusion

The conference participants lauded the inclusion of high-level speakers and the smooth running of the plenary and parallel sessions. One of the participants said, ‘it was a great conference and very informative to me’.



Figure 4: Some participants share a moment after the conference