

Daily Digest No. 2

The world's largest conference on rice in Africa opens in Yaoundé

Under the patronage on HE President of the Republic of Cameroon and Head of State Paul Biya, HE the Minister for Scientific Research and Innovation officially opened the 3rd Africa Rice Congress on behalf of HE the Prime Minister yesterday morning at the Hilton hotel Yaoundé.

Her Excellency addressed a delegation of the Government of the Republic of Cameroon including her fellow ministers of state, representatives of the diplomatic community in Cameroon, members of the Board of Trustees, Council of Ministers and National Experts Committee of AfricaRice, and delegates of the Congress. Her Excellency welcomed delegates to Yaoundé, noting that Cameroon was one of the first 17 Member States of AfricaRice (then the West Africa Rice Development Association). She paid tribute to the late Dr Jacob Ayuk-Takem, onetime Minister of Scientific Research in Cameroon and member of the AfricaRice Board of Trustees from 1997 to 2003. Her Excellency said that it was a privilege for Cameroon to host this Congress as the country has huge rice potential.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Dr Ren Wang, FAO Assistant Director-General for Agriculture and Consumer Protection particularly appreciated the theme of the Congress — smallholder



(Right to left): SE Minister of Scientific Research and Innovation, Cameroon; AfricaRice Board Chair; FAO Assistant Director-General for Agriculture and Consumer Protection

Today's program:

Plenary session 1:

How to make rice genetics work for Africa

09:00	Introduction <i>Masa Iwanaga (JIRCAS, Chair)</i>
09:10	Keynote address <i>Gary Atlin (Gates Foundation)</i>
09:40	Panel discussion
10:30	Coffee / tea break

Mini-symposia: parallel sessions

11:00	Mini-symposia session 3
12:30	Lunch break , including sponsored parallel lunch sessions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>PPP & agribusiness in rice (CTA, Syngenta Foundation, AfricaRice)</i> • <i>Increasing synergy between actors in the West African rice sector & improving future supplies to cities (ROPPA, CRCOPR, Oxfam, Agricord, SNV, VECO, AfricaRice)</i>
14:30	Mini-symposia session 4
16:00	Tea / coffee break
16:30	Mini-symposia session 5
18:00	End of second day

farmers are fundamental to the continuing success and development of Africa's rice sector. He thanked the Government of Cameroon for hosting the Congress.

According to the latest edition of *FAO Rice Market Monitor*, Africa as a whole is predicted to harvest 27.2 million tonnes (Mt) of paddy rice in 2013, equivalent to 17.8 Mt of milled rice — a 2% increase over 2012 levels, largely driven by West Africa and Egypt. Moreover, East Africa is also expected to make a strong recovery, and continental imports are expected to decrease to 12.6 Mt (a drop of 7%).

FAO has developed a new vision for sustainable development of the rice sector in Africa, covering five key areas: Improving the socioeconomic environment; Continuing to strengthen R&D; Continuing to promote and use of quality seed, especially Certified seed; Mechanization; and Reducing postharvest losses.

Meanwhile, FAO in general has been undergoing major changes. First among these is the change of its first global goal to “the eradication of hunger ... by 2019”.

AfricaRice

AfricaRice Board Chair Dr Peter Matlon welcomed delegates to the 3rd Africa Rice Congress, which will be addressing some of the most pressing issues affecting the rice sector in Africa. He thanked the Cameroonian Government and people for their hospitality, and remarked on the overwhelming presence of rice stakeholders — 650 delegates from 60 countries!

After outlining the three objectives of the Congress, Matlon thanked the donors and sponsors of the meeting. He then recognized the appointment of Dr Papa Abdoulaye Seck as Minister of Agriculture in his home country of Senegal, and thanked him “for a job exceptionally well done” in his former role as Director General of AfricaRice. He is confident, however, that AfricaRice is in capable hands under Interim Director General Dr Adama Traoré.

He highlighted the challenge facing Africa in the form of 350 million young people joining the job market over the next 15 years, and the opportunity provided by the development of the rice sector.

Matlon finished his speech by presenting a plaque of recognition to HE the President of Cameroon (via HE the Minister of Scientific Research and Innovation) for his support to the rice sector.

Exhibition area

Authorities and participants then visited the exhibition area showcasing activities of R&D partners and the



SE the Minister of Scientific Research and Innovation, Cameroon receives the plaque from the AfricaRice Board Chair

private sector to boost Africa’s rice sector. The prominent presence of products made from local rice in these exhibits (compared to the last Africa Rice Congress in Mali in 2010) is testimony to the importance that rice value-chain actors are beginning to place on value-addition. The outdoor exhibit showcases small-scale machinery focused on harvest and postharvest activities.

Mini symposia

The first set of mini-symposia went off to a good start in the afternoon, with lively discussions based around presentations and posters.



SE the Minister of Scientific Research and Innovation, Cameroon and other Congress officials visit the Exhibition area



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www.AfricaRice.org

AfricaRice est l'un des 15 Centres internationaux de recherche agricole qui sont membres du Consortium du CGIAR. AfricaRice est aussi une association intergouvernementale composée de pays membres africains.