

## **High Level Ministerial Meeting**

### **Theme - Food Sovereignty and Rice-Based Systems**

## **Delivering on Commitment to Transform Africa's Food Systems**

**November 13, 2024.  
Antananarivo, Madagascar**

### ***Justification***

1. AfricaRice, supported by its Council of Ministers, strives to sustainably improve food and nutrition security for a healthy and prosperous Africa. Its specific mission is to deliver rice-based innovations and transformed rice-based agri-food systems that contribute to the transformation of food, land and water systems in the face of climate change. These provide direct responses to SDG2, Zero Hunger, and SDG3, Good Health and Wellbeing.
2. The African continent, continues to face systemic challenges that negatively affect efforts to improve food and nutrition security, including the rice sector. Climate change is arguably the greatest threat to food systems, while increasing populations and rapid urbanization continue to mount pressure on the food systems of the continent.
3. Therefore, a powerful and unified effort is needed to equip Africa's food systems to advance human and environmental health to their full potentials as direct responses to the UN Sustainable Development Goals on zero hunger, and health for humans and the environment in Africa.
4. This high-level Ministerial Conference will discuss issues and policies focusing on sustained increase in Africa's home-grown nutritious rice production; increased productivity of rice agri-food systems; generation of incomes and creation of wealth especially for women and youth in Africa's food systems business; increased and sustained resilience of rice-based agrifood systems; and improving the nutritional status of malnourished populations on the African continent.
5. The Conference will promote exchange of experiences between member countries at more than 70% self-sufficiency rice production and those with lower levels of self-sufficiency.

### ***Opportunities for Transforming Africa's Rice Agri-food Systems***

6. **Growing demand**: It is projected that by next year, in 2025, Africa will be needing 43 MT of milled rice against local production of 26 MT. Thus, a deficit of 17 MT of milled rice would need to be imported **in 2025**. At the present trend this importation would continue to rise annually, if nothing is done. The attainment of rice self-sufficiency in Africa will drastically reduce the huge import bill while the concomitant foreign exchange savings could be re-invested in other sectors of the economy, thereby increasing employment opportunities for the youth, women and other vulnerable groups.
7. **Market opportunities**: Rice consumption in Africa is expected to continue growing in the foreseeable future because of three main factors: African population growth, increasing per capita consumption, and a shifting consumer preference toward 'premium' rice as urbanization increases. Twenty-two of the 43 rice-producing countries in Africa import between 10% and 93% of their domestic rice requirements. Several of these countries show growing gaps in the local rice balance sheet. **These gaps create strong market opportunities for both existing and new investors** in the rice industry.
8. **Diversification**: Opportunities exist in the diversification of rice-based farming systems – including opportunities in rice-fish and inclusion of higher-value commodities such as vegetables to increase income and farm stability.
9. **Post-harvest technologies**: The increasing opportunities for post-harvest systems in creating jobs for various strata of the population needs to be better capitalized on. This sector has the potential to absorb the youth which constitutes more than 60% of the population in Africa.
10. **Smart farming**: Smart farming technologies can help farmers with a variety of tasks to boost rice production. These technologies can use artificial intelligence to meet the demands of an expanding population, and create automated operations with minimal human intervention, thus reducing the drudgery associated with the production and processing systems of the rice agri-food systems in Africa.
11. **Nutritional rice**: Opportunities exist for consumers who need certain dietary requirements – low glycaemic index rice, high zinc, iron, and high protein. Several varieties possessing these traits have been released by member countries – ultra low glycaemic index Orylux 6 in Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Togo; high Zn rice in Mali and Madagascar; black rice in Uganda; and red rice in Madagascar.
12. These are some of the premium outputs of research, and they show promising opportunities for the transformation of the rice agri-food systems. Given the potential benefits for investments in Africa's rice sector, the urgency of implementing appropriate transformative measures to capitalize on these opportunities from Africa's strategic cereal cannot be overemphasised.

### **Objectives of the High-Level Ministerial Meeting**

13. This High-Level Ministerial (HLM) meeting will **center on the theme of paving the way to bold and specific political commitments to Africa's rice-based nutritious food sovereignty**. The **objective** of the HLM meeting, therefore, is to generate a more collective policy direction and support for enhancing the

implementation of investment programs geared towards the attainment of rice agri-food self-sufficiency in African countries and the creation of gainful employment for the youth and women along the entire rice value chain.

14. The HLM aims to reiterate and strengthen the political and institutional support from policymakers to the promotion of science-based solutions for the transformation of rice agri-food systems on the continent.
15. This meeting will provide a platform for communication of the ministers, members of COM. It will enhance the visibility and coherence of the collective efforts of AfricaRice's highest policy-making organ, the COM in their response to rice-based food sovereignty.
16. The HLM will hinge on the **AfDB's** Feed Africa mission for rice-based agri-food system. It will address **FAO's** goal in Africa aimed at achieving food security for all and ensuring access of all to regular and sufficient high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives. This conference will equally treat issues hinged on issues aimed at transforming rural economies through food systems by making them more inclusive, productive, resilient and sustainable as envisioned by the **IFAD**. These and more are aimed at significantly addressing nutritious food sovereignty on the continent.
17. It will highlight the needed technical expertise, technologies, investment opportunities, including private sector investments, and the role of different actors required to reach the goal of rice-based food self-sufficiency in Africa. African countries will, therefore, need to commit to creating and rigorously implementing favourable policy regimes for rice self-sufficiency and sustaining growth in Africa's rice industry. This should significantly reduce the risk of food crises.

#### ***Outputs/Outcomes of the High-Level Meeting (HLM):***

18. The expected outputs/outcomes of the HLM are:
  - a] High-level policy commitment to efforts geared toward strengthening food sovereignty and transforming rice-based agri-food systems.
  - b] Demonstrated commitment of policymakers to work with AfricaRice and other CGIAR Centers in attaining food self-sufficiency and sovereignty on the African continent.

#### ***Methodology and Process***

19. It is being proposed that the HLM be held over one day, back-to-back with the AfricaRice 33<sup>rd</sup> Council of Minister's (COM) meeting scheduled for November 14-15, 2024, in Antananarivo, Madagascar, under the auspices of the Government of Madagascar.
20. The meeting will involve the Ministers of Agriculture of AfricaRice member countries, the FAO, IFAD, and the AfDB. The African Union, NEPAD, FARA,

CORAF, ASARECA, CARDESA, AGRA, and AfricaRice funders will participate in the HLM.

21. The HLM will be organized in two panel discussions:
  - a] **Panel 1** – Transforming rice-based systems for food and nutrition security in Africa in the face of climate change (Technical dimension of the subject to be discussed – i.e., technologies and innovations). This panel will be composed of NARS and CGIAR Center DGs as well as some development partners and beneficiaries.
  - b] **Panel 2** – Transforming rice-based systems for food and nutrition security in Africa in the face of climate change (Policy and investment-themed panel with ideas borrowed from other commodities e.g. wheat in Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, and key countries with over 70% rice self-sufficiency e.g. Chad, Mali, Tanzania, Nigeria, Egypt). CGIAR EMD is to be invited to join the debate alongside Ministers and development partners.

### ***Co-Organizers***

22. The Government of Madagascar, FAO, AfDB, IFAD and AfricaRice.

### ***Date and Venue***

23. The date being proposed for the High-Level Ministerial meeting and Madagascar Rice Day is November 13, 2024, in Antananarivo, Madagascar.