

Rice is one of the popular staple food in Fogera

"I feel sorry for my father and grandfather who did not know that the swampy plain could produce so much grain"

A rice farmer in Fogera

Once used to be a grazing area during the dry season and useless submerged swamp during the rainy season, the Fogera Plain now produces thousands of bags of rice by about sixty thousand farmers. The plain has grown to the leading rice producing area in the country with minimum public investment in the last thirty years. If you visit the plain in the late November, you will be impressed by wave of rice ear as far as you can see.

Ethiopia is a member of the second group of the "Coalition of African Rice Development (CARD)"ⁱ and the first country among the group to develop the "National Rice Research and Development Strategy of Ethiopia (NRRDS)"ⁱⁱ in early 2010. In Ethiopia, there is around six million hectare of area, which is suitable for rain fed rice. Most of those areas are heavy clay, poorly drained lowland areas, which are not suitable for any crop but rice. Rice cultivation in these areas, otherwise no crop may be grown, has great potential to contribute to the national food security. So far, rice is well accepted by people as the grain is suitable for *injera* and rice or rice/tef *injera* is increasingly popular. NRRDS targets an increase of annual production from 500 thousand tonnes in 2009 to 4 million tonnes by 2019.

FRG II regards rice as one of its focused priority areas. The project has been supporting six FRG based rice related research projects since May 2010. These research projects are conducted by three research centres and one university in Amhara, Oromia, Afar and Somali Regions.

For the researchers involved in the above mentioned research projects practical training was given on estimating "Yield Components of Rice"ⁱⁱⁱ from sampled crops at Adet Research Centre's Fogera Field Station and Woreta Agricultural College on November 17th, 2010. The training was also attended by researchers from four other research centres (Abobo, Aksum, Asosa and Pawe) from Gambela, Tigray and Benishangulu Gumuz, which have been identified as leading rice research centres by EIAR. The training was conducted by Mr Tsuboi from Uganda and Dr Nishimaki from JICA headquarters, Tokyo, who are specialists on rice development in Africa.

At the beginning of November, experts from JICA's rice related projects from different African countries met in Nairobi for exchanging experiences on rice technology and the management of rice development. An expert of FRG II and a staff of the JICA Office from Ethiopia participated in the meeting. Variety of

experiences and opinions were exchanged during the meeting. It was reconfirmed the importance of rice R&D experience exchange among experts, researchers, extensionists and farmers through networks such as CARD.

JICA in Ethiopia, in collaboration with Japan International Research Centre for Agricultural Science (JIRCAS) and Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA), is committed to support the country's rice promotion strategy. FRG II continues to support the development of rice technology focusing on field management and seed production technologies along with processing and marketing technologies.



ⁱ CARD is an initiative which JICA announced at the TICAD IV in 2008 and participated by many international partners. CARD official website: <http://www.riceforafrica.org/>

ⁱⁱ Ethiopia's NRRDS document is downloadable from the CARD website. JICA supported the development of the NRRDS by setting up the National Rice Development Secretariat at the Ministry of Agriculture through a JICA advisor posted at the Ministry.

ⁱⁱⁱ Rice Yield Components are comprised with number of panicles, number of grains per panicle, grain weight and grain filling rate. By analysing each component, way to increase productivity will be identified.

Seed Treatment to Reduce Risk and Cost

Researchers of selected FRG based seed treatment research projects participated in a training workshop conducted on 29-30 November 2010 at Melkassa Agricultural Research Centre (MARC). The researchers (thirty) were from Adet, Abobo, Sekota, Adami Turu, Fedis, and Bako research centres and Gondar, Wolega, and Walaita Sodo universities and had a chance to discuss

on FRG approach, experiences from MARC and Adami Tulu Research Centre and on the contents of each research proposals.

The research on seed treatment is one important area to boost productivity by reducing risks of seed and soil born diseases. The technology, which is not yet common among Ethiopian farmers, enables the seed and seedlings to become healthy, which reduce the risks of diseases and insect damages at the early growing stage of the crop. It may also be important technology for improving quality of products for higher prices in market.

In collaboration with Quality Seed Promotion Project (QSPP), FRG II will formulate a comprehensive framework for seed research through FRG approach in early next year for starting seed technology development in wider areas.

OTHER INFORMATION RELATED TO THE PROJECT

- A follow-up workshop for FRG based rice research will be organised in February 2011.
- The second seed for farmers seminar will be held in March 2011.
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- Your comments and suggestions are very important to us.