

Workshop on Rice in Agricultural Development in Ethiopia

Rice is regarded as a millennium crop by Ethiopian government. Rice promotion activities seem to be gaining momentum and the production and marketing activities are responding positively. In order to keep this momentum, the FRG II project organised a one-day workshop entitled "Rice in Ethiopian Agricultural Development" on February 21, 2011 at Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR).

Mr Teshome from the rice secretariat of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) presented the National Rice Research and Development Strategy¹ and the progress of formulating its implementation plan. Mr Esayas from the Agricultural Investment Support Directorate of MoA briefed the present situation of agricultural investment with particular emphasis on rice. Dr Dawit from EIAR discussed the stakeholders analysis of rice value chain. It was followed by Mr Sawagegn from the Amhara Agricultural Research Institute (ARARI) on the current status of the rice research in the country. They were followed by rice related experiences of four programme/projects, these were rice research and extension by Dr Taye of East Africa Agricultural Productivity Project (EAAPP), participatory research on rice by Mr Shiratori and Dr Niide of FRG II, activities in rice value chain development by Mr Hostetter of Mennonites Economic Development Associates (MEDA), and rice promotion activity by Dr Abera of SG2000.

Fifty six participants from various organisations attended the workshop. The discussion was made focused on following areas namely (i) rice research, (ii) varieties and seed, (iii) marketing, (iv) policy issues, and (v) communicating the results of the seminar to policy makers.

¹ http://www.riceforafrica.org/downloads/NRDS/Ethiopia_En.pdf

Seed Seminar: Improving Farmers' access to Seed

To discuss issues on seed in general and build consensus on priority areas for research and development among stakeholders, a seminar on farmers' seed was held on March 18, 2011 at EIAR. Thirty five participants gathered from research centres, universities, seed enterprises, multi- and bi-lateral organisations, NGOs, etc.

Professor Yoshiaki Nishikawa of Nagoya University discussed "good seed" and "good variety". While characteristics of good seed were universal, good variety differed for different users and locations. He therefore argued that promotion of good varieties was different from securing good seed and the difference must be well understood. Dr Frew of Haramaya University introduced field survey results, which claimed that farmer produced seed was as good as those produced by seed enterprises. He stressed that integration of informal and formal seed systems was imperative to improve farmers' access to quality seed. Mr Yonas of Ethiopian Seed Enterprise presented the seed quality system of Ethiopia, which was currently governed by the Seed Law of 2000 but regulations were not well understood by the stakeholders therefore its enforcement was limited. Dr Abebe of Debra Zeit Agricultural Research Centre discussed the quality of source



seed, with due emphasis on EIAR followed quality assurance procedures. Shortage of personnel, testing facility, storage, and budget hindered assurance of quality of source seed supplied by National Agricultural Research System. Dr Getnet of EIAR presented a case of forage seed quality by pointing out there was not much experience in forage and its seed production despite the fact that the demand is increasing from time to time. It was stressed that demand assessment and seed technologies development were needed through public and private seed systems. Finally, Dr Tokida of JICA Tokyo introduced the experience of rice seed in Cambodia. There was a weak public seed production and certification system and private sector involvement was still limited therefore diversification of seed production including farmer produced seed was necessary. Discussions among participants included, practical quality assurance systems through developing seed market, liberalization, decentralization and integration of formal and informal seed systems.

The seminar was the second seed related seminar organised by FRG II Project, in collaboration with Project on Quality Seed Promotion for Small Scale Farmers (QSPP) and Nagoya University.

FRG Approach Training

In January 2011, FRG approach training for researchers was conducted at Melkassa Agricultural Research Centre. A total of 53 researchers from 20 institutions (15 agricultural research centres/institutes and 5 universities) from different parts of the country participated the training to learn participatory technology generation in collaboration with farmers, extension agents and other stakeholders.

The training provided the participants the chances to acquire theory of the approach as well as to observe practical examples of farmers who have involved in FRG based research activities. During the training sessions, active discussions were made among the participants, who included both experienced and young researchers, on effective and practical ways to implement the approach and some of the important issues such as cost sharing, ownership, gender, sustainability. Because of the importance of this kind of discussions, FRG II encourages discussions among researchers and other stakeholders on participatory research through providing platform for interaction.

JICA Mission

A JICA mission visited Ethiopia between March 14 and 25 to provide guidance for FRG II. Major issues discussed between the mission and FRG II were rice and seed related activities, and indicators for monitoring the project's outputs. The mission has also visited Meikassa, Fantale, Fogera and Pawe areas to observe research and development activities.

OTHER INFORMATION RELATED TO THE PROJECT

- The following surveys were administered recently in East Shewa by FRG II.
 - Perceptions of farmers, agricultural experts and researchers on farmers' saved seed (Debra Zeit Agricultural Research Centre)
 - Source, availability and use of agricultural information/innovation (Melkassa Agricultural Research Centre)
 - Farm household income and credit management: the need for extension service in financial management (Melkassa Agricultural Research Centre)
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