Improving and Scaling up the System of Rice Intensification in West Africa

CORAF/WECARD • Institut d’Économie Rurale (Mali) • SRI-RICE (Cornell University, USA)  
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What is the System of Rice Intensification, or SRI?
SRI is an agroecological approach to growing rice, which allows farmers to increase yields, while at the same time decreasing inputs such as water, chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides. SRI can be applied to all varieties of rice, from farmers’ existing varieties to improved varieties.

How does SRI work?
Let’s take a look at what makes SRI different from standard practices. The series of images below demonstrates how farmers adopt and adapt SRI, and how this changes their rice cultivation practices and the morphology of the rice plant itself.

What is the project?
‘Improving and Scaling up SRI in West Africa’ is the 3-year first phase of a regional World Bank-financed project to increase rice productivity throughout a 13-country ECOWAS project area (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo), seen in the map above. As part of the larger West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP), steered by CORAF/WECARD, regional coordination for the implementation of the project is provided by the Institut d’Économie Rurale’s National Center of Specialization on Rice (CNS-RIZ), based in Mali, with a mandate to evaluate, select and scale up an approach for sustainability increasing rice production throughout the region.

In 2012 and 2013 stakeholders met, and through a participatory process decided to launch the first phase of the SRI project. Each of the 13 participating countries will implement SRI according to their own level of preparedness, using country-level WAAPP focal points to coordinate national efforts including active participation from NGOs, farmers’ groups and associations, commercial rice farmers, training centers, government agencies and research institutes. See the list of countries and their current status above. The SRI International Network and Resources Center (SRI-Rice), based at Cornell University (NY, USA), is the principal technical partner.

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