



SRI NEWS FROM WEST AFRICA

Issue # 0 | Jul-Sep 2014

Quarterly SRI news and updates from the SRI project of the WAAPP

Technical Workshop Paves the Way

With a packed agenda and no shortage of enthusiasm, back-to-back Anglophone and Francophone workshops in early August brought the region together to go in-depth on technical, pedagogical and procedural aspects of the project.

As the host of this workshop, Dr. Adou Rahim, WAAPP Coordinator for Togo, was on hand to welcome participants to the beautiful and verdant town of Kpalimé, nestled in the mountains of Southern Togo, alongside the border with Ghana.

While participants from all 13 countries made the trip out to Togo's capital, Lomé, the timing – which coincided with a sharp increase in the scope, devastation and international awareness of the Ebola

epidemic – sadly prevented the Sierra Leonan delegation from entering the country. Despite the hassles this caused, all participants were able to return home safely, and all 12 of the remaining countries were able to fully participate in the proceedings.



Harouna Ibrahima (center) and other workshop participants listen to a farmer explain the system for lowland rainfed field improvement that he was testing out.

The twin workshops were, by all measures, a success, and allowed Champions and National Facilitators to work through a wide range of topics. In all, the workshop's agenda covered the following items: a detailed technical presentation on SRI principles, practices and adaptation; a review of the new Technical Manual;

group sessions to detail adaptations for differ-

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ABOUT SRI

The System of Rice Intensification (SRI), is a climate-smart agroecological methodology for producing more rice, with less water and seed, and promoting soil health instead of dependence on synthetic fertilizers. Developed in Madagascar in the 1980's, SRI has helped millions of farmers in over 50 countries save money and increase yields while helping the environment.

Learn more at: sriwestafrica.org/sri

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

'Improving and Scaling Up the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) in West Africa' is a three-year regional project aimed at adapting SRI to meet the diverse sociocultural and agroecological realities of rice farmers in the region. As part of the West African Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP), this project is funded by the World Bank, and jointly coordinated by CNS-RIZ in Bamako (Mali), and Cornell University's SRI-Rice Center (USA).

Learn more at: sriwestafrica.org/about

FROM THE REGIONAL COORDINATION



Welcome to 'Issue #0' of our project's quarterly newsletter! We're starting this newsletter with Issue #0 because for future issues, we will be asking you – SRI Champions, National Facilitators, farmers, trainers, technicians, M&E Officers – to take active roles in writing the stories and news that fill these pages. This newsletter is your voice, and a chance for you to spread the work that you are doing to the rest of the

(See 'Coordination' on the next page)

...COORDINATION

region. By participating and sending us your stories, others can learn from your hard work – both successes and challenges.

Each issue will have feature articles, combined with regular sections, including our 'SRI Spotlight,' which will highlight the important work of a different SRI Champion in each issue. Another regular piece, our 'SRI Scene From the Field,' is a chance to showcase a picture of the project in action. Do you have a great picture of a farmer trial, training, harvest, or other event? Send it to us, and it could be in the following issue!

As the project unfolds and activities develop across the region, keeping in touch becomes all the more important. This newsletter is one such way to keep in touch, but in the coming months we will be rolling out the project websites, social media groups, and special 'Innovation Bulletins,' all of which will help us share and chart our progress, and learn from each other. We invite you to participate fully in all of these.

Lastly, we would like to say a word about the continuing challenges posed across the region by the Ebola epidemic.

These are difficult times, and all of us across the region are facing an unprecedented situation. It is up to us as a regional family to support each other, and to rise to the occasion to show the strength, courage and hope that lies within us all and makes us who we are.

Our prayers go out to those affected, and for a quick end to this crisis, and we deeply thank those who are working hard to bring this to an end and alleviate the suffering this has caused.

– **Gaoussou Traoré**, CNS-RIZ/WAAPP Coordinator, IER; and **Erika Styger**, SRI-Rice Director, Cornell University

SRI SPOTLIGHT: COMING SOON

A feature covering the work of a different SRI Champion each issue

From organizing trainings to advocating for farmers and beyond, SRI Champions play a vital role in promoting SRI in West Africa.

People like Pascal Gbenou in Benin, Gerald Aruna in Sierra Leone, Hamidou Guindo in Mali, Fatou Samba in The Gambia, Robert Bimba in Liberia, Gina Odarteifo in Ghana, Muhammed Adamu in Nigeria, and many others all have played pioneering roles in advancing the livelihoods of farmers in their countries.

This deeply rooted passion for advancing agriculture and rural communities lies at the heart of what they do, and who they are. For many of them, when they learned of SRI for the first time, they immediately saw the potential it held for transforming their work and the lives of those they work with.

For Jean Apedoh, who led the way with SRI in Togo after learning about it at an ECHO conference in Ouagadougou, the utility and power that SRI held was instantly clear, but he had to verify it for himself first. Upon returning to Togo he immediately set out, conducting SRI trials.

With field data confirming that SRI was real, he and his NGO, GRAPHE, embarked on a mission that continues today, to bring SRI to

every rice-growing region in Togo, from the coast up to the far north.

Along the way Jean and GRAPHE have encountered obstacles and challenges, but have persevered, and in doing so have created new methods of farmer outreach and extension – transforming their relationship with the farmers, and the cultural mind sets that agricultural development operates within.

Jean's story will be featured in-depth in the next issue of our newsletter – the first of a series of portraits of SRI Champions from around the region.

From each of these stories we can draw inspiration for our own work, but they serve an even stronger purpose than this.

Champions are, by their very nature, pioneers. They see opportunity where others see road blocks. They

are the ones who open the doors to new ways of doing things, and help us all realize our full potential.

Our hope in sharing their stories is to share both the visionary spirit, and real examples of how they made their vision a reality. If you have inspiring stories about a Champion in your country, let us know, and we'll find a way to share this story with the rest of the region! (D. Jenkins)



Jean Apedoh, Togo's pioneering SRI Champion, is set to be in our spotlight for the upcoming newsletter issue.

Monitoring and Evaluation Update

Starting with an M&E meeting in Lomé, Togo in May, the M&E team has been making progress towards getting the structures in place needed to gather good data on the processes and outcomes of the project.

Successes include: a full review and revision of the M&E manual and data collection tools by the M&E Officers (one Anglophone and two Francophone working groups) and completion

of M&E implementation plans at the country level.

These were then available for review at the recent train-the-trainer and technical workshop in Kpalimé, Togo, which promoted stronger connection and flow of ideas among the various actors in the project. Participants at the workshop reviewed, commented on, and validated the materials, giving valuable

input from a different set of actors, who are engaged directly with the field in many capacities.

Despite these successes, much remains to be done. The coming months will see great leaps forward as more data begins to come in and be aggregated and analyzed at the regional level. (T. Archibald)

...Workshop

(Continued from the first page)

ent agroecosystems; a review of the recently revised M&E System Manual and data collection forms (see the M&E Update on page 2); a presentation on new communications tools; country mapping exercises; an exchange of pedagogical best practices and personal experience; a mechanization discussion and exchange; work groups to update country action plans; and an operational session covering WAAPP roles, responsibilities and procedures.

With just three days for each group, the time was tight, but well used. Dr. Erika Styger, of the Regional Coordination Unit, presided over the detailed technical components of the workshop, giving a thorough presentation covering the SRI conceptual framework, and how SRI principles are translated into practices that differ depending on local circumstances.

An updated and greatly revised second version of the Technical Manual was provided to all of the participants in PDF format. This manual provides a comprehensive set of guidelines and strategies for implementing SRI, but is not intended to be the final word on how to do SRI in West Africa.

Rather, project actors were asked at the workshop to take the manual back to their countries, and adapt the content to their local circumstances. The locally-adapted versions of the Technical Manual will, like the original, be living documents to help shape the adaptation process across the region.

Workshop participants were also given poster-sized national maps, and asked to map their local rice production systems, SRI activities,



Send us a photo from the field, for our next issue!

SRI SCENE FROM THE FIELD

WAAPP Benin's Communications Director, Madame Sofiath Osseni (far left), interviews SRI farmers in the Parakou region of Benin in March

and the project target zones. These maps form the first iteration of a future regional SRI map, and help contextualize the baseline data collection process.



The Gambian delegation preparing their SRI map. Participants created maps to show the location of SRI activities and project target zones, and to detail different rice production characteristics.

The Regional Coordination Unit is in the process of planning a new online mapping platform, which was explained to participants conceptually as a way to collect, analyze and display project data, actors, organizations, activities and adaptations/innovations online, in a format that could

be accessible across the globe.

New communications tools, which will be released shortly, were also discussed. These tools

will create new linkages between actors across the region, regardless of country or project role (see 'From the Regional Coordination' on page 1).

Dr. Minamba Bagayoko, of the Regional Coordination, also presented on and led a work session on mechanization, and an operational session on WAAPP procedures and roles. Country groups detailed their mechanization constraints and opportunities.

In the end, a highlight for many was an informal exchange, with participants sharing their tips and experiences from the field, and what they've learned by and from working with farmers to implement SRI.

Amid the enthusiasm and excitement that was visible as each person shared their stories, it was clear that SRI doesn't just change yields, but changes relationships, too. (D. Jenkins)

RECENT & UPCOMING EVENTS

Recent workshops:

- Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Meeting, May 2014, Lomé, Togo
- Regional Francophone Technical Workshop and Training of Trainers, 04-06 August 2014, Kpalimé, Togo
- Regional Anglophone Technical Workshop and Training of Trainers, 08-10 August 2014, Kpalimé, Togo

Stay tuned for the announcement of upcoming events!

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