

Rice Cultivation in Africa <Part 5>

Training course on Upland Rice Variety Selection Techniques for Africa

The training need in this field has increased dramatically, with a vision to double the rice production in Africa being agreed at the TICAD IV, and with the formation of the Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD). This led to JICA's decision to continue the training course for a further three years from 2009. The AAI has been commissioned to conduct the training courses. In October 2010, eight participants from eight African countries were being trained and a total of five training sessions have been conducted.



This course aims to promote cultivation of the upland NERICA rice cultivar developed by the Africa Rice Center. To promote NERICA it is necessary to advance different techniques

for variety selection test, seed production and variety dissemination. In this course, practical sessions are incorporated in the curriculum particularly focusing on the variety selection test. When participants arrive in Japan in late July, it is the time for heading for early upland varieties. Therefore, the practical sessions start with the examination of heading. After that, participants complete practical sessions on examination of the maturation and yields. In the latter part of the training, participants learn methods to calculate yields from raw data (yield components) and statistical analysis. Although August is out of season, using another training plot, participants learn planting field design, seeding methods and examination of germination. In addition, they learn about seed production, through lectures and field visits. Furthermore, we prepare a test field that contains different varieties to teach, through roguing practice, techniques to remove off-types. There are only a few experts on upland rice varieties in Africa. It is important to develop human resources that can put these basic techniques into practice in planting fields.

Among the three rice cultivation related training courses offered at JICA Tsukuba, this is the only course that deals with upland rice varieties. However, there is a limit on how much one can master within the three months of training. There are many useful techniques that would be beneficial for African technicians. These include upland rice variety cultivation techniques used by farmers in Ibaraki Prefecture and methods

for trial cultivation to determine the optimal amount of fertilizer application and planting densities.

In AAI News No. 65, we reported that the majority of the participants between 2006 and 2008 were from eastern and southern African countries and that there was a discrepancy between the participants' home countries and countries targeted by the CARD. To rectify this, in the training courses conducted from 2009, participants were mainly drawn from the CARD target countries and the number of participants from West Africa increased. We pointed out that most of the CARD target countries are Francophone. However, the participants from the five Francophone countries who were accepted in the training courses so far had sufficient understanding of English and there have been no major language issues. There are still many CARD target countries that have not been part of the training courses. It is recommended to actively take participants from new countries in particular in the West Africa Group 1, if English speaking participants can be identified (table 1).

In the training follow-up activities introduced in the article entitled "Close Friends from Far Countries" in AAI News No. 70, we could confirm that the ex-participants from the country were working on rice variety selection techniques using the knowledge and skills gained in the training course. Their activities were supported by the local JICA office. We also received a report that the action plan developed by ex-participants from Cameroon during the 2009 training course has been officially approved at their workplace and is to be implemented from 2011. Since the establishment of the CARD, support for rice production in Africa has become active and many countries have finalized national strategies for increasing rice production. As these projects get implemented, it is expected that there will be more opportunities for the participants to actually use what they learn on the JICA training course in the field in their own countries.

Table 1 Nationality of participants for the upland rice variety selection techniques for Africa

Region	CARD category	Country	Number of		Region	CARD category	Country	Number of	
			2006-2008	2009-2010				2006-2008	2009-2010
West	Group 1	Ghana	1	2	East	Group 1	Kenya	2	0
		Guinea	0	0			Tanzania	6	1
		Mali	0	0			Uganda	3	2
		Nigeria	2	1		Group 2	Ethiopia	2	0
		Senegal	0	0			Sub total	13	3
		Sierra Leone	1	2		South	Group 1	Madagascar	0
	Benin	2	2	Mozambique	2			0	
	Burkina Faso	0	2	Group 2	Zambia		0	1	
	Cote d'Ivoire	0	2		Non-CARD priority		Malawi	4	0
	Gambia	1	1	Zimbabwe			4	1	
	Liberia	0	0	Sub total	10		3		
	Togo	0	0	Grand total	30		20		
	Sub total			7	12				
	Central	Group 1	Cameroon	0	2	Note: All the four participants from Benin were from the JICA expert's at the Africa Rice Center (formally WARDA). One out of the four participants was a Benin national.			
Group 2		D R Congo	0	0					
		Cetral Africa R	0	0					
		Rwanda	0	0					
		Sub total	0	2					