



Congratulatory Remarks
Dr Harold Roy-Macauley, AfricaRice Director General

5th KAFACI General Assembly, 6 April 2021

On behalf of AfricaRice and its 28 member countries, I am honoured to present this congratulatory remark to this august body of stakeholders here present at the 5th Korea-Africa Food and Agriculture Cooperation Initiative (KAFACI) General Assembly.

We are immensely proud of our strong partnership with the Rural Development Association (RDA), through KAFACI, which is significantly contributing to powering a quiet rice revolution in Africa, as shown by the results of the Phase I of the KAFACI's flagship initiative – **The Africa Rice Development Partnership Project**.

This partnership has been successfully implemented with 19 KAFACI member countries, most of which are also AfricaRice member countries.

In effect, AfricaRice rice breeders, with the support of Korean rice breeders, have crossed valuable rice germplasm from Korea – notably the Korean Tongil lines – with elite AfricaRice rice germplasm, to develop new African Tongil-type lines. Rice breeders from KAFACI member countries, with the support of AfricaRice and Korean rice breeders, are using these African Tongil-type lines to develop high-yielding varieties with good grain quality for the irrigated and rainfed lowlands of Africa.

The value addition of the partnership is that within a relatively short period of time, five early-maturing high-yielding rice varieties with improved milling and cooking characteristics have already been officially released as ISRIZ 6 and ISRIZ 7 in Senegal; Makafaci and Wachangu in Malawi; and KAFACI 1 in Mali.

The five varieties released have an average yield of 7 t/ha, compared to 2.2 t/ha average yield in Africa and 4.5 t/ha in the world. These new varieties are gaining wide popularity among farmers and consumers and command excellent price on the market.

Equally impressive has been the enhancement of African rice breeding capacity, though training administered to rice breeders from member countries, particularly in the application of anther culture, which is an efficient path for inbred line development. To support the training, a modern high-throughput anther culture laboratory for producing double haploid (DH) plants, named the Africa-Korea Rice Breeding Lab (AKRiL), was established at the AfricaRice Sahel Regional Center in St. Louis, Senegal.

Despite the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the project, it is hoped that over 55 varieties would be developed and released by the member countries throughout this period, and, more importantly, the national rice breeding infrastructure would be much strengthened to provide farmers with the high-yielding quality seeds.

I would therefore like to present our sincere and heartfelt congratulations to the Secretary General of Korea-Africa Food and Agriculture Cooperation Initiative (KAFACI), the Rural Development Administration, and all those who have in one way or another worked hard to ensure that the Rice Development Partnership Project delivers such outstanding results.

I would also like to thank Dr. Kang Kyung-Ho, the first coordinator of the Partnership Rice Development Project, whose passion for breeding and building connections with African breeders has been instrumental in realizing the first phase achievements. We welcome his successor, Dr. Sang-Bok Lee to the AfricaRice family and wish him a productive stay with us. We look forward to further strengthening our partnership through KAFACI to draw upon the rich experience and knowledge of the Republic of Korea in rice science and development that will contribute significantly to increasing rice production and achieving self-sufficiency in Africa.

Thank you.