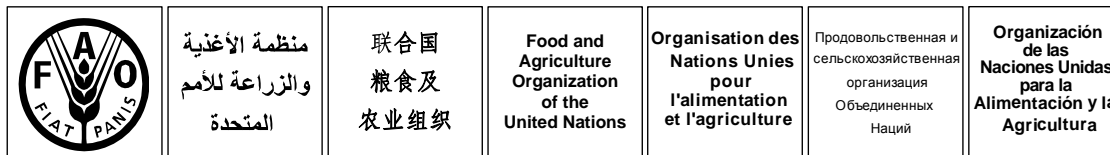


December 2012



INTERNATIONAL RICE COMMISSION

Twenty-second Session

Rome, Italy, 29-30 November

Report of the 22nd Session of the International Rice Commission

I. Opening of the meeting

1. The 22nd Session of the International Rice Commission (IRC) was held at the Headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) from 29 to 30 November 2012.
2. Ms. Alexandra Fridel Tonsmann of the Permanent Mission of Peru to FAO, opened the meeting on behalf of the Chair of the 21st Session of the Commission at 10.05 am on Thursday, 29 November 2012.
3. Opening statements were made by Ms. Tonsmann (Peru) and Mr. Clayton Campanhola, Director of the Plant Production and Protection Division, on behalf of FAO.
4. Ms. Tonsmann welcomed delegates to the meeting and noted that the 21st Session of the Commission had been convened in Chiclayo Peru in May 2006.
5. Mr. Campanhola, in his statement, recalled the importance of rice to global food security and drew the attention of the meeting to the recent FAO forecasts that rice production would outpace consumption in 2012-2013. He briefly reviewed the evolution of the International Rice Commission, noting that when it was created in 1948 it was the only international mechanism for work on rice and that since then the number of other international and regional organizations and programmes working on rice had increased exponentially. He also noted that participation in meetings of the Commission has declined since 1994 and that the Independent External Evaluation of the FAO in 2007 had recommended that IRC be wound up. In concluding he drew the attention of the Commission to the important decision regarding its future that was before this meeting and wished participants a successful outcome to their deliberations.

II. Organizational matters

a) Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons

6. Ms. Tonsmann of Peru was elected as Chair of the Commission, Mr. Samba Kante of Senegal and Mr. Lupino Lazaro Jr. of The Philippines were elected as First and Second Vice-Chairs respectively.

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b) Adoption of the agenda

7. The Commission followed the provisional agenda contained in document IRC 2012/1 and set out in Annex 1 to this report.

c) Report on the credentials of representatives at the 22nd session of the International Rice Commission

8. Introducing the item the representative of the Secretariat recalled that, in accordance with Article V (Para 2) of the Constitution, the presence of delegates representing a majority of the Members of the Commission (32 Member countries) constituted a quorum. In line with Rule III of the Rules of Procedure, the Secretariat working with the FAO Legal Office, would examine the credentials of the representatives participating in the current meeting and submit a report to the Chair on the results of its examination during the meeting.

9. The Commission did not reach a quorum during the first morning of its meeting. Participants were reminded of the need for a quorum in order for it to be able to take any decisions. Quorum was reached in the afternoon of 29 November with the participation of 33 Member countries.

10. The Chair subsequently reported that the Secretariat had reviewed the credentials that had been submitted and confirmed that there were 35 Member countries that were accredited to participate in the 22nd Session of the Commission.

d) Participants:

11. Representatives of the following 35 Members, participated in the meeting: Benin, Brazil, Cameroon, Chad, China, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Egypt, France, Ghana, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Korea (Republic of), Liberia, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Mozambique, Myanmar, Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Kingdom, the United States of America, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam.

12. In addition, representatives of the following 4 countries attended the meeting as observers: Burundi, Honduras, the Russian Federation and Spain.

13. The list of registered participants may be found in Annex III to this report.

III. Matters related to the work of the Commission**a) Report on the work of the Commission**

14. In introducing the item, the representative of the Secretariat summarized the work of the Commission since its 21st Session in May 2006. He noted the outcomes of the 21st Session of the commission directed to the Secretariat and highlighted activities between 2006-2009 in particular the outcomes of different reviews or evaluations related to the work of the Commission during that period including the Independent External Evaluation of FAO in 2007 which recommended that the IRC be wound up. A summary of the activities of the Secretariat during 2012 was also provided, in particular the efforts to convene the 22nd Session of the Commission, the Global Rice Roundtable convened in Montpellier France in July which considered possible future role for the IRC and the expenditures in 2012 in support of the work of the Commission.

15. The meeting took note of the information in document IRC 2012/3.

b) Discussion and decision on the future of the Commission

16. In introducing the topic the Secretariat summarized the evolution of the IRC noting it had been established in 1948; the outcomes of evaluations/reviews of work related to the IRC as well as an overview of ongoing programmes and activities including those of FAO on rice that was developed by the expert meeting convened in Montpellier France in July of this year. He noted that, in addition, the declining participation of member countries in the meetings of the Commission since 1994 raised questions regarding its continued relevance in particular given how much the context in which it is

operating had changed in the 64 years since it was established. Finally, he summarized the two decisions proposed to the meeting, i) suspend operation of the Commission effective immediately and initiate a process for its termination in line with Article XIII of the Constitution or ii) to define and agree to a country driven process to revise the IRC Constitution with the view to create an effective and efficient Commission. He noted that initial estimates were that the process would take 3 years, require in the order of 3.5 million USD and that the revised constitution and budget would have to be submitted to the FAO Conference for approval.

17. In the ensuing discussion countries recognized the important contribution of rice to food security and rural development. It was also stated that the possible discontinuation of the Commission should not be seen as a reduction in the importance of rice in the work of FAO. In the event that the IRC was to be discontinued several countries stressed that other bodies within FAO, such as the Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on Commodity Problems, should be requested to give greater priority to issues concerning rice.

18. Countries noted that the lack of a quorum in meetings of the Commission reflected the fact that many of IRC's original functions were now being addressed by other bodies. Some were of the view that the discontinuation of the IRC would be an example of effective management within the UN system with respect to statutory bodies that have outlived their usefulness. Other countries expressed the concern that closing the IRC was a political, rather than a technical issue and felt they did not have sufficient instructions from their capital to make a decision at this meeting.

19. It was clear that there was no agreement regarding the two decisions set out in document IRC 2012/4 and some countries felt that further discussion was needed on the future of the IRC including a review of further options.

20. One suggestion was to request the established bureaux of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) and the Committee of Commodity Problems (CCP), to review the Commission and make a proposal on its future that could be considered at a special session of the Commission. On further discussion, it was recognized that such a working group could be set up, but would not necessarily involve the COAG or CCP, although they could perhaps be invited to participate as observers. The working group would be composed of members of the IRC.

21. The Commission considered an initial set of points regarding the creation of such a working group that included its composition, terms of reference and a possible timeline, with the understanding that a proposal developed by the working group, would be considered at a special session of the Commission possibly in June 2013, immediately prior to the FAO Conference. In the ensuing discussion, countries noted that there should be a clear definition of the scope and function of the working group and its output, that it should be open to observers, that it should be regionally representative, and that a timeline be developed that would ensure that a proposal would be available in time for consideration by a Special Session of the Commission in June.

22. It was noted that, in line with Article 5, paragraph 6, the Special Session would have to be agreed upon by the Director-General of FAO and funds made available. It was also noted that, in order for the Commission to be included on the agenda of the Conference in June 2013 under other matters, a proposal would need to be put forward to Conference Services of FAO as soon as possible.

23. A drafting group was formed, consisting of representatives from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Dominican Republic, Senegal, Nigeria, the United States of America and France, to develop a resolution on the establishment of a working group and its terms of reference, which would be presented to the Commission for review and adoption.

24. A working group (WG) would be established to develop a proposal on the future of the IRC that would be considered at a Special Session of the Commission, the outcome of which would be reported to the 38th FAO Conference in June 2013.

25. The text of the resolution and terms of reference of the working group adopted by the meeting may be found in Annex 2 to this report.

IV. Other Matters

26. There were no other matters identified for the consideration of the meeting.

V. Date and place of the next Session of the Commission

27. The Secretariat reported that Conference Services had arranged a tentative booking for a Special Session of the Commission at FAO headquarters in Rome from 13 to 14 June 2013, immediately prior to the 38th Session of the FAO Conference, pending approval of the Director-General.

VI. Adoption of the Report

28. The meeting adopted the present report on the basis of the draft report that had been circulated during the meeting as amended, and on the understanding that the finalisation of the report would be entrusted to the Secretariat working in cooperation with the Chair.

VII. Closure of the meeting

29. The Chair thanked the Commission and Secretariat staff for their work over the two days. The meeting was closed at 16:45 on 30 November 2012.

ANNEX I

Agenda 22nd Session of the International Rice Commission

- 1) Opening of the meeting
- 2) Organizational matters:
 - a) Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons
 - b) Adoption of the Agenda
 - c) Organization of work
 - d) Report on credentials of representatives to the 22nd Session
- 3) Matters related to work of the Commission:
 - a) Report on the work of the Commission
 - b) Discussion and decision on the future of the Commission
- 4) Other Matters
- 5) Date and place of the next Session of the Commission
- 6) Adoption of the report
- 7) Closure of the meeting

ANNEX II

RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP TO DEVELOP A PROPOSAL ON THE FUTURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL RICE COMMISSION (IRC)

THE MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL RICE COMMISSION, AT ITS 22nd SESSION, DECIDED TO ESTABLISH A WORKING GROUP TO DEVELOP A PROPOSAL ON ITS FUTURE:

- a) The Working Group (WG) will have the following features:
 - The Working Group will be open to Observers from IRC Member States and interested stakeholders.
 - It will be composed of seven IRC Members nominated by each Regional Group, among Permanent Representatives to FAO in Rome;
 - It will elect the Chairperson from among its Members at its first meeting;
- b) The WG will review, taking into account the documents presented at the 22nd Session of the IRC, the operation of the IRC as the basis for a proposal on its future to either:
 - phase out the IRC based on the identification of existing bodies within FAO that might assume the objectives/functions of the Commission; or
 - develop a proposal that identifies a specific role for the IRC in the current global environment on Rice; or
 - propose an alternative to the aforementioned proposals.
- c) If legal, programme or funding issues which could affect the Organization arise, they should be identified in accordance with Rule X, paragraph 4 of the IRC Rules of Procedure, in a timely manner.
- d) The WG shall have English as its working language and take decisions by consensus;
- e) Timeline will be as follows:
 - Regional Groups shall notify the IRC Secretariat of their respective representatives to the WG by December 10, 2012 in order to allow its first meeting as soon as possible;
 - Final report of the WG shall be available by 15 March 2013 (to be sent for translation);
 - Agenda for Special Session shall be circulated by the end of March 2013;
 - Final report shall be circulated in all IRC languages to IRC Members by 1 May 2013.
 - Final report of the WG shall be presented at a Special Session of the IRC, which will take place immediately before or during FAO Conference of June 2013 (pending approval of FAO Director-General).
- f) The outcomes and any decision taken at the Special Session of the IRC will be reported to the FAO Conference in June 2013.

ANNEX III

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

BENIN - BÉNIN

Ms Soukeyna KA LOKO
Représentante Permanente Adjointe
Ministre Conseiller
Ambassade de la République du Bénin
Viale del Policlinico, 131 int 6
00161 Rome

BRAZIL - BRÉSIL - BRASIL

Head of Delegation
Mr Olyntho VIEIRA
Permanent Representation of the Federative
Republic of Brazil to FAO
Via di Santa Maria dell'Anima 32
Rome

Alternate(s)

Mr Pedro BRANCANTE MACHADO
Permanent Representation of the Federative
Republic of Brazil to FAO
Via di Santa Maria dell'Anima 32
Rome

Mr Cláudio Fernando BRAYER PEREIRA
IRGA
Padre Reus st.
172 Cachoeirinha
RS

Mr Sergio Iraçu Gindri LOPES
Research Manager
IRGA
Padre Reus st.
172 Cachoeirinha
RS
Phone: 55 9968 7150
Email: sergio_lobes@irga.rs.gov.br

CAMEROON - CAMEROUN - CAMERÚN

Chef de délégation
Mr Jean Claude EKO'O AKOUAFANE
Secrétaire général - Ministère de
l'agriculture et du développement rural
ekoorjc@yahoo.fr

Suppléant(s)

Moungui MEDI
Deputy Permanent Representative
Ambassade de la République du Cameroun
Via Siracusa, 4-6
Rome
Phone: 0039064403644
Email: medimoungui@yahoo.fr

CHAD - TCHAD

Suppléant(s)

Mr Dastre ALLARANGAYE
MOUNDIABAYE
Chercheur Riz à l'ITRAD
BP 5400
N'Djamena
Phone : +235 6629 1670
Email : allarangaye@yahoo.fr

CHINA - CHINE

Alternate(s)

Mr Shihua CHENG
Director General & Professor, China
National Rice Research Institute
Phone: 86-571-63370188
Fax: 86-571-63371532
Email: shcheng@mail.hz.zj.cn

Mr Luo JU
Project Officer for International
Cooperation & Associated Professor, China
National Rice Research Institute
Phone: +86-571-63370212
Fax: 86-571-63371532
Email: luojurice@126.com

CUBA

Suplente(s)

Ms Silvia ÁLVAREZ ROSSELL
 Representante Adjunto
 Organismos Internacionales
 Embajada de Cuba
 Via Licinia N°7
 00153 Roma
 Phone: 065781123
 Fax: 065745445
 Email: adjuntocuba@ecuitalia.it

Mr Luis Alberto MARÍN LLANES
 Representante Alterno
 Organismos Internacionales
 Embajada de Cuba
 Via Licinia N°7
 00153 Roma
 Phone: 065781123
 Fax: 065745445
 Email: alternocuba@ecuitalia.it

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC - RÉPUBLIQUE
 DOMINICAINE - REPÚBLICA
 DOMINICANA**

Jefe de Delegación

Mr Mario ARVELO
 Embajador, Representante Permanente
 Misión Permanente de la
 República Dominicana ante la FAO
 Via Marco Aurelio, 42 int. B-2
 Roma

Ms Maria Cristina LAUREANO
 Primer Secretario, Representante Alterno
 Misión Permanente de la
 República Dominicana ante la FAO
 Via Marco Aurelio, 42 int. B-2
 Roma

EGYPT - ÉGYPTE - EGIPTO

Alternate(s)

Magdy HASSAN MAGDY ANWAR
 Deputy Permanent Representative of Egypt
 to UN Agencies based in Rome
 Embassy of Arab Republic of Egypt
 Via Salaria, 267
 00199 Rome
 Phone: +39 06 8548956
 Fax: +39 068542603
 Email: egypt@agrioffegypt.it

FRANCE - FRANCIA

Chef de déléation

Mr Alain DEREVIER
 Conseiller recherche
 Représentation permanente de la
 France auprès de l'OAA
 Corso del Rinascimento, 52
 Rome
 Phone: 0668405240
 Fax: 0668405215
 Email: alain.derevier@diplomatie.gouv.fr

GHANA

Head of Delegation

Mr Nii QUAYE-KUMAH
 Alternate Permanent Representative to
 FAO
 Embassy of the Republic of Ghana
 Via Ostriana, 4
 00199 Rome
 Phone: +393890165333
 Fax: +39-0686-325-762
 Email: nii.quaye.kumah@gmail.com

Alternate(s)

Ms Regina APPIAH-SAM R.
 Head of Chancery
 Embassy of the Republic of Ghana
 Via Ostriana, 4
 00199 Rome
 Phone: +393487124630
 Fax: +390686325762
 Email: regysam@yahoo.co.uk

GUINEA - GUINÉE

Chef de délégation

Ms NATHALIE KONAN
 Coordinatrice Nationale de la Sécurité
 Alimentaire
 Via Adelaide Ristori 9b / 13
 00197 Rome
 Phone: +22464227276/62475399
 Email: nathaliekonan98@yahoo.fr

INDIA - INDE

Head of Delegation

Mr Shobhana K. PATTANAYAK
 Minister(Agriculture)
 Alternate Permanent Representative to
 FAO
 Embassy of India
 Via XX Settembre, 5
 00187 Rome
 Phone: +39-06-42013972
 Fax: +39-06-48904470
 Email: agri.wing@indianembassy.it

INDONESIA - INDONÉSIE

Head of Delegation

Mr Kasdi SUBAGYONO
 Director
 Indonesia Center for Agricultural
 Technology Assessment and Development
 Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of
 Indonesia

Alternate(s)

Mr Agus Prihatin SAPTONO
 Minister Counsellor, APR to FAO,WFP
 and IFAD
 Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia
 Via Campania, 55
 Rome

ITALY - ITALIE - ITALIA

Head of Delegation

Mr Claudio MISCIA
 Counsellor
 Deputy Permanent Representative to FAO
 Rome
 Phone: +39 06 6977961

Alternate(s)

Mr Stefano BISOFFI
 Director
 International Relationships Unit
 Council for Research and Experimentation
 in Agriculture
 Via Nazionale 82
 00184 Rome

Ms Elisabetta LUPOTTO
 Plant production and Biology Unit
 Council for Research and Experimentation
 in Agriculture
 Via Nazionale 82
 00184 Rome

JAPAN - JAPON - JAPÓN

Alternate(s)

Mr Ryo OMORI
 First Secretary, Alternate Permanent
 Representative to FAO
 Embassy of Japan
 Via Quintino Sella, 60
 00187 Rome
 Phone:+39 06 487 99411
 Fax: +39 06 488 5109
 Email: ryo.omori@mofa.go.jp

KENYA

Head of Delegation

Ms Josephine Wangari GAITA
 Amabassador /Permanent Representative
 Kenya Embassy
 Viale Luca Gaurico 205
 00143 Rome

Alternate(s)

Mr Paul MUNYAO KALIIH
 Alternate Permanent Representative
 Kenya Embassy
 Viale Luca Gaurico 205
 00143 Rome

LIBERIA - LIBÉRIA

Head of Delegation

Mr Mohammed S. L. SHERIFF
 Permanent Representative of Liberia to UN
 Based Organizations
 Embassy of Liberia
 Ple. delle Medaglie D'oro 7
 00136 Rome
 Phone: 3667430920
 Email: liberiaembassy@hotmail.com

Alternate(s)

Mr A. Haruna Rashid KROMAH
 Secretary
 Embassy of Liberia
 Phone: 0635453399
 Fax: 0635344729
 Email: ahrk510@gmail.com

MADAGASCAR

Suppléant(s)

Monsieur MONJA
 Conseiller/Représentant Permanent Adjoint
 de Madagascar auprès de la FAO
 Ambassade de la République de
 Madagascar
 Via Riccardo Zandonai, 84/A
 Rome
 Email: ambamad@hotmail.com

MALAYSIA - MALAISIE - MALASIA

Head of Delegation

Ms NAIMAH RAMLI
 Undersecretary
 Paddy and Rice Industry Division
 Phone: +60388701810
 Fax: +60388701761
 Email: naimah@moa.gov.my

Alternate(s)

Ms Halimah ABDULLAH
 Permanent Representative
 Embassy of Malaysia
 Via Nomentana, 297
 Rome

Ms Syariffah Norhana SYED MUSTAFFA

Alternate Permanent Representative
 Embassy of Malaysia
 Via Nomentana, 297
 Rome

Mr Amir Hamzah HARUN
 Alternate Permanent Representative
 Embassy of Malaysia
 Via Nomentana, 297
 Rome

Observer

Mr Zainudin HASHIM
 Senior General Manager for Corporate
 Planning & Business Development
 Email: zainudin@bernas.com.my

MALI - MALÍ

Chef de déléation

Gaoussou DRABO
 Ambassadeur Représentant Permanent
 Ambassade de la République du Mali
 Via Antonio Bosio, 2
 00161 Rome
 Phone: +39 06 44 25 40 68
 Fax: +39 06 44 25 40 29
 Email: amb.malirome@tiscalinet.it

Suppléant(s)

Mr Bah KONIPO
 Deuxième Conseiller Représentant
 Permanent Adjoint
 Ambassade de la République du Mali
 Via Antonio Bosio, 2
 00161 Rome

MEXICO - MEXIQUE - MÉXICO

Suplente(s)

Mr Leonardo HERNÁNDEZ ARAGÓN
 Líder del Programa de Investigación en
 Arroz
 Insituto Nacional de Investigaciones
 Forestales, Agrícolas y Pecuarias

Mr Alan ROMERO ZAVALA
 Representante Alterno de México
 Embajada de los Estados Unidos
 Mexicanos
 Via Lazzaro Spallanzani, 16
 Roma

MOZAMBIQUE

Alternate(s)

Mr Valdemiro Leonardo MUNGUAMBE
 Head of Department at the Ministry of
 Agriculture
 Phone: +258 21 415103
 Fax: +258 21 415103
 Email: vavamunuambe@gmail.com

Mr Marcos LANGA
 Senior Officer
 Ministry of Agriculture
 Email: marcoslanga@yahoo.com

MYANMAR

Head of Delegation

Mr Tint SWAI
 Permanent Representative of the Republic
 of the Union of Myanmar
 Phone: +39 06 36303753
 Fax: +39 06 36298566
 Email: merome2010@gmail.com

Alternate(s)

Mr Than SAIN
 Alternate Permanent Representative of the
 Republic of the Union of Myanmar
 Phone: +39 06 36303753
 Fax: +39 06 36298566
 Email: merome2010@gmail.com

Mr Ko Ko KYI
 Alternate Permanent Representative of the
 Republic of the Union of Myanmar
 Phone: +39 06 36303753
 Fax: +39 06 36298566
 Email: merome2010@gmail.com

NETHERLANDS - PAYS-BAS - PAÍSES BAJOS

Head of Delegation

Ms Gerda VERBURG
 Permanent Representative of the Kingdom
 of the Netherlands to the UN Organisations
 for Food and Agriculture
 Permanent Representation of the Kingdom
 of
 the Netherlands to the UN Organizations
 for Food and Agriculture
 Via delle Terme Deciane, 6
 00153 Rome
 Phone: 065740306
 Email: rof@minbuza.nl

Alternate(s)

Ms Eva VAN WOERSEM E.
 Alternate Permanent Representative of the
 Kingdom of the Netherlands to the UN
 Organisations for Food and Agriculture
 Phone: +39 06 5740306
 Email: rof@minbuza.nl

NIGERIA - NIGÉRIA

Mr Harold CHIKWENDU
 Deputy Director
 Desk Officer, Rice Value Chain
 Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural
 Development
 Abuja

Mr Olumuyiwa OSINAME
 Team Leader
 Rice Value Chain
 Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural
 Development
 Abuja

PAKISTAN - PAKISTÁN

Head of Delegation

Mr Zulfiqar Haider KHAN Z. H.
 Agriculture Counsellor/ Alternate
 Permanent Representative of Pakistan
 Embassy of the Islamic Republic of
 Pakistan
 Via della Camilluccia, 682
 Rome
 Phone: 06 36304736
 Fax: 06 36301936
 Email: agriwing@gmail.com

Alternate(s)

Mr Khalid MEHBOOB K.
 Adviser / Alternate Permanent
 Representative of Pakistan
 Embassy of the Islamic Republic of
 Pakistan
 Via della Camilluccia, 682
 Rome
 Phone: 06 36304736
 Fax: 06 36301936
 Email: agriwing@gmail.com

PERU - PÉROU - PERÚ

Jefe de Delegación

Sra. Alexandra TONSMANN FOPPIANI
 Tercer Secretario
 Embajada de la República del Perú
 Via Francesco Siacci, 2/B, int. 5
 Roma

PHILIPPINES - FILIPINAS

Head of Delegation

Mr Romeo RECIDÉ
 Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning
 Department of Agriculture
 Elliptical Road, Quezon City
 Metro Manila

Alternate(s)

Mr Noel DE LUNA
 Chief, International Relations Division
 Department of Agriculture
 Elliptical Road, Quezon City
 1100
 Metro Manila

Mr Lupino LAZARO Jr.
 Deputy Permanent Representative
 Philippine Embassy
 Viale delle Medaglie D'Oro 112
 00136 Rome

Mr Esteban PAGARAN
 Alternate Permanent Representative
 Philippine Embassy
 Viale delle Medaglie D'Oro 112
 00136 Rome

**REPUBLIC OF KOREA - RÉPUBLIQUE
DE CORÉE - REPÚBLICA DE COREA**

Ms Sujin PARK
 Embassy of the Republic of Korea
 Via Barnaba Oriani, 30
 Rome

SENEGAL - SÉNÉGAL

Chef de délégation

Samba KANTE
 Conseiller technique, Coordonnateur du
 Programme National d'Autosuffisance
 en riz
 Phone: +221 33 8233101/+39 06 6865 212
 Fax: +221 33823 32 68/ +39 06 6821 92 94
 Email: minagril@gmail.com

Mr Seyni NDAO
 Directeur du Développement et de
 l'Aménagement rural
 Phone: +221 33 8233101/+39 06 6865 212
 Fax: +221 33823 32 68/ +39 06 6821 92 94
 Email: minagril@gmail.com

SRI LANKA

Head of Delegation

Mr Asitha PERERA
 Ambassador/Permanent Representative of
 Sri Lanka to the FAO, IFAD & WFP
 Phone: + 39 06 8554579
 Fax: +39 06 84241670
 Email: embassy@srilankaembassyrome.org

Alternate(s)

Ms Gothami INDIKADAHENA
 Minister (Commercial) / Deputy Permanent
 Representative of Sri Lanka to the FAO,
 IFAD & WFP
 Phone: +39 06 8554560 Ex: 105
 Fax: + 39 06 84241670
 Email: minister.comslemrome@gmail.com

Mr Mohamed Haniffa MUINUDEEN
 Additional Secretary
 Ministry of Agrarian Services & Wildlife
 Govijana Mandiraya, 80/5
 Rajamalwatta Avenue Battaramulla
 Phone : 94 11 2885380, 718186178
 Fax : +94 11 2885380
 Email : muinhaniffa10@gmail.com

THAILAND - THAÏLANDE - TAILANDIA

Head of Delegation

Mr Chairit DAMRONGKIAT
 Director General
 Rice Department
 Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives

Alternate(s)

Mr Rapibhat CHANDARASRIVONGS
 Minister (Agriculture)
 Permanent Representative to FAO
 Office of Agricultural Affairs
 Royal Thai Embassy
 Via Cassia, 929 Villino M
 Rome

Ms Sairak CHAILANGGAR
 Counsellor (Agriculture)
 Deputy Permanent Representative to FAO
 Office of Agricultural Affairs
 Royal Thai Embassy
 Via Cassia, 929 Villino M
 Rome

Mr Piyawat NAIGOWIT
 First Secretary (Agriculture)
 Alternate Permanent Representative to
 FAO
 Office of Agricultural Affairs
 Royal Thai Embassy
 Via Cassia, 929 Villino M
 Rome

Mr Krishnpong SRIPONGPANKUL
 Director
 Cooperative and Foreign Division and
 Chainat Rice Research Center
 Rice Department

 Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives

UNITED KINGDOM - ROYAUME-UNI - REINO UNIDO

Head of Delegation

Mr Neil BRISCOE
 Ambassador
 Permanent Representative
 Permanent Representation of the
 United Kingdom to FAO
 Via XX Settembre, 80/a
 Rome

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA - ÉTATS-UNIS D'AMÉRIQUE - ESTADOS UNIDOS DE AMÉRICA

Alternate(s)

Mr Michael MICHENER
 Minister Counselor for Agriculture
 Alternate Permanent Representative
 United States Department of Agriculture
 United States Mission to the United Nations
 Rome-based Agencies
 Via Boncompagni 2
 00187 Rome
 Phone: +39-06-4674-3507

VENEZUELA (BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF) - VENEZUELA (RÉPUBLIQUE BOLIVARIENNE DU) - VENEZUELA (REPÚBLICA BOLIVARIANA DE)

Jefe de Delegación

Sra. Gladys Francisca URBANEJA
DURÁN
Embajadora
Representante Permanente ante la FAO
Roma
Phone: 06 808 1407
Fax: 06 8069 0022
Email: embavenefao@iol.it

Mr Manh Cuong DOAN
Programme Officer
International Cooperation Department,
MARD

Ms Thi Thu Quynh NGUYEN
Counsellor
Deputy Permanent Representative
of Viet Nam to FAO
Embassy of the Socialist Republic
of Viet Nam
Via di Bravetta, 156-158
Rome

Suplente(s)

Sr Luis Alberto ÁLVAREZ FERMÍN
Ministro Consejero
Representante Permanente Alterno ante la
FAO
Roma
Phone: 06 808 1407
Fax: 06 8069 0022
Email: embavenefao@iol.it

VIET NAM

Head of Delegation

Mr Ba Bong BUI
Vice-Minister
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural
Development of Viet Nam

Alternate(s)

Mr Hoang Long NGUYEN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to
FAO
Embassy of the Socialist Republic
of Viet Nam
Via di Bravetta, 156-158
Rome

Mr Quoc Doanh LE
Director-General
Crop Production Department, MARD

**OBSERVERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL
RICE COMMISSION
OBSERVATEURS DE LA COMMISSION
INTERNATIONALE DU RIZ
OBSERVADORES DE LA COMISIÓN
INTERNACIONAL DEL ARROZ**

BURUNDI

Premier A Conseiller d'Ambassade Macaire
NAHIMANA
Premier Conseiller d'Ambassade
Representant Permanent Suppléant
Ambassade de la République du Burundi
Via Enrico Accinni, 63 Scala B Int. 10
Rome

HONDURAS

Jefe de Delegación
Sra. Mayra REINA
Ministro Consejero
Representante Permanente Adjunto ante la
FAO
Representación Permanente de la
República de Honduras ante la FAO
Via Giambattista Vico 40, int. 8
Roma
Phone: 333 7942650
Email: mayarareina@libero.it

**RUSSIAN FEDERATION - FÉDÉRATION
DE RUSSIE - FEDERACIÓN DE RUSIA**

Mr Sergey SAPOZHNIKOV
Alternate Permanent Representative
Embassy of the Russian Federation
Via Gaeta, 5
Rome

SPAIN

Suplente
Sr. Elías José GUÍA LÓPEZ
Agregado Agrícola
Embajada de España
(Oficina de los Representantes Permanentes
Adjunto y Alterno)
Via di Parione, 12
00186 Roma
Phone: +39 06 6878762

