REPORT

ON

THE AUTO-EVALUATION OF PROGRAMME ENTITY 212 P5

Support to Strategy Formulation and Promotion of Specific Action for Rice Development in Member Countries of the International Rice Commission (IRC)

Rome
April 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current auto-evaluation deals with Programme Entity 212 P5 *"Support to Strategy Formulation and Promotion of Specific Action for Rice Development in Member Countries of the International Rice Commission (IRC)"* It was conducted under the overall supervision of the Chief, Crop and Grassland Service, and in consultation with members of the FAO IRC Steering Committee, member countries of the Commission and partner institutions.

The Programme Entity 212 P5 is unique in several ways. It is entirely devoted to the sustainable development of a single commodity, rice, and the well-being of its producers and consumers. It does so by providing secretariat and technical support to the work of an intergovernmental body, the International Rice Commission (IRC), and by assisting in the implementation and follow-up of its decisions and recommendations. The evaluation was based on: a) briefings by the Programme Managers and on individual discussions with members of the IRC Steering Committee; b) extensive IRC and rice-related literature, and c) a comprehensive questionnaire aimed at soliciting the opinions of the stakeholders and partners of IRC on the strength, weakness and opportunities of the International Rice Commission activities and how effectively FAO and others are implementing its recommendations. The main remit of the auto-evaluation is to: (1) Review the development and new trends and opportunities in rice research and development in the world and (2) Review of the programme activities in relation to major achievements of the IRC from 1998 to 2005. Following are the major recommendations of the Auto-evaluation:

- The Commission's Secretariat consider producing on regular basis every four years a comprehensive State of Rice Production and Development to be tabled at the regular Sessions of the Commission. It should be possible to do that in collaboration with relevant FAO units and international organizations, especially the CGIAR Agriculture research Centres.

- The Commission Secretariat, in consultation with the Steering Committee, initiate serious discussion of what need to be done to revive the work of the Commission. Consideration should be given to raising this issue at the forthcoming session of the Commission to get its support for the initiative. Should the Commission agree, the following course of action is suggested: a) preparation of an issues paper by the Secretariat, based on wide consultation within and outside FAO; b) convening a small meeting of representative member countries, relevant organizations/research institutions, private sector/NGOs and leading rice experts/personalities; c) finding sponsor/s for the meeting possibly from traditional donor countries and private sector enterprises.

- The Chairperson of the Steering Committee convenes a special meeting of the Committee to discuss issues relevant to its work including its future orientation and mode of operation especially of promoting greater networking and partnerships. The discussion of the outcome of the current auto-evaluation of PE 212 P5 may offer an opportunity for such special meeting and discussion.

- The Agriculture Department find ways of strengthening the Secretariat as it could greatly benefit from an additional staff to take care of tasks such as information collection and dissemination.

- Consideration be given to obtaining guidance from FAO Governing Bodies for broadening the scope of the Programme to include the private sector and the commercial scale production of rice, while maintaining focus on small and poor rice producers and consumers.

- The Programme Managers should consider the phasing out of 'Thriving with Rice' and 'Hybrid-Rice Development and Use', and the gradual phasing out of 'Support to the Special Programme for Food Security'.

- Consideration be given to the merits of having the 'Rice Integrated Crop Management of various ecosystems' and 'New Rice Varieties' consolidated and that 'New Rice for Africa (NERICA)' activity should include both upland and lowland rice.

- The future orientation of the Rice Development Programme should be broadened and geared towards being more of interdivisional in scope.

THE REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

FAO has a long history of conducting regular evaluations of its programmes and activities, normally carried out by independent external reviewer. Recently new regimes of auto-evaluations were introduced placing stronger emphasis on evaluation as a way to foster learning and continuous improvements in FAO programmes. The current auto-evaluation deals with Programme Entity 212 P5 *"Support to Strategy Formulation and Promotion of Specific Action for Rice Development in Member Countries of the International Rice Commission (IRC)"* It was conducted under the overall supervision of the Chief, Crop and Grassland Service, and in consultation with members of the FAO IRC Steering Committee, member countries of the Commission and partner institutions.

I.1 The Programme Entity

The Programme Entity 212 P5 is unique in several ways. It is entirely devoted to the sustainable development of a single commodity, rice, and the well-being of its producers and consumers. It does so by providing secretariat and technical support to the work of an intergovernmental body, the International Rice Commission (IRC), and by assisting in the implementation and follow-up of its decisions and recommendations. As such, the Programme Entity is influenced in its activities by the dictates and directions of the IRC, but at the same time it plays a major role in shaping the agenda of the latter. In preparing for the Commission's meetings and in implementing its recommendations, the Programme Entity seeks the collaboration of several FAO technical units that have activities relevant to rice, as well as of outside rice-related research and development organizations. This involves a good deal of coordination efforts, including calling for a wide range of inputs and convening preparatory experts and other meetings in between sessions of the Commission.

Unlike several of the FAO special entities that provide secretariat and technical support to intergovernmental bodies, the Programme Entity under review has in addition a full fledged normative and operational programme of work of its own. In support of each of these normative activities, the programme promotes field projects, collects, analyses and disseminates relevant information and organises forums to promote exchange of information, experience and new technologies on a variety of rice-related subjects. The Programme Entity, though small in budget and staffing, endeavours to undertake a wide range of activities, the totality of which is rather complex as most of these activities are driven by outside stimulus (the IRC) and their full implementation is subject to the ability and willingness of various players.

I.2 The Evaluation Process

The evaluation was based on: a) briefings by the Programme Managers and on individual discussions with members of the IRC Steering Committee; b) extensive IRC and rice-related literature, and c) a comprehensive questionnaire aimed at

soliciting the opinions of the stakeholders and partners of IRC on the strength, weakness and opportunities of the International Rice Commission activities and how effectively FAO and others are implementing its recommendations (Annex 1 and 2, people met and questionnaire format, respectively). All in all, 23 replies were received from former IRC chairpersons (1 reply), country members (4), Members of the Steering Committee (10), regional officers (3), research centres (3) and individuals with rice-related expertise (2).

I. 3 Outcomes of the Auto-evaluation

The main remit of the auto-evaluation is to:

1. Review the development and new trends and opportunities in rice research and development in the world.
2. Review of the programme activities in relation to major achievements of the IRC from 1998 to 2005.

II. GLOBAL IMPORTANCE OF RICE: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Rice is the main staple of more than half the world's population. Rice is often the main source of employment, income and nutrition in many poor and food insecure regions of the world. The improvement of the productivity and efficiency of the rice-based farming systems is expected to contribute greatly to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Rice is a most versatile crop: it is grown under a wide range of soil moisture regimes, from deep flood to dry land, and in different soil conditions. Rice-based production systems span from the tropical rain forest climate to the continental temperate climate and from the arid desert climate to the sea-level regions to 2,600 meters above sea level. The diversity of the regions, peoples, and resources connected within the world's rice-based systems requires a diverse approach for global rice-based development that includes participation from the local to the international level.

The importance of managing rice-based ecosystems in a sustainable way is underscored by the strong relationship between rice production and local livelihoods. However, rice production is besieged by a number of challenges and constraints including declining productivity, diminishing land and water resources, global climate change and limiting economic and other factors. Facing the major challenge of enhancing productivity of rice-based systems in a sustainable manner will require closing the yield gap through improving crop management techniques, systems approach to post harvest operations and harnessing science for development, safety assessment and technology transfer.

Reversing the declining trend in rice production growth will depend on achievements in science and technology to promote rice productivity, as well as on economic forces. Low market prices do not encourage growth in the sector, but higher prices in the market could be disaster for consumers who cannot afford to pay any more for their food. Intervention in pricing by national governments or international bodies could help keep the forces of supply and demand in balance.

Diminishing land and water resources constitute another major constraint to sustainable rice development in many areas. At present, about 75% of global rice production comes from irrigated rice ecosystems but land and water resources for irrigated rice production continues to diminish. This is the more evident in Asia due to intensive competition for land and water in major rice producing countries from expanding urban and industrial sectors. On the other hand, in several Sub-Saharan and Latin American countries there are considerable land and water resources for rice production. The high cost of developing these resources remains a major constraint. This is coupled with declining prices of rice in the international markets since 1995, which had caused a sharp reduction in the return from rice production, a factor that have contributed to poverty and hardship for many small rice farmers in developing countries.

Rice cultivation in many countries demand high labour input and due to the effect of the market economy, many of the younger generation in farming communities prefer to migrate out from their villages to more industrialised parts within or outside their countries. Farm mechanisation may partially solve the problem but if inappropriately used it could contribute to global warming, the destruction of rice cultivated land and additional environmental pollution. Furthermore, women and smallholder farmers play an important role in both rice production and post-harvest activities, yet they often do not receive proportionate social and economic benefits when improvements in rice cultivation are initiated at the field level[1].

In determining the relative importance of concerns/issues that need to be addressed regularly by the Commission, the respondents to the questionnaire gave equal priority to socio-economic and technology related issues. The predicament of women and small farmers of not receiving social and economic benefits proportionate to their role in rice production and post-harvest was highlighted. Equally, they emphasised the role of science and technology, especially modern biotechnology in increasing the productivity of rice. These were followed in priority by two other issues, the inability of rice production to keep up with population growth, and environmental pollution. The decline in the rate of growth of rice yield was not accorded as a high priority compared with the other issues presumably because it is a symptom of the other factors. The declining prices of rice in the international markets was not seen by the respondents to the questionnaire as high enough apriority for the International Rice Commission to deal with.

While the issues above demand response by the Commission, the respondents to the questionnaire, emphasised that there must be a wider realisation of sustainable agriculture and social effects in general, a technical response alone is not appropriate, but is certainly a very important part of the response. Furthermore, rice should not be seen in isolation but in the context of diversified farming systems and value chain/value addition for enhancement of human nutrition and income generation to lift rice farmers from the poverty traps. An example was given: in many countries fish protein will be in high demand, water resources in high competition leading one to think that rice fish with less pesticides and rotation with legumes would be a better development direction than just rice productivity increases in isolation of the rest of

[1] 2004 Report on the International Year of Rice (a Consultant Report to AGPC)

the system. Several respondents felt that the Commission focuses mainly on technical issues and less to rice based livelihood systems are not addressed as such. The lack of emphasis by the Commission on human and institutional dimensions of rice production continues to be of concern.

Obviously, the relative importance of the above issues differs from one region to another and the Commission should keep them regularly in review. In this regard, it is ***recommended*** that the Commission's Secretariat consider producing on regular basis every four years a comprehensive State of Rice Production and Development to be tabled at the regular Sessions of the Commission. It should be possible to do that in collaboration with relevant FAO units and international organizations, especially the CGIAR Agriculture research Centres.

III THE COMMISSION

The International Rice Commission has been in existence for some 56 years, during which period, it saw its membership growing from twelve founding members to more than sixty members at present. It has so far met more than twenty times in pursuance of its all-embracing mission: *to promote national and international action in matters relating to the production, conservation, distribution and consumption of rice*. The Commission's remit is to review related scientific, technical, and economic problems, to encourage and coordinate research, to provide recommendations for national and international actions, and assemble and disseminate, through the FAO publications and other media, information relating to the problems and activities pertinent to its functions.

The notable growth in rice production over the past 40 years is attributable, at least in part, to the work of the Commission in the application of technology, the implementation of cooperative programmes and the dissemination of information. The work of the Commission has evolved from an early emphasis on breeding and international nurseries to the implementation during the 70s and 80s of a large number of rice development projects and programmes in support of the Green Revolution. Recently, the Commission has been given importance to the conservation of the environment, human and institutional improvement and natural resources of rice production systems and action that will enhance the income of rice producers.

III.1 Role of the Commission

Has the Commission still a role to play in promoting national and international action in matters relating to the production, conservation, distribution and consumption of rice, as its original mission dictates? This was a question put to former chairpersons of the Commission, member countries, staff of international agricultural research centres dealing with rice, known rice experts and many FAO staff at Headquarters and the regional offices. The answer by all was a unanimous yes, with not a single dissenting voice! However, there were several 'yes but' answers; it is clear that the vision of having an intergovernmental body dealing with one of the most important commodity for food security and human well-being is still valid and

strongly supported. Naturally, views differed as to what shape, future orientation and mode of operation should the Commission adopt.

III.2 Evolution of the Commission

By their nature, questionnaires do not allow for in-depth comments, but the responses received on whether the Commission was evolving sufficiently offered useful glimpses of how the various stakeholders saw the evolving role of the Commission. Below are some of the brief responses to the questions posed.

Was the Commission evolving sufficiently to tackle new challenges and demands?

- No substantial evidence so far that the Commission is evolving, except that it is going to give importance to some non-technology areas. The Commission has to define its role in the light of the current situation and its resources.
- The Commission has done little in the areas of importance such as the effects of globalization and market liberalization on rice production, legislation and marketing[2].

What does the Commission need to do more?

- More innovative approaches are needed to address the needs of member states especially considering the changing socio-economic paradigms.
- It has to be more dynamic and more proactive, less dependent on FAO's initiative.
- To be more proactive on helping countries to prepare policies on areas of major national and global interest,
- A balanced approach to technology, institutional, human and environment aspects is needed. So far, by and large, it has been a rice technology promotion club.
- Some of the priority areas to be considered: diversification and intensification of rice-based cropping systems to be more productive and cost effective by including high-value crops to enhance nutrition and increase income.
- Harnessing biodiversity of rice-based systems for improving nutrition of rural communities; Public-private partnerships for development of the rice sector.

What are the new areas to address?

- Rice-fish, climate impact (methane), water competition, water and environmental impact are not well-addressed yet important challenges – perhaps more important than stagnating yields (they stagnate due to economic conditions)!
- Still need actions on research to use rice waste like husk and straw, etc
- The IRC can still play an active role in producing technical outputs including technical books and manuals, videos, newsletters.

[2] Traditionally, the Rice Group of the FAO Basic Foodstuffs Service (ESCB) carries out the work on rice trade and marketing. Therefore, the Commission Secretariat has done little in the areas of importance such as the effects of globalization and market liberalization on rice production, legislation and marketing.

- Can take part in several studies related to rice production, the most important is Hybrid Rice and RiceCheck.

What are the constraints?

- The commission is constrained by resources to take up new challenges.
- The current status of the IRC confines its scope of work and reduces its impact in the future, while the following-up of IYR requires enormous tasks ahead should FAO be more serious about world rice production.
- More financial and technical support is needed by FAO/HQs to the Commission, including recruitment (or assignment) of an additional officer to assist the Secretary of the Commission.

III.3 The Commission's focus

The Commission tends to issue a large number of recommendations and directives (e.g. the 18th Session 47 recommendations, the 19th Session 61 recommendations and the 20th Session over 70 recommendations). This led to the question of whether the Commission should have sharper focus and a more rigorous approach to its priority setting. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the Commission needs to have greater focus but the list of what they thought it should focus on got long and diverse!

III.4 The Commission's frequency of meetings

The Constitution of the Commission was amended in the past so as to have Regular Sessions of the Commission convening at least once every four years instead of once every two years mainly due to financial consideration. Most respondents to the questionnaire, however, agreed that four years was a long period between sessions and that more frequent meetings would improve its capacity to deliver, but they realise the budgetary limitations under which the Commission has to operate. Some thought that ideally the Commission should meet every two years; others suggested that the Commission meets globally every four years and regionally every two years. The conclusion was that due to finance limitation, the present frequency of IRC sessions was acceptable, but more meetings should be organized for specific issues needed at regional levels between sessions. This is actually how the Commission currently operates.

III.5 Participation in the Commission's Sessions

Although the participation from partner institutions of the Commission has been satisfactory and the recent survey indicates clearly the strong interest of member countries in the continuation of the Commission and its activities, the participation of member countries in the recent-past Sessions of the Commission had left much to be desirable. Of the 61 member countries only 38, 30 and 27 attended the 18th, 19th and 20th Session, respectively. This situation could be attributed mainly to lack of resources to support developing countries attendance. It is, also, probable that some

countries do not always see the benefit for them to participate in all Sessions of the Commission and thus are more selective in their participation. Several respondents to the Questionnaire put forward ideas to improve the situation, which the Commission's Secretariat may wish to review. The following is a sample to illustrate the variety of views.

- The Commission may extend its invitation to rice industries in its Member Countries who might contribute financially towards travel expenses of the attendance of others, especially of least developed countries.
- An electronic newsletter will help to keep a deeper interest and an updated knowledge and progress related to rice production and post productions needs related to rice
- Make the agenda relevant and of practical importance enough to attract the member Countries and partners. The Commission should revisit its original mandate and discuss with the Cereal Group of ESCB on possibility to update it to address the implications of globalization, market liberalization and farm subsidies in rich countries for rice growers in developing countries.
- Provide more responsibility to the member countries (participatory, ownership. approach),
- Possibilities of attracting more donors and private sector to address issues of common interest and to provide support for projects, exchange of information (meetings, workshops) and attendance.

III.6 Discussion and Assessment

The Commission has played a notable role in promoting national and international action in matters relating to the production, conservation, distribution and consumption of rice. It has provided over the years a useful forum for member countries and relevant organizations and research institutions to get together and discuss matters of importance to this crop vital for food security and poverty alleviation in many parts of the developing world. The Commission's Secretariat and FAO's relevant technical units have been instrumental in the success of the Commission.

All those who have taken part in the questionnaire have confirmed, beyond any doubt, the importance of the Commission's mission and the need for it to continue its good work. They, nonetheless, pointed to several areas needing improvement, in the way described above, including improvement in its focus, mode of operation and participation of member countries in it deliberation. It is realized, however, that much of the success of the Commission hinges on the continued commitment by FAO and member countries. Many suspect that that commitment is waning of late due to financial and other constraints. This will be unfortunate indeed.

In the light of the above, it is ***recommended*** that: The Commission Secretariat, in consultation with the Steering Committee, initiate serious discussion of what need to be done to revive the work of the Commission. Consideration should be given to raising this issue at the forthcoming session of the Commission to get its support for the initiative. Should the Commission agree, the following course of action is suggested: a) preparation of an issues paper by the Secretariat, based on wide

consultation within and outside FAO; b) convening a small meeting of representative member countries, relevant organizations/research institutions, private sector/NGOs and leading rice experts/personalities; c) finding sponsor/s for the meeting possibly from traditional donor countries and private sector enterprises.

IV REVIEW THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PROGRAMME ENTITY

Since the Commission in fact drives the activities of the Programme Entity and since the full implementation of these activities depends on the collaboration of several players including the IRC member countries, research and development organizations and several FAO technical units, a meaningful evaluation of the Programme Entity should take into account the various components involved and the interaction among them. The following is a review and assessment of the various components that are involved directly or indirectly with PE 212P5, namely the FAO Steering Committee, the Commission Secretariat, and the FAO Rice Development Programme.

III.1 FAO Steering Committee

Rice-related matters permeate, to a varying extent, the activities of many technical and operational units in FAO, and for this reason a Steering Committee was established by the FAO Director-General to co-ordinate these activities and to oversee preparations for the meetings of the Commission and to follow-up of its recommendations. The Director of the FAO Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP) is currently the Chairperson of the FAO Steering Committee. It normally meets once a year prior to and in between the regular sessions of the Commission.

The bulk of the work on rice is within the Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP), which, deals with rice development and production in general as well as matters relating to integrated pest management and seed production. Other FAO technical units look into certain aspects of rice development relevant to their general mandates; the degree of their involvement varies greatly and is influenced by opportunities created by donors' interest and/or stimulated by request by member countries. The preparation for the Commission's meetings requires production of documents by the Commission's Secretariat but also by technical units, which represents at times a drain on their limited resources.

Discussions with members of the Steering Committee showed that they were in general comfortable with the once-a-year meetings, and several of them found them to be very useful and informative on FAO's involvement in rice. They all expressed satisfaction with the Commission's Secretariat handling of the Steering Committee meetings. *Regarding PE 212P5, they felt that it should be seen as an Organizational obligation and not AGPC's or AG's sole responsibility.* The success of the International Year of Rice is in good part attributable to the efforts made by the members of the Steering Committee individually and collectively. However, meaningful participation by the concerned technical units, especially when it involves preparation of documents or attending meetings, requires resources, which are in short supply.

The question of whether the PE 212P5 should allocate/share resources for the production of documentation by the technical units has received mix reaction and was not considered practical. However, the suggestion that allocation of some seed money by PBE at the disposal of the Steering Committee may help to make it more proactive and create greater interest in its work and the work of the Commission was widely supported. Some members stressed that the real issue was not as much lack of money as the mandate of the Commission, which has remained technology-driven. There was a need for more cooperation between IRC Secretariat and technical units and among related technical units. Joint activities should be encouraged more as had been done in the past for post harvest with ESCB, ESNA, FIRI, and AGSF, through the IRC Steering Committee.

In the light of the above it is ***recommended*** that: The Chairperson of the Steering Committee convenes a special meeting of the Committee to discuss issues relevant to its work including its future orientation and mode of operation especially of promoting greater networking and partnerships. The discussion of the outcome of the current auto-evaluation of PE 212 P5 may offer an opportunity for such special meeting and discussion.

III.2 The Commission Secretariat

Respondents to the questionnaire agreed that the Secretariat does provide satisfactory and timely support to the Commission, prior, during and after sessions, particularly, the timely production and dispatch of documentations[3]. The fact that the Commission meets every four years may give the impression that the task of the Commission Secretariat is easy and far in between. The following listing of the tasks of the Secretariat defies such an impression:

1. Provide a forum
    - Sessions: every four years,
    - Expert consultations, at least once every two years depending on resources and emerging issues,
    - Steering Committee Meeting, at least once a year depending on emerging issues.

2. Collection, analysis and dissemination of information
    - IRC News letter
    - Proceedings of IRC Sessions and Expert Consultations
    - Technical books and manuals
    - Databases
    - Web page

3. Implementation of recommendations of the IRC Sessions and Expert Consultations – Rice Development Programme

[3] With one dissenting voice, that is. The 'no' was justified on the basis that the 'Commission Secretary has too much on his plate and without the necessary support there is not much he can do'.

4. Technical support to other FAO units and programmes and to technology transfer to SPFS, TCE.

Since April 2004 the manager of the PE 212 P5 is responsible for the Rice Development Programme, at the same time, serving as the Executive Secretary of the Commission, a task that originally was carried out by two staff members. There is a general agreement that although the two are inter-related, additional resources are needed to further enhance and expand activities of the Commission and the Rice Development Programme. The Secretariat has done its best, but probably at considerable cost for the one officer remaining and this is likely to be an unsustainable situation over the long run. If the present situation of declining resources persists, both functions are likely to suffer. The question was asked of what would be the best course for the remaining one officer to take should the reduction of staff of PE 212P5 become permanent: to concentrate on the Rice Development Programme, or on the task of a Secretary of the Commission? There was no conclusive choice emerging from the respondents to the questionnaire, a further confirmation of how the two tasks are closely intertwined.

The Secretariat collaborates with several international organizations especially CGIAR Centres (e.g. IRRI, WARDA, CIAT, IPGRI, IITA) and several others (The Planet Rice Research Report, ORSTOM CIRAD, Ecoport, INPHO, IGGR, CTA, AgNIC, Rice Biotechnology Quarterly, Oryza Sativa). The Secretariat is also a member of the International Organizing Committee of the Africa Rice Initiative spearheaded by WARDA and UNDP. FAO and IRRI signed In 1999, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to strengthen their collaborative action aimed at promoting wider adoption of hybrid rice technology outside China, and in 2000 FAO and WARDA signed another MOU to support the Rapid Rice Technology Diffusion in West Africa (RARIDWA). FAO has also collaborated with FLAR/CIAT in the promotion of Integrated Crop Management for Irrigated Rice in Latin America.

The contribution of the IARCs to the Commission is seen mainly in providing useful information emanating from their research and development activities, the formulation of useful links with institutions/organizations of member countries and providing a link to the particular rice situations in each region and allow for inter-regional exchanges of information. There have been good collaboration with IRRI (through INTAFOR), WARDA (NERICA) and CIAT (CFC Rice Project) and several other Organizations/agencies during the preparation and implementation of the IYR. It is hoped that collaboration will be maintained after the IYR.

Part of the approach of the Programme Entity is the provision of support to inter-regional cooperative networks on rice to promote exchange of experience on approaches and strategies for sustainable rice production. As a follow-up to this, the Secretariat, in close collaboration with FAO Regional Offices and CG Centers, has supported four rice networks:

- With IRRI and RAP - the International Task Force on Hybrid Rice;
- With CIAT and RLC - the Working Group on Advanced Rice Breeding in Latin America and the Caribbean;
- With University of Torino, RNE and REU - the Inter-regional Collaborative Research Network on Rice in the Mediterranean Climate Areas; and

- With WARDA and RAF, the Technical Cooperation Network on Wetland Development and Management/Inland Valley Swamps.

The support to the networks is in the form of joint projects, exchange of information and capacity building. It appears that only the MED-Rice and INTAFOR have been active in the past 10 years. The Advanced Breeding Network and WEDEM/IVS need to be activated. Like most of networks in developing countries, the rice technical networks look for FAO and others for assistance. They call on FAO to provide technical assistance and some seed money (in the form of joint activities) to encourage them to be more active.

Discussion and Assessment

FAO has been able, to a greater extent, to support and serve the Commission well. The original vision of having the Secretariat function and the management of the Rice Development Programme together under the same roof is still valid and workable. However, its validity is dependent on having reasonable resources available to allow for equal and competent care of the two tasks, which is no longer the case since resources are getting scarcer and priorities are shifting. Separating the two function is not practical and will not solve the problem, but maintaining the current trend of reduced resources will lead to reduced efficiency and defaulting on the responsibilities towards the Commission. While there is no easy way out, it is ***recommended*** that the Agriculture Department find ways of strengthening the Secretariat as it could greatly benefit from an additional junior staff to take care of tasks such as information collection and dissemination. In the past, the Secretariat of the Commission was placed directly under the Department level. At such level, there is ample scope for introducing greater and active partnership with and among relevant technical units.

III.3 Rice Development Programme (RDP)

The Rice Development Programme is build around the recommendations and directives of the International Rice Commission. The current Programme is based on major recommendations made during 18th, 19th and 20th Sessions of the Commission, and has given priority to the support for activities in Member Countries on the following areas.

- Hybrid Rice Development and Use
- Rice Integrated Crop Management
- Inland Valley Swamps Development and Utilisation
- New Rice for Africa (NERICA)
- Thriving with Rice
- Support to the Special Programme for Food Security

Each of these thrusts has normative and operational components as well as functions related to retrieving and disseminating relevant information. The following is a brief review of the orientation, activities and major achievement of the various component of the Programme

III.3.1 Hybrid Rice Development And Use

Since it was developed in China in 1976, hybrid rice technology has attracted attention among rice producing countries and research institutions due to its yielding advantage over the best commercial rice varieties. In China alone some 50% of the total rice area is now under hybrid rice varieties, which is enabling the country to reduce the area assigned to this crop in favour of other production activities and to save water for national ecenomic development activities. The International Rice Commission urged FAO and Member Countries to support the development of hybrid rice and since 1990 the Programme has increased its activities in support of the development and use of hybrid rice in Member Countries outside of China.

Activities

The main activities carried out by the Programme are typical of those for promoting a new technology, including programme formulation missions, provision of training and promotion of exchange of information, experience, and genetic material as well as collecting, analysing and disseminating information on hybrid rice and its technologies. The Programme, also, actively participates in implementation activities of projects, for example the project on Hybrid Rice Development and Use in Asia, funded by the Asian Development Bank, and implemented by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), since 1998.

Main Achievements

The main achievements of the Programme are manifested in two major areas, namely technical support and information dissemination. The former consisted of project formulation and implementation of twelve projects since 1990 in seven rice-producing countries; eight by TCP finances and three by UNDP. The projects dealt with wide-ranging topics including strengthening national capacity for hybrid rice research and development as well as seed production technologies. The Secretariat of the Commission also participated in the Asian-Development-Bank funded project on the development and use of hybrid rice for food security in Asia, from 1998 to 2005

The second area of achievements is the development of a database on hybrid rice varieties and the publication of technical books and proceedings on hybrid rice. Some 1,000 researchers, extension officers, and seed production specialists were trained as well as improving the knowledge on hybrid rice of tens of thousands of farmers. The cultivation of hybrid rice, outside China, has notably increased; it is estimated that, in the year 2004, hybrid rice was planted in 650,000 ha in Vietnam, 560,000 ha in India, 54,000 ha in the Philippines, 40,000 ha in Bangladesh, 875 ha in Indonesia, and 15 ha in Sri Lanka -- The FAO/IRRI/NARC partnership was essential for much of this achievement.

Recently hybrid rice varieties for sub-tropical climate areas in Egypt were successfully developed. Furthermore, several countries were helped in the formulation of medium-term programmes for the development and use of hybrid rice.

III.3.2 Rice Integrated Crop Management (RICM)

In a response to a recommendation by an expert consultation in 2000, FAO undertook to assist member countries to develop and use the innovative system of Rice Integrated Crop Management (RICM), a holistic crop management using the best management practices. This is in partial response to declining rice production in many countries and increased costs of production, which have led to lower farmers' income, part of the solution is a better management of crop production at the farm level.

Activities

The main activities carried out are mainly investigative and promotional in nature, including the review of the development and transfer of the RICM systems, assistance in the formulation of national programmes for their adoption and training of staff of national programmes and farmers in a number of countries. In addition, the Programme provided fora to promote exchange of information on RICM systems and their application as well as collecting, analysing and disseminating relevant data and information.

Main Achievements

The main achievements are in two areas, namely technical support and information dissemination. In the area of technical support, successful development and test of RICM systems were carried out in Brazil, China, Indonesia, Philippines, Rwanda, Thailand, Venezuela, and Viet Nam. About 500 researchers and extension officers in Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam were trained, and knowledge on RICM was imparted to several thousands farmers in these countries. In Latin America, the number of farmers adopting ICM is increasing considerably. Two workshops were organized, one on participatory evaluation and transfer of technologies for irrigated rice production in the Sahel Zone of West Africa, and the other on the application of RiceCheck systems for rice production in Indonesia.

Through TCP projects, it was possible to provide support to programmes on intensification of rice production for food security in Indonesia, Philippines, Rwanda, and Thailand and on formulation of programmes of integrated crop management technology for production of good quality seeds in the highlands and mountainous regions in Vietnam. Regarding information, a number of articles on RICM systems were published in IRC Newsletter and in the Proceedings of the Expert Consultation on Yield Gap and Productivity Decline in Rice Production.

III.3.4 Inland Valley Swamps Development and Utilisation

The International Rice Commission recognised the potential of inland valley swamps in contributing to rice and food production for food security in Sub-Sahara Africa and it recommended their development and utilisation for rice-based food production systems. This was prompted by the fact that most of the increases in rice production during the last two decades were due to the expansion of cultivation area mainly under upland conditions causing serious deforestation and environmental degradation.

Activities:

The Programme has concentrated its activities on training staff of national programmes and farmers, providing support to the improvement of facilities for research and development and dissemination of information. The programme also participated in the activities of the Wetland Development and Management Network/Inland Valley Swamps (WEDEM/IVS), as well as providing technical support to an inland valley swamps development project funded by the Commodity Fund and implemented by WARDA and the Basic Food Stuffs Service of FAO.

Main Achievements:

Within the technical support component, the programme has assisted since 1994 in the formulation and implementation of six projects for strengthening national rice programmes in several Sub-Sahara Africa countries with emphasis on inland valley swamp development. In addition, the programme held a regional workshop on development and use of inland swamps in 1996 and another workshop in 1997 on wetland classification for agricultural development. In keeping with the programme's emphasis on information, a manual on swamp rice cultivation in Africa was published in English and French and a database on planted rainfed lowland rice varieties was established.

III.3.4 New Rice for Africa (NERICA)

Scientists at the West Africa Rice Development Association (WARDA) have developed a number of promising rice varieties from crosses made between *O. sativa* and *O. glaberrima*. These rice varieties, named New Rice for Africa or NERICA, have shown great potential, which prompted the inclusion of their promotion among the major activities of the Programme.

Activities

Since 1997, the Programme has collaborated with WARDA in testing and transferring of NERICA varieties to farmers and in providing technical support to formulate programmes and projects for their development. In this regard, the Programme undertook several missions to discuss with the scientists of WARDA and national programmes in West Africa measures to expedite the transfer of the NERICA rice varieties to farmers and to promote the exchange of information and experiences on these varieties. These activities were complemented by efforts to collect, analyse and disseminate information on improved rice technologies for use in inland valley swamps.

Main Achievements

The programme spearheaded a campaign for the dissemination of improved rice production systems with emphasis on NERICA to reduce food deficit and improve farmers' income in several West Africa Countries. This was done through study tours and providing forum to discuss collaborative activities to transfer NERICA to farmers as well as by actual operational projects in the field. To backup efforts to disseminate improved varieties, the Programme established a database for

promising varieties for different rice ecologies in West Africa. Recently, three field projects were successfully developed and funding supports for the dissemination of NERICA rice in Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Uganda were approved by donors.

III.3.5 Thriving with Rice

The International Rice Commission in its 16th (1985) and 17th (1990) Sessions recommended the promotion of the concept of "Thriving with Rice" aimed at improving rice production, rural employment opportunities, and farmers' incomes. The concept, developed and successfully tested in Asia, is based on: a) crop intensification and diversification; b) full utilisation of the biomass of the rice plants; c) transformation and use of rice grains and their by-products, and d) utilisation of tools, equipment, and inputs that could be locally manufactured with local materials.

Activities

The Programme supported wide-ranging activities of introducing to national programmes innovations and new technologies for rice intensification and diversification and the transformation of the biomass of rice plants. These activities comprised a) test, demonstration, and transfer of innovations; b) training of staff of national programmes, farmers, and craftsmen; c) promotion of exchange of information and experiences on the application of "Thriving with Rice" concept and practices; d) support specific research activities to develop new practices/innovations, and e) information collection, analysis, and dissemination on Thriving with Rice. Between 1999 and 2001, the Programme collaborated with the International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) to develop methods for rapid composting of rice straw.

Main Achievements

Through several field projects formulated and implemented by the Programme since 1992, several thousand researchers, extension staff, farmers and craftsmen were trained on the concept and practices of "Thriving with Rice". The impacts of the application of the "Thriving with Rice" concept and practices in rice production, rural employment and farmers' incomes could be substantial, but are difficult to assess, due to the nature and the complexity of the concept. A good example to illustrate what could be achieved through the application of the 'Thriving with Rice' concept and practices is a unique project, which brought together the Government of Bangladesh, UNDP and FAO, namely the Thana Cereal Technology Transfer and Identification Project[4]. This multi-faceted project, originally envisaged as a core component of the Government of Bangladesh's Accelerated Cereal Production Programme (ACP), is aimed at sustainable intensification of the production and productivity of rice, under irrigated conditions, by identifying appropriate varieties and location specific packages of technologies, which permit crop diversification and development of sustainable intensive rice-based cropping systems. Of particular interest, is the

[4] The Programme has produced an interesting presentation on the Thana Cereal Technology Transfer and Identification Project (GOB/UNDP/FAO) that provides a summary picture of what could be achieved with the application of the "Thriving with Rice" concept and practices.

impressive list of some fifteen publications on the various aspects of the project in English and Local languages.

III.3.6 Support to The Special Programme for Food Security

Rice production systems provide not only food, but they are also main source of incomes and employment opportunities for poor people in rural areas of Asia and, to a lesser extent, in Africa and Latin America. Attaining sustainable rice production for food security in Member Countries is of great importance to the International Rice Commission. Therefore, in addition to the earlier-mentioned activities, the Rice Development Programme (RDP) has also actively provided technical support and service to Member Countries, especially countries, which participated in the Special Programme for Food Security. During the initial phase, a Special Programme for Food Security has four main components, which are the following: water control, crop intensification, diversification and analysis of Constraints. Intensification of rice production is a major activity of the Special Programmes for Food Security in a large number of countries, even in countries where rice is not a traditional staple food crop.

III.3.7 The field Programme

Apart from its normative activities, the Programme has formulated, implemented and has taken part in considerable number of field projects. The following is a brief overview of the magnitude, funding and orientation of the operational field activities. The list of rice projects for the years 2002 to 2006 shows a total of 34 projects (13 completed, 12 ongoing and 9 in the pipeline awaiting funding). Of these, 26 projects have been initiated by AGP (20 AGPC, 5 AGPS, 1 AGPP) followed by AGE 5 and 1 each for AGL, FIR and ESC. As far the geographical distribution of the projects is concerned, Sub-Sahara Africa gets the largest number of projects (14 projects) followed by Asia and pacific (7), Latin America and the Caribbean (5) and the Near East (3). The main source of funding of the field programme continues to be the FAO TCP, with very few projects being funded from other sources.

The overwhelming orientation of the field projects is towards technology transfer including seed dissemination of new varieties of rice and new management systems. Hybrid rice developed by China, the new rice for Africa (NERICA) developed by WARDA and mutant varieties developed by IAEA are among the major areas for intervention by the field programme. Strong emphasis is put on strengthening national capacities in the various areas of the current thrusts of the Programme. Several projects are awaiting funding, i.e. improved agronomic practices for the rice straw management in Egypt and emergency provision of quality seeds and rehabilitation of certified seed production to assist vulnerable farmers in conflict-affected areas in Sri Lanka. A common theme in almost all projects is food security and poverty alleviation in general and for specific vulnerable areas and groups in particular.

As noted above, the field projects are predominantly funded by FAO's regular programme budget from the technical cooperative programme (TCP) allocations. This led to the question as to what are the reason/s for the inability of the Programme to attract sufficient funding from sources other than the FAO TCP. The respondents to

the questionnaire put it to two main reasons: a) lack of innovative project ideas, and b) donor fatigue and/or disinterest, only few respondents attributed it to lack of demand by governments. In addition, they made some critical remarks, some are repeated below:

- Old style approaches to rice cultivation and lack of openness to new methods (SRI) and markets (organic) leave one with the feeling that the programme is still in the 1970's when the Green Revolution was active;
- The stereotype, technology-focussed projects are not attractive as will be the ones focusing on globalization and liberalized market-related and those focusing on rice- related human, environment and institutional concerns;
- The private sector participation will drive effective demand of services, which may facilitate mobilisation of public resources
- Rice production [in Africa] can be improved if governments are willing to provide more support to rice farmers, particularly by facilitating input acquisition and restricting the importation of rice from other countries, and
- Funding for International Agency Projects has been reduced everywhere, one of the reasons is that in the past many of these projects were seen as "easy money" from rich donors, and they may not had reached their goals.

III.3.8 Discussion and Assessment

The Rice Development Programme has been remarkable in the way it had put in action major recommendations of the International Rice Commission and in the way it translated them into a coherent package of normative activities and credible field projects. The Programme concentrated on those recommendations addressed to international organizations, especially FAO and on areas where it could have greater spill over impact to benefit as many countries as possible. The programme took the initiative to promote new technologies, hybrid rice, NERICA or innovative crop management systems, and by this it paved the way for their adoption in several countries and for others, with more technical and financial resources, to take the task further.

Perhaps the more enduring success of the Programme is its development of databases and its effort to collect, disseminate and transfer information on rice. In the words of a senior seeds specialist, 'the FAO Rice Information publication is excellent for emergency and development related information and it should continue to be updated[5]. I can't think of another source of information on area of rice cultivation, varieties released with basic characteristics. This is very useful for emergency work and project development'. The Programme has been helpful in several other ways and to many others as can be seen from what a former Rice Programme Leader at CIAT and Executive Director of the Latin American Fund for Irrigated Rice (FLAR) has to say: ' We have received a very valuable and strategic aid in Latin America as FAO continued support of FLAR [that] facilitated the consolidation of this institution and the diffusion of improved management practices at a time when most countries in the

[5] Private correspondence. It is unfortunate that because of staff and other resources limitations, the information is not updated as regularly as it should be.

region face the challenge of globalization, open markets and keen competition from abroad'[6].

As the Programme is looking ahead in a new cycle of programming and constraint budgeting, it needs to adjust to new realities including staff decrease and dwindling financial resources. Furthermore, the current content and orientation of the Programme need serious examination. In the following section, the basic tenets of the Programme are questioned and recommendations for improvement are advanced.

Programme Scope

Should the programme broaden its scope to include the private sector and the commercial scale production of rice, while maintaining focus on small and poor rice farmers?

The overwhelming response from those responding to the questionnaire is in favour of broadening the mission of the programme by including in its sphere of interest the private sector and the commercial scale production of rice. Supporting growth of commercial agriculture, in this case rice, is a very important way to increase economic activity, bringing more jobs, and helping reduce poverty. However, the real challenge is to keep proper balance between commercial farmers, private sector and small growers. It is generally agreed that the Programme should have links to NGO's rice supporting associations and private sector in rice producing countries. This is perhaps easier said than done as shown by the experience of certain countries. The involvement of the private sector in rice production was noted in early 1980s in many countries of West Africa. Unfortunately this involvement was not well prepared for in many cases because investors were not ready when entering in this venture. To improve future interventions of the private sector in rice industry, it will be useful to provide support in training of these farmers to develop their capacities to optimise production and well manage their farms.

In view of the above it is ***recommended*** that: Consideration be given to obtaining guidance from FAO Governing Bodies for broadening the scope of the Programme to include the private sector and the commercial scale production of rice, while maintaining focus on small and poor rice producers and consumers.

Programme Content

Should the Programme shed some of its activities that have been with it for a long time in favour of new activities with more current interest? If so, which to be phased-out?

The prevailing view of the respondent to the questionnaire is that certain activities have been with the Programme for some time and that it has advanced them sufficiently to be taken over by others within and outside FAO. It is also generally felt that the Programme is too technology oriented and need to redress this by paying more attention to other areas of concern. There seems to be an agreement that 'Thriving with Rice' and 'Hybrid-Rice Development and Use' are good candidates

[6] Private correspondence.

for phasing out. Support to the Special Programme for Food Security could also be gradually phased out, since this activity has been shifted to FAO Regional Offices. Some of activities may more effective if consolidated/merged.

In view of the above it is ***recommended***: The Programme Managers should consider the phasing out of 'Thriving with Rice' and 'Hybrid-Rice Development and Use', and the gradual phasing out of 'Support to the Special Programme for Food Security'

It is, also, ***recommended***: Consideration be given to the merits of having the 'Rice Integrated Crop Management of various ecosystems' and 'New Rice Varieties' consolidated and that 'New Rice for Africa (NERICA)' activity should include both upland and lowland rice.

Programme future orientation

The Programme Managers are in better position to judge and decide on the future orientation of the Programme, as much depends on availability of staff and other resources. Some of the views expressed in response to the questionnaire serve as pointers to some real issues and concerns, which need to be taken in consideration when thinking of the future orientation of the Programme. Participant were given six issues and asked to rank them in order of priority. The result was as follows:

Two issues were considered of first priority:

- Women and smallholder farmers play an important role in both rice production and post-harvest activities, yet they often do not receive proportionate social and economic benefits when improvements in rice cultivation are initiated at the field level.
- Science and technology can enhance rice production through more efficient use of natural resources especially water. Modern biotechnology can increase the productivity of rice varieties and provide protection against pests, diseases and climatic variations.

Two issues were ranked second:

- The world population is growing and rice production must also grow but with better and more efficient use of water, land and labour, while reducing the losses incurred during production, transportation and processing.
- Environmental pollution due to the inappropriate application of inputs especially pesticides is of particular concern.

Two issues were ranked third:

- The rate of growth of rice yield increases is declining, and water and land resources for rice production - especially in Asia - are becoming scarce.
- The declining prices of rice in the international markets since 1995 have caused a sharp reduction in the return from rice production, a factor that have contributed to poverty and hardship for many small farmers in developing countries.

Obviously the issues are interlinked, and there is a need, therefore, for a wider realisation of sustainable agriculture and social effects in general. A technical response alone is not appropriate, though is certainly a major part of the response. Equally, not just rice but the rice farming system and value chain/value addition chain.

In view of the above, it is ***recommended*** that: The future orientation of the Rice Development Programme should be broadened and geared towards being more of interdivisional in scope.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the rationale and Objective of PE 212 P5 as given in the MTP 2004-09, the relative development problem was described as follows: "Rice is the staple food for more than 3 billion people in the world and provides 50-60% of daily energy requirements in their diets. Yield increase was the principal factor contributing to the rapid growth in the world's rice production during the 1970s and 80s. However, since 1990, the average growth has decelerated considerably, from about 2 percent per year in the 1980s to about 1 percent per year in the 1990s. Intensive rice production also needs to be adjusted in order to reverse growing; environmental degradation, such as agro-chemical pollution, increased pest infestation and loss of biodiversity, while water and land resources for rice production have become scarcer".

In December 2002, the General Assembly of the United Nations declared 2004 the International Year of Rice. *The dedication of an International Year for a single crop is unprecedented in the history of the United Nations.* It reflected the fact that rice is the primary food source of the world's population. 'Although rice science and research have made substantial progress, their impact on the less favourable rice systems is still minimal. The drought stress and flood may be more severe and frequent in the near future due to the effect of the global climate change. Similarly, large rice areas in the low-lying parts of the deltas of major river systems may be subjected to salinity as the sea-level rises. Rice varieties with enhanced tolerance to drought, flood and salinity will be needed for sustainable rice production in the long run'.

The above shows a clear recognition, by FAO and the international community at large, of the paramount importance of rice for food security and the well-being of billions of people around the world. It also raises the alarm regarding the continuing decline in rice productivity and the need for more concerted efforts to halt the trend and eventually reverse it. FAO can claim credit for much of the progress achieved in the past; the PE 212 P5 has been FAO's main instrument in rallying interest and action globally, through the International Rice Commission, and to coordinate FAO's own efforts. There is every reason to believe that the call on FAO's supportive role will continue if not intensified, especially in the light of the momentum and interest created by the International Year of Rice.

The auto-evaluation has examined the work of the Commission, the FAO Steering Committee and the Secretariat of the Commission and found much to commend. At the same time areas for improvement were identified and

recommendations were accordingly put forward. The Rice Development Programme (RDP) was the subject of much of the analysis and assessment of the auto-evaluation and it too was commended for the remarkable way it had put in action major recommendations of the International Rice Commission and in the way it translated them into a coherent package of normative activities and credible field projects. However, the auto-evaluation recognises the need for change and refinement, and it has accordingly made recommendations regarding the Programme's scope, content and its future orientation.

As this report was being prepared, it was learnt that due to the introduction of new programmatic reforms, the PE 212 P5 is likely to disappear as a discrete entity. It is not within the remit of this auto-evaluation to judge the wisdom of the move or predict its future implication for FAO's work on rice. It is hard, however, to reconcile this with the distinct comparative advantage FAO sees for itself as stated in the FAO priority and comparative advantage in the MTP 2006-11: "FAO, through the International Rice Commission, has a distinct comparative advantage in facilitating good coordination of CG centres and national rice programmes supporting rice production, an essential role for the efficient mobilization of limited available resources." The PE 212 P5 has been instrumental in maintaining that comparative advantage through supporting the Commission work and member countries programmes as well as assisting in putting FAO's act together. Every effort should be made to maintain and further strengthen its role.

Annex 3: The Questionnaire for the Evaluation of Rice Development Programme at the Crop and Grassland Service (AGPC)

Sent 20 January 2006

Introduction

FAO has a long history of evaluating its programmes and activities; normally, carried out by independent external reviewers. Recently a new regime of internal evaluations was introduced to review programme achievements over a period of six to eight years placing especial emphasis on evaluation as a way to foster learning and continuous improvements in FAO programmes. The current auto-evaluation deals with the Programme Entity 212 P5 'Support to Strategy Formulation and Promotion of Specific Action for Rice Development in Member Countries of the International Rice Commission (IRC)'

The IRC is an inter-governmental body established in 1948 by the Fourth Session of the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 'to promote national and international action in matters relating to the production, conservation, distribution and consumption of rice'. Membership in the Commission is open to all countries and associate members of FAO; it now enjoys the support of 61 members.

The Programme Entity under review consists of a number of normative activities and field projects in response to major directives and recommendations of the Commission. The central endeavour by the Programme Entity is in the area of collecting, analysing and disseminating information as well as organising forums to promote exchange of information, experience, and genetic materials on hybrid rice and its technologies and on a variety of rice-related subjects. The Programme Entity seeks the collaboration of several FAO technical units as well as of outside research and development organizations.

The evaluation of the subject programme entity (PE 212P5), therefore, needs to take into account the various components/players involved and the interaction among them. For this reason the Questionnaire will deal with the following:

A. The Commission
B. The FAO Steering Committee of the Commission
C. The Programme PE 212P5
    The Secretariat of the Commission
    The FAO Rice Development Programme
    The Programme Entity 212P5 as a whole
D. The Technical Cooperative Networks
E. Research Partners

Objective of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is intended to solicit the opinions of the stakeholders and partners of IRC, as well as the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the IRC for 1998-2002 and 2002-2006 on the strength, weakness, opportunities and threats of the International Rice Commission activities and how effectively FAO and others are implementing its recommendations. The questions are arranged in groups according to the above components, participants may wish to respond to only those questions most relevant to their interest and familiarity with the subject or component, but they are most welcome to answer any of the others, if so they wish. Critical comments/views are invited and will be greatly appreciated.

Please note that in the case of yes/no or multiple choice type of questions you **highlight** the corresponding square and type the letter x

Thank you very much for your time and support.

I. Questions regarding the Commission

The Commission has been in existence for some 56 years, during which period, it saw its membership growing from twelve founding members to more than sixty members at present. It has so far met more

than twenty times in pursuance of its all-embracing mission. The achievements of the Commission are many and wide-ranging. It is generally believed that the notable growth in rice production over the past 40 years is attributable, at least in part, to the work of the Commission.

The work of the Commission has evolved from an early emphasis on breeding and international nurseries to the implementation during the 70s and 80s of a large number of rice development projects and programmes in support of the Green Revolution in many countries. Recently, the Commission has been giving importance to the conservation of the environment, human and institutional improvement and natural resources of rice production systems coupled to action that will enhance the income of rice producers.

Q1. Has the Commission still a role to play in promoting national and international action in matters relating to the production, conservation, distribution and consumption of rice, as its original mission dictates?

☐*Yes* ☐*Partially* ☐ *No*

Comment / suggestions for improvement:.....
.....
....

Q2. Is the Commission evolving sufficiently to tackle new challenges and demands?

☐*Yes* ☐*Partially* ☐ *No*

Comment and suggestions for improvement.....
.....
.....

Q3. Should the Commission have greater focus and a more rigorous approach to its priority setting[7]?

☐*Yes* ☐*Partially* ☐ *No*

Comment and suggestions for improvement.....
.....

Q4. Are the Commissions mode of operation and frequency of its sessions satisfactory[8]?

☐*Yes* ☐*Partially* ☐ *No*

Comment and suggestions for improvement.....
.....

Q5. How to improve the participation of Member Countries and partners in attending its sessions and in the management and financing of the Commission[9]?

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[7] The Commission tends to issue a large number of recommendations (e.g. the 18th Session 47 recommendations, the 19th Session 61 recommendations and the 20th Session over 70 recommendations.)

[8] The Constitution of the Commission was amended in the past so as a Regular Session of the Commission should convene at least once every four years instead of once every two years. Was that for financial implications, or was that dictated by other considerations?

[9] Of the 61 member countries only 38, 30 and 27 attended the 18th, 19th and 20th Session, respectively.

Answer/ Comment and suggestions improvement.....

.....

II. Questions regarding the FAO Steering Committee of the Commission

Rice-related matters permeate to a varying extent the activities of many technical and operational units in FAO, and for this reason a Steering Committee was established by the FAO Director-General to co-ordinate these activities and to oversee the preparations of the International Rice Commission's meetings and follow-up of its recommendations. The Director of the FAO Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP) is currently the Chairperson of the FAO Steering Committee. It normally meets once a year prior to and in between the regular sessions of the Commission.

The bulk of the work on rice is within the Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP), which deals with rice development and production in general as well as matters relating to integrated pest management and seed production. Other FAO technical units look into certain aspects of rice development relevant to their general mandates; the degree of their involvement varies greatly and is influenced by opportunities created by donors' interest and/or stimulated by request by member countries. The preparation for the Commission's meetings requires production of documents by the Commission's Secretariat but also by technical units, which represents at times a drain on their limited resources:

Q6. Should the PE 212P5 allocate resources for the production of documentation by the technical units?

☐*Yes* ☐*Partially* ☐ *No*

Comment and suggestions for improvement.....

.....

Q7. Would allocation of some seed money by FAO at the disposal of the Steering Committee help to make it more proactive and create greater interest in its work and the work of the Commission?

☐*Yes* ☐*Partially* ☐ *No*

Comment and suggestions for improvement.....

.....

III. Questions regarding the PE 212 P5 at the Crop and Grassland Service

The PE 212P5 or Rice Development Programme at the Crop and Grassland Service has two functions: hosting the Secretariat to the IRC and the implementing the FAO Rice Development Programme.

III.1 Questions regarding the Secretariat to the IRC

The Secretariat organizes a Regular Session of the Commission every four years. The 19th Session was held in 1998 in Cairo, Egypt and the 20th was held in 2002 in Bangkok, Thailand. The 21st Session will be held in 2006 in Peru. In between Regular Sessions, the Secretariat organizes expert consultations at least once every two years and the FAO Steering Committee meetings once a year. The Secretariat also collects, analyses and disseminates information through the publication of yearly IRC News letter, proceedings of IRC Sessions and Expert Consultations, technical books and manuals, one volume of FAO Rice Information every three years, and databases and Web pages.

Q8. Does the Secretariat provide satisfactory and timely support to the Commission, prior, during and after sessions, particularly, timely production and dispatch of documentations?

☐*Yes* ☐*Partially* ☐ *No*

Comment and suggestions for improvement.....

.....

Q9. Is the functioning of the Secretariat affected by the double task of serving the Commission and carrying out the Rice Development Programme under PE 212P5?

☐*Yes* ☐*Partially* ☐ *No*

Comment and suggestions for improvement.....

.....

III.2 Questions regarding the FAO Rice Development Programme

This Programme is based on the implementation of the Commission's major recommendations. It currently has six thrusts: Hybrid-Rice Development and Use; Rice Integrated Crop Management; Inland Valley Swamps Development and Utilisation; New Rice for Africa (NERICA); Thriving with Rice, and Support to the Special Programme for Food Security. Each of these thrusts has normative and operational components as well as functions related to retrieving and disseminating relevant information. Apart from its normative activities, the programme has formulated and implemented a number of field projects financed with TCP and other resources. It also provides technical support to other FAO units on technical matters related to rice-based production systems.

Q10. Should the Programme shed some of its activities that have been with it for a long time in favour of new activities with more current interest? If so, which of the following should be phased-out (tick as appropriate)?

☐ *Hybrid-Rice Development and Use*

☐ *Rice Integrated Crop Management*

☐ *Inland Valley Swamps Development and Utilisation*

☐ *New Rice for Africa (NERICA)*

☐ *Thriving with Rice*

☐ *Support to the Special Programme for Food Security*

Q11. Should the programme broaden its scope to include the private sector and the commercial scale production of rice, while maintaining focus on small and poor rice farmers?

☐*Yes* ☐*Partially* ☐ *No*

Comment and suggestions for improvement.....

.....

Q12. What, in your view, are the reason/s for the inability of the Rice Development Programme to attract sufficient funding from sources other than the FAO TCP funding?

☐ Donor fatigue and or disinterest

☐ Lack of innovative project ideas

☐ Lack of demand by governments

☐ Others

Comments/ suggestions for improvement: .....

.....

III.3 Questions for the whole PE 212P5

Q13. Is the PE 212P5 able to cope with double task of serving the Commission and of carrying out a full-fledged programme entity of its own?

☐*Yes* ☐*Partially* ☐ *No*

Comment and suggestions for improvement.....

.....

Q14. Has the reduction of staff of the PE 212P5 from two officers to one officer, as currently is the case, affected the Secretariat ability to carry its duties satisfactorily?

☐*Yes* ☐*Partially* ☐ *No*

Comment and suggestions for improvement.....

.....

Q15. What would be your recommendation in case the reduction of staff of PE 212P5 becomes permanent?

☐ Should it concentrate only on the task that of a Secretariat to the Commission?

☐ Should it instead concentrate only the Rice Development Programme?

Comments .....

.....

IV Questions regarding the Technical Cooperative Networks

The Secretariat of the Commission supports four rice networks: the International Task Force on Hybrid Rice, the Working Group on Advanced Rice Breeding in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Inter-regional Collaborative Research Network on Rice in the Mediterranean Climate Areas, and the Technical Cooperation Network on Wetland Development and Management/Inland Valley Swamps.

Q16. *To what extent and in what form does the Secretariat support these networks?*

Answer: .....

.....

Q17. *Are the networks normally consulted regarding the preparation of the work of the Commission, and how much interaction they have with the Secretariat and/or the Steering Committee?*

☐*Yes* ☐*Partially* ☐ *No*

Comment and suggestions for improvement.....

.....

Q18. How effective the networks are in creating inter-country/inter-regional cooperation in rice development?

☐*Very* ☐*Partially* ☐ *None*

Comment and suggestions for improvement.....

.....

V. Questions regarding Contribution of IARCs

Apart from collaboration with national organizations in member countries, the Secretariat of the Commission collaborates with several international organizations especially CGIAR Centres (e.g. IRRI, WARDA, CIAT, IPGRI, IITA) and several others (The Planet Rice Research Report, ORSTOM CIRAD, Ecoport, INPHO, IGGR, CTA, AgNIC, Rice Biotechnology Quarterly, Oryza Sativa). The Secretariat is also a member of the International Organizing Committee of the Africa Rice Initiative spearheaded by WARDA and UNDP.

FAO and IRRI signed In 1999, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to strengthen the collaborative action aimed at promoting wider adoption of hybrid rice technology outside China, and in 2000 FAO and WARDA signed another MOU to support the Rapid Rice Technology Diffusion in West Africa (RARIDWA). FAO/IRC has collaborated with FLAR/CIAT in the promotion of Integrated Crop Management for Irrigated Rice in Latin America.

Q19. *What is the contribution of the CGIAR Centres especially IRRI, WARDA and CIAT to the work of the Commission?*

Answer.....

.....

Q20. Is the current collaboration satisfactory?

☐*Yes* ☐*Partially* ☐ *No*

Comment and suggestions for improvement.....

.....

Q21. What, if any, is the mechanism to enhance participation and collaboration?

Answer: .....

.....

VI. Questions regarding Sustainable Rice Development for Food Security and Poverty Reduction

Rice is life for major populations of the world and is deeply embedded in the cultural heritage of many societies. It is the staple food for more than half of the world population; in Asia alone, more than 2,000 million people obtain 60 to 70 percent of their caloric intake from rice and its products. It is the most rapidly growing source of food in Africa, and is of significant importance to food security in an increasing number of low-income food-deficit countries. Rice-based production systems and their associated post-harvest operations employ nearly 1,000 million people in rural areas of developing countries. Small-scale farmers in low-income and developing countries grow about four-fifths of the world's rice.

The 2nd Committee on Poverty Eradication of the 60th Session of UNGA in November 2005 recognized the role that rice can play in providing food security and eradicating poverty of the world population, and it recognized the important contribution that the observance of the International Year of Rice, 2004, had made in drawing world attention to the role that rice can play in providing food security and eradicating poverty in the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Q22. Do you agree that the following concerns/issues are real and need to be addressed regularly by the Commission and other relevant bodies/organizations?

☐ The world population is growing and rice production must also grow but with better and more efficient use of water, land and labour, while reducing the losses incurred during production, transportation and processing,

☐ Environmental pollution due to the inappropriate application of inputs - especially pesticides - has caused concerns,

☐ Science and technology can enhance rice production through more efficient use of natural resources especially water. Modern biotechnology can increase the productivity of rice varieties and provide protection against pests, diseases and climatic variations,

☐ The rate of growth of rice yield increases is declining, and water and land resources for rice production - especially in Asia - are becoming scarce,

☐ Women and smallholder farmers play an important role in both rice production and post-harvest activities, yet they often do not receive proportionate social and economic benefits when improvements in rice cultivation are initiated at the field level,

☐ The declining prices of rice in the international markets since 1995 have caused a sharp reduction in the return from rice production, a factor that have contributed to poverty and hardship for many small farmers in developing countries.

Q23. What other concerns/issues not mentioned above, which you deem equally or more important?

Answer: .....
.....

Q24. Is FAO devoting to Rice sufficient resources in accordance with its global importance and for food security in particular[10]?

☐*Yes* ☐*Partially* ☐ *No*

Comment and suggestions for improvement.....
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[10] It is not easy to calculate how much FAO spends on Rice (or any other crop for that matter-PBE cannot provide such figures right away) In talking to members of the Steering Committee, it appears that time spent on rice related matters, including the Commission Secretariat, is perhaps in the order of two man-year.

Annex 4: FAO Rice-Related Activities: Report on Rice-related Activities carried out by FAO Technical Units[11]

19th Session (7-9 September 1998)

Crop and Grassland Service (AGPC): Over the last 4 years, and in collaboration with other Headquarter technical units, Regional Offices, IARCs and NARCs, AGPC's activities have been implemented in five main areas: promotion of hybrid rice, studies on yield evolution of high yielding varieties, development and use of rainfed lowland/swamp rice, technical assistance to cooperative networks on rice, and rice information collection, analysis and dissemination. Technical support has also been given to the field projects and Special Programme for Food Security in Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Haiti, Laos, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Nepal, the Philippines, Senegal and Tanzania.

Seed and Plant Genetics Resources Service (AGPS): Over the last four years, seed policy and programme status in countries of the African, Asian and Latin American regions were assessed, as a preparatory exercise for a Global seed strategy and policy expert consultation. The AGPS Seed Information System (SIS) has developed an important database of rice varieties and cultivars available to member countries for their breeding and seed production programmes.

Plant Protection Service (AGPP): The Intercountry Programme for the Development and Application of Integrated Pest Management in Rice in South and Southeast Asia has just completed its third phase and a new five year phase started in 1998: Assistance is provided to 12 Asian countries; Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. The experience gained in Asia has been transferred to Africa, through four TCP projects in Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Mali.

Water Resources, Development and Management Services (AGLW): It has given technical assistance in irrigation and water resources management for rice cultivation to many field programmes implemented all over the world, particularly in the framework of FAO's Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) in the following countries: Burkina Faso, Cambodia, China, Guinea, Haiti, Mali, Mauritania, Nepal, Niger, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Senegal and Tanzania. For Bangladesh, Benin, C6te d'Ivoire, Cuba, Lao PDR, Madagascar and Togo, rice-related water components of SPFS projects are presently under formulation.

Plant Nutrition and Management Service (AGLN): Project "Nitrogen Fertilizer Efficiency and Environmental Impact for Irrigated Rice Systems in Southeast Asia", operational in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, is devoted to improved nitrogen fertilization technologies for irrigated rice fields; scientific investigations, and demonstration of the relevant innovations on farmers' field. It commenced operation in 1 March 1995.

Agricultural Engineering Branch (AGSE): AGSE involvement in rice production is concentrated on assistance to governments in identifying the demands of farmers vis-a-vis agricultural mechanization (in general), and especially in determining the type and level of farm power required for the farming systems. During the last four years direct involvement of AGSE in rice cultivation has been in Suriname (TCP project on formulation of a mechanization strategy, study tour to the Philippines on rice production) and in the DPR Korea (UNDP project, mechanization components dealing with rice transplanter and stripper harvester). A study tour was also organized in Northern Italy to look into mechanized rice production).

Agro-Industries and Post-Harvest Management Service (AGSI): The most interesting of this technical service is the Rice: Post-harvest E-mail Conference, which was organized in 1997 to address the more common issues and concerns, as well as the success stories in the adoption of technologies in the rice post-production system comprehensively from the farm to the processing plants. The known concerns of farmers and processors and the activities of service industries and institutions were floated for discussion.

[11] As reported by the Executive Secretary of the Commission to its 19th and 20th Sessions

Inland Water Resources and Aquaculture Service (FIRI): Major activities have been carried out, through the projects on rice-fish systems in Viet Nam and Laos. The Service also developed standard projects for inclusion of aquaculture components into the diversification programme of the SPFS.

Basic Foodstuffs Service (ESCB): One of the principal activities of the Rice Group in the Basic Foodstuffs Service of the Commodities and Trade Division relates to the servicing of the Intergovernmental Group on Rice (IGG on Rice), which meets once every two years. The IGG on Rice, in its role as International Commodity Body for rice before the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), is responsible for sponsoring projects for funding by the CFC (IVC/WARDA project). The Rice Group of ESCB provides, on a regular basis, a review and short-term outlook for the rice market, which are reported in the Food Outlook and FAO bimonthly publication.

20th Session (23-26 July 2002)

Crop and Grassland Service (AGPC): Research and training activities on hybrid rice technologies -- which were provided through the Regular Programme, four TCP projects and two UNDP-funded projects -- have resulted in the release of a number of hybrid rice combinations and cytoplasmic male sterile (CMS) lines in Member Countries and the growing of about 800,000 hectares of hybrid rice in 2001/02 by farmers in Asia, excluding China; especially in Bangladesh, India, the Philippines and Viet Nam. Pilot tests on the development and transfer of the Rice Integrated Crop Management (RICM) system, in collaboration with national programmes in Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Indonesia and Vietnam, have taken place. A TCP Project on RICM in Thailand has recently been implemented. In particular, the transfer and identification of cereal technologies in Bangladesh were strengthened through a UNDP-funded project. Support also has been extended to the transfer of NERICA (New Rice for Africa) varieties in West Africa and to the African Rice Initiative (ARI) initiated by WARDA and its Member Countries and UNDP. In collaboration with ESCB, technical supervision has been provided to test the development of Inland Valley Swamp for rice-based production systems in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria under a project, which is funded by the Common Fund for Commodity and executed by WARDA. Several missions were undertaken to provide technical support to national rice programmes, especially through the Rice Intensification of the Special Programme for Food Security in Member Countries.

Seed and Plant Genetic Resources Service (AGPS): Initiatives aimed at enhancing seed security of Member Countries for rice production have been implemented. As a logical follow-up to the assessments of the Seed Policies and Programmes in FAO Member Countries, the Service has initiated a number of projects aimed at establishing sustainable rice seed production - under both high-input and low-input conditions.

Plant Protection Service (AGPP): and **Global Integrated Pest Management Facility**: New rice integrated pest management programmes have been initiated in West Africa, covering Mali, Burkina Faso and Senegal. In Asia, the fourth and final -~ phase of the FAO regional IPM rice programme, community IPM intercountry programme, completed most of its work. Over 2 million farmers in about 100 000 villages across twelve countries in Asia have participated in this programme. Work on ecological analyses of rice agro-ecosystems, designed by ecologists in the regional ~-IPM Rice programme, has now led to several publications in world-leading ecological journals.

The Global Workshop on Red/Weedy Rice Control was organized in Cuba in 1999 and resulted in a conclusion that there is an evident increase in red rice -~ incidence in many rice-producing countries due to the increase of direct-seeded areas; no simple method for the control of weedy/red rice exists. In 2001, the Workshop on Echinochloa spp control was convened in China. This workshop concluded that there is still an air of uncertainty on the taxonomic status of many species, sub-species, varieties and binomials of Echinochloa and that a practical manual for the ~-identification of these species should be prepared by experts in the near future and should be made available to field workers and extension specialists in countries where the weeds are a problem.

Water Resources Development and Management Service (AGLW): Technical assistance in the introduction of efficient water management technologies for rice cultivation has been provided to Member Countries, especially under the Special Programme for Food Security in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Laos, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Nepal, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Tanzania,

Uganda. Computer programmes CROWAT, CLIMWAT and AQUASTAT for rice water requirement and water resources information were developed and disseminated.

Land and Plant Nutrition Management service (AGLL): On-station and on-farm -~ trials as well as on-farm demonstrations and training on methods for enhancing nitrogen fertilizer efficiency were carried out in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines during 1995-98, under a sub-regional project on Nitrogen Fertilizer Efficiency and Environmental Impact for Irrigated Rice Systems in Southeast Asia funded by Japan.

Agro-Industries and Post-Harvest Service (AGSI): Activities related to rice, especially rice post-harvest operations, introduction of metal silo for grain storage have been carried out in Guinea and Viet Nam and four documents on processed rice manuals and on rice quality control were prepared and disseminated.

Basic Food Stuffs Service (ESCB): Two Sessions of the Intergovernmental Group on Rice (IGG on Rice) were convened in Rome: the 39th Session in 1999 and the 40th Session in 2001 to review the major problems and issues facing the world rice economy, including rice policy development and the short-term market outlook and prospects. In addition, the IGG on Rice, in its role as International Commodity Body for rice vis-a-vis the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), is also responsible for sponsoring projects for funding by the CFC. During the 40th Session of the IGG on Rice, the Secretariat (Rice Group of ESCB) informed the Group of the submission for possible approval of the project entitled "Bridging the Irrigated Rice Yield Gap in Venezuela and Brazil", which was submitted by the Latin American Fund for Irrigated Rice (FLAR). The Service also contributes, on a regular basis, a review and short-term outlook for the rice market, to "Food Outlook", FAO's bi-monthly publication.

Food and Nutrition Division (ESN): The 56th meeting of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), to evaluate the safety of certain mycotoxins occurring in foods, was held in Geneva from 6 to 15 February 2001. The Codex Alimentarius Commission will use the assessments for ochratoxin and trichotecenes (deoxynivalenol, T-2 and HT-2 toxins), which are known contaminants of rice. The Codex Standard for Rice (CODEX STAN 1998-1995) has been maintained without alteration during this period. Activities have been undertaken to examine the intraspecies variation in nutrient content of different rice cultivars. Several conference papers/posters and reports have been prepared.

Inland Water Resources and Aquaculture Service (FIRI): Technical assistance has been provided to Member Countries in assessing and developing the various options of aquaculture in rice-based farming systems as a means of promoting food security and securing sustainable rural development. Major activities and achievements include the FAO Workshop on Integrated Irrigation and Aquaculture (IIA) held in Ghana (1999). Several studies and analyses have been initiated by FIRI on the availability and use of aquatic organisms in rice-based farming, with a rich aquatic biodiversity and traditional knowledge, in selected sites e.g. Cambodia, China, Laos and Viet Nam.

Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture (AGE): The FAO/IAEA Consultants' Meeting on Integrated Soil, Water and Nutrient Management for Sustainable Rice-Wheat Cropping Systems in Asia was held at FAO Headquarters in Rome from 23-25 August 2000. Recommendations for a future FAO/LAEA Coordinated Research Project (CRP) were formulated and a draft of the Project Document was prepared.