

PRESS RELEASE

AATF and IRRI ink partnership to disseminate and commercialise hybrid rice and sustainable technologies for the benefit of African smallholder farmers

13 September 2019 - AATF and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) recently signed a 4-year partnership agreement aimed at helping African smallholder farmers increase their productivity, income, and resilience through enhanced access to good quality elite seeds and sustainable agronomic practices.

The partnership will benefit from IRRI's six decades of expertise in rice science-based solutions in Asia, and AATF's expertise in accessing disseminating and commercialising innovative agricultural technologies through a wide network of public and private sector collaborators supported by, knowledge of the needs of African farmers.

Demand for rice in Africa is increasing at over 6% per year, faster than any other staple food. Local rice farmers are not yet able to capitalise on this demand, as African smallholder farms yield on average 2 tons per hectare, as compared to the global average of 3.4 tons. This is due to a variety of factors, including the use of low-yielding outdated local varieties, traditional cultivation practices, low involvement of private seed companies in rice seed production and business, and prevailing biotic and abiotic stresses, together with climate change adversities.

The partnership between AATF and IRRI will include testing of IRRI and AATF elite varieties, and dissemination of high yielding and nutritious varieties; testing and promoting suitable agronomic practices and digital technologies for water management, crop care, mechanisation, and postharvest; and regular exchange of information. AATF and IRRI will meet regularly to develop joint projects for African rice sector development, including seed industry, and market needs and opportunities.

To further the partnership and expand the networks of both parties, AATF will become a member of the IRRI-convened Hybrid Rice Development Consortium (HRDC) and Direct Seeded Rice Consortium (DSRC), while IRRI will become a member of the AATF-led Alliance for Hybrid Rice in Africa (AHyRA).

"AATF is pleased to be working with IRRI on delivering these potentially life-changing technologies for our smallholder farmers," said Dr. Kayode Sanni, Rice Project Manager at AATF. "Rice is increasingly becoming an important staple food for more and more Africans and upgrading our technologies and rice value chain will be key factors in meeting that need. IRRI has made significant strides in uplifting the productivity and livelihoods of

farmers in Asia, and through this collaboration we hope to use this knowledge to benefit our African farmers.”

“The partnership with AATF supports IRRI’s strategy to accelerate the dissemination of elite rice varieties, good agronomic practices, and knowledge, to improve food security and the economic sustainability of rice-based agri-food systems,” said Remy Bitoun, Head of IRRI Tech Transfer. “This agreement is an evidence of our long-term commitment to the rice value chain in Africa. AATF’s expertise in technology transfer and extensive network across 23 countries in Africa is essential to delivering innovations to farmers, accelerating the benefits of these technologies to help ensure food and nutrition security in the region.”

About AATF

AATF is empowering smallholder farmers across Sub-Saharan Africa with a wide choice of agricultural innovations that generate wealth and health for their families and communities. AATF does this through public-private partnerships that facilitate development and deployment across the full product value chain.

aatf-africa.org

About IRRI

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) aims to improve livelihoods and nutrition, abolishing poverty, hunger and malnutrition among those who depend on rice-based agri-food systems. In doing so, IRRI’s work protects the health of rice farmers and consumers, and the environmental sustainability of rice farming in a world challenged by climate change. IRRI’s work promotes the empowerment of women and supports opportunities for youth in an equitable agri-food system.

irri.org

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