

Mauritania Prime Minister commends African Development Bank wheat initiative implemented by ICARDA, pledges strong support for boosting wheat production

The International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, [ICARDA](#), in partnership with *La Direction de la Recherche de la Formation et du Conseil Agricole* ([DRFCA](#)), Mauritania, have organized a National Conference on “*Development of Wheat Production and competitiveness of Rice in Mauritania*”, during 20-21 November 2015 at Nouakchott, Mauritania. This is reference to the outcome of the African Development Bank ([AfDB](#)) Project on Support of Agricultural Research for Development for Strategic Crops ([SARD-SC](#))

The Conference was inaugurated to Mauritanian by His Excellency the Prime Minister, Mr. Yahya Ould Hademine, in the presence of the Minister of Agriculture, Her Excellency Lemina Mint El Ghotob Ould Moma, and the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, Her Excellency Naha Mint Moknass, and other High-level Government Officials. Guests who attended the opening session included representatives of national and international organizations and the wider donor community. About 150 participants attended the inaugural session.

During his opening address, the Prime Minister pledged his government’s full support for the “expansion of wheat production in the country with the aim to enhance national food security and reduce dependence on increasing wheat imports”. He encouraged the participants to develop a strategy for expanding the wheat producing areas in Mauritania, which represent to date less than 5000 ha “We have to focus on increasing wheat production to meet the growing needs of Mauritians for this commodity”, the Prime Minister added.

Mr. El Marrakchi, [DRFCA](#) Director, expressed appreciation to [ICARDA](#)’s support through the African Development Bank funded SARD-SC Wheat Project which has aided in “the provision of improved wheat varieties, in on-farm testing and demonstration sites.” He specifically mentioned the high yielding variety Norman which produces up to 6.3 tons per ha and which has been registered in the national catalogue in 2015, and the capacity building of researchers and extension officers. There was much appreciation for the improved seed of ‘Norman’ and ‘Attila-Gan-Attila’ varieties provided by ICARDA through the [SARD-SC](#) Wheat Project.

The [SARD-SC](#) wheat initiative is pursuing similar activities in 11 countries throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. Alongside national partners, SARD-SC is contributing to the expansion of land devoted to wheat production over the next five years – one example is Nigeria where increase from 70,000 to over 300,000 hectares is targeted.

Wheat provides 20 percent of calories and 20 percent protein to the global human diet. However, most countries in Sub Saharan Africa are not self-sufficient in wheat production, and wheat remains their

single most important imported commodity, which becomes a significant cost to countries. Increasing the competitiveness of domestic wheat will significantly reduce pressure on treasury finances.

National programs in collaboration with [ICARDA](#) has released various high yielding wheat varieties with heat and drought tolerance in many countries such as Syria, Ethiopia, Sudan, Nigeria, Turkey, Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan. Recent releases are as well resistant to Ug99 stem and yellow rust diseases.

ICARDA's Crop Improvement Program [ICARDA](#) has a global mandate for the improvement of barley, lentil, faba bean, Kabuli chickpea, grasspea and a shared mandate for bread wheat and durum wheat with [CIMMYT](#).

With partners in more than 40 countries, [ICARDA](#) produces science-based solutions for new crop varieties at the Marchouch Research Station near Rabat in Morocco. [ICARDA](#) is host to a model crop improvement program that develops crop production technologies for both high and low potential agro-ecosystems.

###

About ICARDA

The International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas ([ICARDA](#)), a member of the CGIAR Consortium, is the global agricultural research organization working with countries in the world's dry and marginal areas to deliver sustainable systems solutions that increase productivity, improve rural nutrition, and strengthen national food security.

For more information, please contact Andrea Gros, Head of Communication and Documentation Services at a.gros@cgiar.org