

WAFSRN

WEST AFRICAN FARMING SYSTEMS RESEARCH NETWORK

ACTIVITIES AND WORK PROGRAMME FOR 1988 - 1989

June 1988, Ouagadougou

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INTRODUCTION

The Steering Committee of the West African Farming Systems Research Network (WAFSRN) met on April 23 and 24, 1988 in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) to review and draw up the Network's programme for 1988 and 1989 as well as the feasibility of establishing WAFSRN Secretariat within the "Semi Arid Food Grain Research And Development Project" of the Organization of African Unity (OAU/STRC-SAFGRAD).

This report includes (i) a presentation of WAFSRN with its background, objectives, organization and functioning, financial resources and the progress so far made in setting up the secretariat (ii) an account of the 1988-1989 working programme. This programme includes several components: collection, processing and dissemination of scientific and technical information; short-term training, technical workshops and monitoring tours; network biennial symposium and (iii) a calendar of activities.

Some activities planned have not yet been discussed with the selected institutions, neither have all the financial resources required been mobilized. The programme and/or calendar may, therefore, still be modified.

1. PRESENTATION OF WAFSRN

Background

The high population increase and consequent pressure on arable land are generally admitted as some of the underlying causes of the problems of food production and economic crisis facing most sub-Saharan African countries and particularly West Africa. The drought which this region has been experiencing for almost two decades as well as other factors have seriously worsened the situation. Although farmers have tried to adapt their traditional farming systems by adopting some improved technologies, the resulting increase in production and productivity remains far behind the rate required to meet the increase in population and improve its well-being. Paradoxically, results obtained from plant, animal and forestry research in research stations have seldom been adopted by most farmers.

Thus in the 1970's an increasingly obvious trend was to conduct research in farmers' fields in a multidisciplinary manner and with the participation of farmers themselves. Among these farmers, special attention has been given to small farmers. This has enabled the real constraints of farmers to be identified and efforts made to adapt research results to their conditions and needs. This has also enabled researchers to have a better understanding of farmers' priorities in order to modify and redefine their research programmes to meet the farmers' needs. Towards the late 1970's, a limited number of West African Countries had gained some experience in Farming Systems Research (FSR) which led the donors to support an increasing number of projects aimed at integrating FSR into the national agricultural research systems (NARS).

The consensus on the importance of FSR in improving farmers' agriculture in West Africa did not prevent divergences between national and international research institutes and between researchers concerning the goals, sphere of operation and methodology of FSR.

In November 1982, on the initiative of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), the French Institute for Tropical Crops Research (IRAT), the International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and the Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), a workshop was organized at IITA, Ibadan (Nigeria) with the general objective of creating a West African Farming Systems Research Network "in order to facilitate the exchange of information, communications and meetings, mainly to achieve a better understanding between scientists, technicians and development agents through closer communication, methodologies and strategies" (letter of invitation sent to participants). Fifty four individuals, national researchers, researchers from international and external organizations as well as representatives from donor agencies participated in this workshop. Unfortunately only 7 out of 17 West African Countries were represented (Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Benin, Togo, Sierra Leone and Liberia). A Steering Committee, a Chairman and a Coordinator were elected and commissioned to define the organization and work programme of the network and to look for the means required for its implementation. Three working groups were set up: one entrusted with the collection and dissemination of information, particularly the publication of a network newsletter; another group responsible for the harmonization of the FSR key concepts and the third group was to organize a workshop in 1983.

The absence of a legal status, necessary for accepting donor grants linked to the professional character of the network, and of a full time coordinator prevented the achievement of the stated objectives.

A symposium was held in March 1986 in Dakar (Senegal) on the theme, "FSR in West Africa". Out of the 17 countries in the region, 16 participated as well as researchers from the International Institutes concerned. The Steering Committee elected on that occasion was requested to define a work programme, the implementation of which would be entrusted to a permanent secretariat established at OAU-SAFGRAD, and to seek the necessary financial means.

Objectives

The general objective of WAFSRN is to promote and facilitate cooperation among researchers, national, international and external research programmes and institutions working in the field of farming systems research in West Africa. This collaboration should make it possible to support researchers and strengthen NARS experiences in research methodologies, and comparison of results as well as better access to information.

The specific objectives are:

- To enhance collaboration in the planning and evaluation of FSR in West Africa.

- To improve research practices through exchange of experiences, particularly by organizing meetings, monitoring tours for researchers and any other activity which meets the needs of members.

- To organize or assist in organizing and institutionalizing training activities in the FSR approach for researchers and other rural development agents.

- To collect, process, and disseminate relevant FSR results and particularly to encourage researchers to publish their results and make them available to all interested parties so that agricultural policy officials have clear alternatives at their disposal.

- To assist, at their request, national researchers, programmes and institutions, in the planning, implementation and evaluation of FSR and, possibly, in the preparation of funding requests.

In the course of implementating its objectives, WAFSRN may collaborate with other networks with more specific fields of interest. Competition with such networks should be avoided while WAFSRN explores the possibility of welcoming them as sub-networks.

The network expects to rely on International Centres, external agricultural research organizations and schools of agriculture in the region. The network also hopes to gain from the experiences of similar networks in Africa and elsewhere.

The first beneficiaries of the network programme will be researchers and, to some extent, extension agents who work in collaboration with the researchers

In the last resort, farmers and more particularly small farmers of the region will be the beneficiaries of the improved technologies which researchers will have contributed in developing.

Status and Organization

During the Ibadan workshop in 1982, discussions on the network status resulted in the following consensus: farming systems research did not correspond to the exclusive mandate of any of the IARCs. The objectives and implications of this research methodology implied that the NARS should be its main instigators while recognizing the important role which the IARCs should play because of their expertise and training capacities. The limited development of FSR in West Africa and the state of the art justified the priority to be given to collaboration between researchers. Finally, the efficiency and the dynamism, indispensable to a network having a vast scope of activities overlapping several disciplines, recommended that it be animated by researchers known for their competence and dedication and freely selected by their colleagues. It was therefore decided to make the network a professional association of researchers, with membership on an individual basis, and linking it to a Steering body elected by all its members. It is not a question of ignoring existing national, international and foreign institutions but of simply recognizing that besides, and in complementarity with these institutions, there is room for professional associations.

The network is open to all researchers interested in farming systems research in West Africa, whether they belong to the region or not, whether they are dependent on national, international or foreign organizations. Membership procedure is limited to a registration at the network secretariat and for the moment there is no membership fee nor annual subscription to be paid.

A Network Charter is being prepared by the Steering Committee and will be proposed for adoption by members during the next symposium in 1989.

The network has no legal status of its own. In accordance with the decision of the March 1986 Symposium, a protocol of agreement has been signed with the "Semi-Arid Food Grain Research And Development" (SAFGRAD) project of the Scientific, Technical and Research Commission of the Organization of African Unity (OAU/STRC). Thanks to this agreement, we now enjoy OAU legal status. Thus all WAFSRN official deeds are performed by the STRC Executive Secretary. Except for some aspects, WAFSRN staff is recruited and managed according to the same regulations in force at SAFGRAD.

Finally in return for its management support and the supply of some services, WAFSRN pays 10% of its funds to SAFGRAD.

- The Network entities are the following:

The Symposium is held every two years in one of the countries of the region. It aims at two major objectives. First, to gather the maximum of researchers for in-depth discussions on FSR. The Steering Committee selects a general theme on which presentations and discussions are focused. This theme should permit discussions on essential matters. The documents presented as well as discussions are published. Secondly, participants constitute the general assembly of the network. Part of the Symposium is therefore dedicated to the review of activities, the definition of guidelines and election of the Steering Committee. During the Dakar Symposium, the Steering Committee was able to meet immediately in order to elect its chairman, work out its working programme and meet with all the donors present.

The Steering Committee is entrusted with the implementation of the guidelines defined by the Symposium. It draws up the network's work programme and controls its implementation by the Secretariat. It consists of 9 members: seven elected on an individual basis, four of whom come from the NARS of the region (only one member can be elected per member country) and two from non national organizations in addition to the Director of Research of SAFGRAD and the Coordinator. It elects its chairman and selects the Coordinator. It meets at least once a year.

The Network Secretariat is responsible for preparing and implementing Network activities. It ensures the secretariat of meetings of the Steering Committee. It is headed by the Coordinator. The latter was recruited in November 1987. One secretary/administrative assistant will be recruited very soon. The practical conditions for the application of the protocol of agreement which links the Network to SAFGRAD have been adopted and are being implemented. The secretariat should be fully operational in August or September 1988.

National Correspondents The 1982 workshop had provided for the designation of national network correspondents in consultation with the research leaders of member countries. The original idea was to have in each country a correspondent who could relay the Coordinator to his activities, promote and activate a national sub-network having its own activities. This idea has not been materialized and almost all the countries have since then institutionalized their farming systems research. Some have an official who is responsible for coordinating the work of various research institutes (Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire etc...). Others have created one FSR directorate or division (Senegal, Mali, Burkina, etc...). The designation of correspondents, different from these officials might not be efficient. The Steering Committee has decided to start with a thorough dialogue with these officials.

A Meeting of National FSR Leaders will be organized on 25-26 October, 1988 in Ouagadougou. The main objectives of this meeting will be (1) to present and discuss the WAFSRN programme (2) to take stock of researcher participation and information (institutions, programmes, researchers) available, country by country. This will make it possible to consider ways and means of strengthening them and to work out a programme of support and country visits (3) examine needs and conditions for reflection, support and training as regards FSR organization and management.

The IARCs will be invited to this meeting to present their activities as well as the assistance which they offer or may offer to national structures. If precise needs are identified, the FSR leaders may eventually form sub-networks with specific activities.

Financial Resources

From the very start, several donors have supported the network. The German Cooperation through GTZ, IDRC, the Ford Foundation, IITA, IRAT and the French Ministry for Cooperation contributed to its activities: organization of the 1982 workshop and the 1986 Symposium, Steering Committee meetings and coordinator's activities, publication of the network bulletin.

As a result of the non-existence of a legal status, the first grants received have been managed either by IITA, CIRAD or the donors themselves.

Henceforth, with the agreement with SAFGRAD, the joint management of grants by this organization and the network is possible. The following donors have approved or have promised a contribution to the 1988-1989 work programme .

a) IDRC has approved two funding requests and has already transferred the first instalments. The first request (IDRC 3-P-86-0272 project) of a two-year duration for 450,000 Canadian dollars) essentially supports the creation of the secretariat, its functioning and that of the Steering Committee as well as the organization of the next Symposium. The second request (IDRC 3-P-87-0107 project of two years for 184,785 Canadian dollars) supports the creation of a scientific information and documentation system at the level of the secretariat.

b) The French Ministry for Cooperation has decided to support the network activities, except the functioning of the Secretariat, for a period of three years.

c) The Ford Foundation has accepted to provide its financial support for the secretariat and the publication of a scientific journal. Considering the work programme adopted, supplementary funds will have to be sought.

Preparation of the 1990-1994 Five-Year Programme

The two IDRC financial contributions which support the network running costs and some other activities will come to an end in late 1989, if it is assumed that in view of the delay encountered, a modification of the project schedule, without any significant financial incidence, may be obtained.

A work programme will then be prepared during the first six months of 1989 and the funding requests during the third quarter to avoid any break in activities. The selection of a five-year period for this programme would be a good compromise between donor regulations and the duration requested for the achievement of good results.

1988-1989 WORK PROGRAMME

Taking into consideration the guidelines defined by the 1982 workshop, the 1986 symposium and its previous discussions, the Steering Committee adopted the work programme during its meeting of 23-24 April, 1988.

This two-year programme, with a rather too limited duration, may look modest. It takes into account the financial grants obtained, the promises made and the modest secretariat of the network. In spite of this realism, adequate implementation of the programme will depend on: (i) voluntary participation of network members in its activities (ii) the collaboration and support expected from the IARCs and NARS. This programme is neither closed nor definitive; it is up to its members to improve it through their dynamism and the initiatives which they will take. Some proposed activities and the organization of the next symposium with working groups per major agro-ecological zone, already suggest that researchers should form sub-networks with their own activities and one animator designated by them. Other working groups might be created, for example, on the use of micro-computers, the practical conditions of farmer participation in the research process and on simple research methodologies. A matter of high priority is related to looking for methodologies, low in human and financial resource, which countries with modest research structures may implement. This matter is also valid for countries with too large agro-ecological diversity and which are unable to constitute a complete team for each zone.

Experiences are already available and might provide some food for thought in this regard. The Committee feels that it is at the level of sub-networks, regrouping a limited number of practitioners, that collaborative research programmes can be developed and implemented. Its role and that of the secretariat will involve supporting the initiatives of members in this regard.

The programme includes several components: (1) the creation of a scientific and technical information system (2) training activities (3) technical workshops and monitoring tours (4) the biennial symposium (5) support to national programmes and information visits.

Creation of a Scientific and Technical Information System

The general objective is to collect, process and disseminate useful information on FSR. The target is not only the systems researchers, even if the latter have the priority; those collaborating with them and FSR users are also taken into consideration. Similarly the information will not only deal with FSR; information on improved technologies being developed in the stations and which FSR scientists might test with farmers, will be collected and disseminated as well as information on the needs and expectations of research users.

The mass of information already available and the limited financial and human resources of the network imply that everything could not be done. The logical approach will be, in the first place, to compile an inventory of whatever is achieved in this field, inform members and help them, if necessary, to have access to it. As a second step, collaboration will need to be established with these information sources for documentation exchange. Thus, duplications will be avoided. The scientific and technical information unit may focus on the information which is not collected or processed or disseminated by other units or those for which it is in the best position to do so.

The recruitment of a documentalist is planned for the secretariat. In the short term a scientific editor and a secretary/editorial assistant will complete the team.

The acquisition of data-processing system is also envisaged, which will enable management of data bases, micro-editing and micro-filming material. This should contribute to the production and dissemination of the following:

Publication of an Annual Catalogue of FSR Institutions, Programmes and Scientists in West Africa: The objective is to publish annually, in a practical form, useful information on research and institutions of higher education which carry out research or training activities on farming systems, their programmes of activity and the researchers practising this activity. This document which should enable one to know who is doing what and where will be useful for researchers as well as for research and training institutions and donors.

A good deal of information is already available in a scattered manner and in a form which does not respond to our needs. For example, the World Bank carried out in 1985 and 1986 an "Inventory of Agricultural Research in West Africa". The Project for Assistance to the Management of Research Institutes (AGIR) of the Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) undertook an analysis-diagnosis of research organizations of CILSS member countries. FAO, ISNAR, World Bank, USAID, etc... carried out similar studies for the preparation of project funding. From such information it should be possible to complete it and put in a form that meets our own needs.

This information which will be computerized will be regularly updated. The first catalogue is scheduled for the second quarter of 1988.

Publication of an Annual FSR Bibliography: In a non exhaustive manner, one can count the institutions which currently engage in the field of bibliographic collection, processing and dissemination in the area which interests the network: Kansas State University was involved in work initiated in the framework of the Farming Systems Support Project (FSSP), the "Centre International de Documentation sur l'Agriculture des Regions Chaudes (CIDARC which is part of CIRAD), the French Research-Development Network, the IARCs, etc... It is therefore difficult to define a priori the exact form which the Network information unit will take. One option taken is not to organize any documentation service and not to acquire and store documents systematically. Only indispensable documents will be collected. On the other hand, all documents will be localized so that those wishing to have them can apply to the source.

The objective which must guide us is that this information produced by the network and/or other networks should be accessible to researchers. We assume that the so-called "fugitive" or "unconventional" literature produced by national structures is the one which is less valued. Our effort should therefore aim at the collection, processing and dissemination of this literature as a priority. The meeting of the national FSR leaders scheduled for October will enable us to establish links indispensable for regular collection of documents. Country visits of the Coordinator as well as regular correspondence will thus play an important role. A pooling of bibliographic information should be possible.

Contacts have already been made and discussions will take place by late 1988 to define possible collaborations. We anticipate issuing the first bibliography during the second quarter of 1989.

Information on Request: At their request, users (researchers, institutions) may, at any time, receive any information included in the data bases in the form of photocopies, microfilms and disquettes.

The documentation services of organizations of research and higher education which have a data processing system may receive bibliographic information in the form of disquettes which can be inserted in their own data bases.

Publication of the WAFSRN Letter: The Network bulletin started to be published in January 1986 with the assistance of IITA and the Ford Foundation. Its twenty pages include information on FSR activities (training and technical workshops, seminars, etc...), research notes and reports, methodological notes and information on research activities.

The content and number of pages of the bulletin should not change. The bulletin will be the main information support for the network. It must give researchers the opportunity of publishing their research activities and even provisional results obtained, without experiencing the constraints and delays involved in the publication of scientific articles. Emphasis will be placed on methodologies, methods and techniques of survey, testing and analysis. Specialists will be requested to draft notes for this purpose. The information on the training courses offered to researchers should also be an important aspect.

The presentation and style of drawing of the bulletin the title of which will become "WAFSRN Letter" in order to distinguish it from the scientific bulletin will also be improved to make the reading more pleasant while increasing the content.

Between now and the end of this year, one of the priorities of the secretariat will therefore be to take charge of preparing and publishing the Network Letter on a quarterly basis. The micro editing equipment planned should enable us to ensure the production of this publication ourselves in Ouagadougou. In the first instance, the dissemination will be limited to 300 free copies. Members and documentation services of research and training organizations will be the main recipients.

Publication of a Scientific Journal: Presently in West Africa, there is no journal devoted to agricultural sciences. The previous and present attempts to create scientific journals at national level encountered or are encountering many difficulties: funding, irregular offer or insufficiency of quality articles, limited capacity for proof reading and editing, narrowness of the national scientific community interested, etc... Thus, most scientific articles concerning the region are published in journals of Western countries and are mostly the product of researchers from these countries.

Although the publication of articles is an important aspect of the curriculum of a researcher, those from Western Africa publish little because of the multiple constraints they face and are twice penalized. As potential authors, access to external scientific journals is more difficult for them. As readers they seldom have access to foreign journals.

Because of its character of professional association, independent from national systems and international research centres but benefiting from their support, WAFSRN constitutes a highly favourable framework.

On the other hand, the fact that it regroups agricultural scientists conducting their research activities in collaboration with the agricultural producers in West Africa, gives the network a spatial and pluridisciplinary dimension large enough to ensure the viability of a journal.

IDRC has accepted to financially support, for a two-year period, a semi-annual scientific bulletin which would include leading articles and bibliographic information (bibliographic references, key-words and analyses) and which would have a circulation of 200 copies freely disseminated.

Having considered the matter in depth, the Steering Committee has taken the following decisions:

To give to this bulletin a more outstanding scientific character and to differentiate it from the Network Letter. To make it evolve after the initial phase of two years towards a real quarterly scientific journal corresponding to general standards desired.

To seek beforehand the complementary means of ensuring the viability and quality of the bulletin and thus making its transformation into a journal possible: recruitment of a full time scientific editor (and of an editorial assistant) who, with the coordinator, will ensure the review of articles, preparation and composition of the bulletin and follow-up of its printing and dissemination.

Not to limit the area covered by the bulletin to farming systems research but to open it to all activities which can promote contacts between researchers and producers be they (i) activities involving diagnosis of constraints specific to family farms or related to their physical, technical and socio-economic environment and/or (ii) disciplinary or multi-disciplinary activities aimed at the adaptation of improved technologies in the rural community.

Based on the terms of reference already worked out by the secretariat, a funding request, complementing the one to IDRC, will be submitted to the Ford Foundation. The latter has already expressed interest in a five-year project, the duration of which is considered as minimum by the Committee for any chance of success.

The project of creating a scientific journal will be examined again by the Committee during its meeting of 27-28 October and it is expected that at that moment the Ford Foundation will have reacted favourably.

The Committee will then define in detail a feasibility study for the journal which the future editor and the coordinator will carry out before starting the publication. The objective is to publish the first issue in June 1989, at the latest. During the first six months an attempt will be made to collect enough articles for two to three issues.

Publication of a Series on "Research Works and Documents"
Without considering it as a priority for the two years, the Committee has agreed on the principle of creating a series entitled "Research Works and Documents". This series, without any definite periodicity, will include, in the first place, proceedings of workshops and symposia organized by the Network. It is expected that in the future the working groups within the network and the teams of researchers will propose proceedings to be published in this series. These, of course, will be proceedings too voluminous to be published in the journal but presenting sufficient interest for their dissemination in an improved form at the regional level.

Training Activities

It should be recalled that the principle adopted by the network is, as far as possible, not to design and implement training activities alone but to identify the needs of members, encourage and participate in these activities with existing institutions (which have this orientation) when they are being implemented; not to compete with them but to play a catalytic role. The training activities proposed hereafter are suggested subject to the agreement of the organizations identified. No negotiation has, so far, been initiated. The objectives, content and conditions of these training courses are therefore only outlined.

Workshop on Systems Research Approach: Until now the FSR training workshops in West Africa have been conducted by the Farming Systems Support Project (FSSP) and by IITA. The FSSP has since come to an end. IDRC has attempted to assist the Dschang University Centre (Cameroon) in organizing an annual workshop in collaboration with University of Florida and IITA. CIRAD has also planned a workshop with Cameroon agricultural research. These efforts have not yet been materialized. We have had the opportunity of discussing with the above partners, except the Cameroonians. All of them agreed that WAFSRN should resume the initiative so that a workshop can effectively be organized. It will be placed under the responsibility of Dschang University Centre but hosting candidates from other West African countries. The workshop, scheduled to last from three weeks to one month, would be designed for researchers who are just beginning their career and students completing their training. It would combine field work and classroom work, following the model training developed by FSSP and IITA. However, an effort will be made to improve and also better integrate Francophone contributions.

WAFSRN, the French Research/Development Network, CIRAD, IITA and University of Florida would support Dschang University Centre in organizing this workshop and seeking the funding required. IDRC remains interested in supporting the workshop and provisions have been made in the request submitted to the French Ministry of Cooperation. Beginning from the month of June, the Coordinator will make the necessary contacts with the authorities of the Dschang University Centre and will discuss on the spot, the principle of the training workshop, the time table and the conditions of negotiation with the various parties. Although the objective and time table would depend very much on the Cameroon authorities, every effort should be made to have the first training workshop held in 1989.

Workshop on Approach to Scientific Writing: In order to help and stimulate researchers to write and publish their findings, the Committee has adopted, among its priority activities, the organization of an annual workshop on scientific writing. The scarcity of experienced researchers in national institutions who can guide and advise the fresh researchers in this field, the gaps noted in publications of researchers aimed at informing their colleagues and the users of research results and the projected creation of a WAFSRN scientific journal, justify this objective.

A training module of seven to ten days will be elaborated in order to initiate researchers in the writing of notes, reports and scientific articles for various clienteles: scientists, decision makers, extension agents, etc... An initiation to audio-visual techniques will complete this training. The workshop will alternatively be given in French and in English with groups of twenty participants, at the maximum. Participants will be selected on the basis of written reports which they will have previously sent to the organizers and on which they will work during the session.

The supervisor of this workshop will be the network scientific editor. The collaboration and support of the IDRC Communication Science Division and those of the French Research/Development Network will also be sought.

The venue of the workshop has not been determined. Two possibilities will be explored: (1) negotiate with the Dschang University Centre to host the workshop (2) organize the researchers by groups of neighbouring countries and select one of the research or training institutes of these countries to host the workshop. It is hoped that the first workshop can be held in 1989.

Technical Workshops and Monitoring Tour. In 1989, setting up of the network structures, planning and establishment of the scientific and technical information system as well as training workshops have not made it possible to organize technical workshops. Some of these activities will still be mobilized, at least, during the first quarter of 1989, an important time for the secretariat. The Committee is also anxious that the next symposium of the network which will require serious preparation be held in the same year. Therefore, only activities for which initial planning has been made and one animator or co-organizer available to assist the secretariat have been accepted. Two workshops and one monitoring tour are planned for 1989. They are:

Technical Workshops on Irrigated Crop Production Systems (St. Louis, Senegal): This workshop will regroup some twenty researchers working on the improvement of farming systems in irrigated perimeters designed for family farms. The objective consists in achieving exchanges and comparisons between programmes and researchers working effectively in the field on the following points:

Which have been the constraints diagnosed and in which order of priority? Which improved technologies have been proposed and tested with farmers? Which methodologies have been implemented? Which have been the results and the implications for other research programmes, for the research institution, for the producers and extension services, for agricultural policy? The preparation of documented reports, discussions in the conference room and field visits should contribute to strike a precise balance of FSR under irrigated farming. A designated animator will be responsible for preparing the discussions and editing the workshop proceedings

The Senegalese Institute* for Agricultural Research (ISRA) has been contacted to host this workshop which might be held in August 1989 at the Agricultural Research Centre of St. Louis in Senegal. A Farming Systems Research Team and an irrigated rice research team from the West Africa Rice Development Association (WARDA) are based there and are working in the Senegal River Valley. They can assist in the preparation and the holding of the workshop. A researcher from the CIRAD farming systems department is willing to play the role of animator. It is also expected that the workshop may form a sub-network and establish its own programme of exchanges and collaboration.

Workshop on the Adaptation of Farming Systems to Drought: This is a workshop which the Network for Research on Drought Resistance in the Sahel (R3S) proposes to organize jointly with WAFSRN. The objective is to make a "comparative analysis of the adaptation strategies of farming systems to drought within each of the major types of agricultural situations in Sudano-Sahelian Africa with a view to define for each region priority research

themes in the area of drought control". The conception and planning of the workshop have not yet been done but the Committee has approved the principle of joint organization provided that members of the network can fully participate. Contacts will therefore be initiated with R3S for this purpose.

Monitoring Tour in Mali: Farming Systems in the Savanna Zone: The Committee has approved the idea of a monitoring tour in Mali which would be organized and supervised by one of its members. The latter has worked for several years on farming systems research conducted by the Institute of Rural Economy in the South-East of Mali (Sudan Savanna region of Sikasso). He will make precise proposals during the Committee meeting in October 1988 for the final decision to be made.

The objective will be similar to that of the workshop on irrigated farming systems in St. Louis (Senegal) and would gather a limited number of researchers working on the field in the Sudan Savanna Zone.

BIENNIAL SYMPOSIUM

The delay in the establishment of the secretariat has not made it possible to hold the statutory symposium of the network two years after that of Dakar (1986). The date agreed is the week of 28 August to 2 September, 1989. The theme selected is: "Contribution of Farming Systems Research to the Development of Improved Technologies for the Agro-Ecological Zones of West Africa".

The proposed objective is that, on the basis of the model of St. Louis workshop on irrigated farming systems, participants would produce a critical and very concrete assessment of FSR in the region. It is hoped that well supported answers may be given to the following questions: Has FSR made it possible to accelerate the technology adaptation and transfer process? Has it enabled research to be better oriented towards the priority problems of farmers? Which of the improved technologies have benefited the farmers? Has the elaboration of agricultural policies and extension programmes benefited this research? Actually, an attempt will be made to strike a balance between the usefulness and efficiency of FSR in comparison with the traditional methodologies.

In order to tackle the theme more closely, the symposium will mostly be held in working groups per agro-ecological zone (forest, Sudan Savanna, Soudano-Sahelian and irrigated zones). Leading Scientists will be invited to introduce the theme and animators will select the reports to be presented in working groups, direct the discussions and prepare the symposium proceedings.

The Coordinator has been mandated to initiate contacts for the selection of the host country with the following order of priority: Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria.

The Committee will devote part of its meeting in October 1988 to a more detailed preparation of the symposium.

Support to National Research Systems and Information Visits to Member Countries

During the 1982 workshop and the 1986 symposium, country information visits by the Coordinator and specific support to national researchers programmes and organizations had been considered as an important part of the activities to be conducted by the network.

A careful consideration of the matter and its implications in terms of funding, availability of experienced researchers and of the Coordinator for implementing these support missions and visits has led the Committee to give them less priority in the present work programme. The establishment of the training component, the preparation of technical workshops and symposium and the feasibility study of the scientific journal should already make him to visit several West African Countries. These visits will be used to get information and examine the requests of the researchers and institutions.

The Coordinator may also respond to invitations and requests for technical support if he is in a position to do so. The question of specific technical support in the form of expert consultancies will be examined later in the framework of the network five-year programme, more especially, as SAFGRAD is planning to provide this type of support.

RESPAO
COMITE DE PILOTAGE

Membre	Adresse
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WAFSRN - CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES : 1988 - 1989

	1988												1989											
	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N						
<u>ESTABLISHMENT OF STRUCTURES AND PROGRAMS</u>																								
Establishment of secretariat																								
Meeting of National FSR Leaders			Ouaga	10/24-26																				
Steering Committee meeting			Ouaga	10/27-28																				
Elaboration of 1990- 1994 program																								
Steering Committee meeting on five year program and WAFSRN Symposium																								
<u>SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION SYSTEM</u>																								
Opening of date base to users										X														
Publication of annual catalogue: institutions,programs, scientists									X															
FSR bibliographic publications		X			X							X						X						
WAFSRN Letter													X		X			X						
Scientific journal													X					X						
<u>TRAINING</u>																								
FSR workshop (Dschang - Cameroun)																								
Workshop on scientific writing																								
<u>TECHNICAL WORKSHOPS</u>																								
FSR workshop on irrigated cropping St. Louis - Senegal																								
Monitoring tour; savanna zone - Mali																								
Workshop on FS adaptation to drought																								
<u>SYMPOSIUM</u>																								
																		8/28 - 9/2						

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Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA)

African Union Specialized Technical Office on Research and Development

1988-06

WAFSRN ACTIVITIES AND WORK PROGRAMME FOR 1988 - 1989

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