

REPORT ON THE 3rd MEETING OF THE
STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICAN
SORGHUM RESEARCH NETWORK
OUAGADOUGOU - DECEMBER 15-17, 1987

1. INTRODUCTION

The 3rd meeting of the Steering Committee of the West and Central African Sorghum Research Network was held in Ouagadougou December 15 - 17, 1987. The following participated in the meeting:

Prof. C.E. Ohiagu, Nigeria, Member/Chairman
Dr. M. Traore, Mali, Member
Mr. K. Attiey, Cote d'Ivoire, Member
Dr. J. Clark, Niger, Member
Dr. C.M. Pattanayak, Coordinator, Member
Dr. T. Bezuneh, SAFGRAD, Observer
Dr. S. Da, Burkina Faso, Observer/Member SAFGRAD
Oversight Committee.

Prof. C.E. Ohiagu was unanimously elected as the Chairman of the Steering Committee for a period of two years.

After some introductory remarks by the Coordinator, it was agreed that the main objective of the 3rd Steering Committee meeting was to discuss practical means to strengthen national programs (infrastructure, operational funds, training), and seek supplemental financial assistance; however, some issues affecting the network could be taken up before getting into main business.

A decision was made that the number of national representatives in the Committee should be increased from 4 to

6. The two additional members will be elected at the next workshop. Subsequently, two members will retire every 2 years, continuity being ensured by the remaining majority of four national representatives. It was further agreed that a Chairman should be elected among the national representatives for a period of 2 years. He should be replaced by a new chairman elected among those national representatives who have already completed at least 2 years in the Steering Committee.

The following agenda was adopted:

1. Coordinator's report
2. Review of the minutes of the previous meeting
3. Regional trials (financial aspects)
4. Work plan for 1988
5. Proposal for supplemental funding for national programs for effective participation in the network activities.

2. COORDINATOR'S REPORT

The Coordinator gave a review of the activities for the year 1987 (monitoring tours, preparation for next workshop, regional trials/nurseries, document supply to national programs). He emphasized that the 3rd meeting of the Steering Committee was aimed at developing project proposals for supplemental financial and technical support to the national programs. He presented the restructured West African regional sorghum research program of ICRISAT. Two regional research teams will be posted in the region, one in Mali and the other in Nigeria. The Mali team will be composed of three scientists from ICRISAT, four scientists from IRAT and the Coordinator from SAFGRAD/ICRISAT. These teams will have specific research responsibilities and they will function on a complementary basis. The Coordinator, posted with the team in

Mali will supervise the research activity in both the teams. Research strategy and priorities were also emphasized. In general, the Mali team will deal with improvement of traditional agricultural systems with 75% of its activity devoted to development of open-pollinated cultivars for the 900-1200 mm rainfall zone. Whereas the Nigeria team will focus on intensive agricultural systems with 75% of its activity devoted to development of hybrids for the 600-900 mm rainfall zone. He also emphasized that the two teams will work in closest cooperation with stronger national programs such as Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Burkina Faso and also will provide support to all national programs.

The discussions that followed the Coordinator's report laid emphasis on some important topics: i) It was decided that since some Central African countries (Cameroon, Central African Republic and Chad) were involved in the network the name of the network should be changed from West African Sorghum Research Network to West and Central African Sorghum Research Network (WCASPN); ii) It was agreed that the Coordinator should be posted with one of the regional research teams of ICRISAT. It was suggested that initially the Coordinator may continue to function as the program leader of ICRISAT's regional program; but this situation may be reviewed later when the network activities will be fully expanded. At that time the committee will communicate its views to ICRISAT. Nevertheless, the Committee felt that it will not dictate any of its views to anyone.

3. REVIEW OF THE MINUTES OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Some of the items discussed at the second meeting were reviewed and updated.

1. Germplasm: Each national program should complete its collection. The Coordinator should explore possibilities of conservation of available national collections at I.S.C. Also he should explore possibilities of providing national programs with long term storage facilities. But national programs should be encouraged to explore support from bilateral arrangements for such storage facilities.
2. Inter-regional interaction: In the existing network budget we don't have any line item to support travel of national scientists to another region. The network may consider assisting 2-3 national scientists to attend workshops in Eastern or Southern Africa provided there is adequate savings from workshop line item of last fiscal year. SAFGRAD is pursuing its effort to look for funds to organize a continental sorghum workshop.
3. Short term visit/training: The Coordinator suggested that some time be allowed for ICRISAT regional program to get settled in the new locations before undertaking such activity. In the mean time such training could be planned in collaboration with ICRISAT Center in Hyderabad.
4. Workshop: It was decided that the scheduled workshop be postponed to August, 1988. This would allow all participants to complete data collection and analysis in order to provide a better opportunity to discuss research results in the workshop. The Coordinator has been requested to plan a trip to Cameroon to explain this decision to Cameroonian authorities and seek their support. For participation in the workshop it was agreed that network budget will support one representative from each national program; however, for additional participants other sources of funding must be sought. It was agreed that normally Steering Committee members should attend workshops and participate in the Committee meeting

after the workshop. An elected Steering Committee member must represent a national sorghum research program and the same person ideally should continue to participate until expiry of this term.

5. CIPAD's collaboration: The participation of IRAT/CIPAD in the regional team in Mali was very much appreciated.
6. Expatriate scientists: The Committee felt that these scientists should have a role on training national scientists and technicians. For this reason, the expatriate scientists ideally should have had experience in their profession.

REGIONAL TRIALS (FINANCIAL ASPECTS)

National representatives pointed out the need of financial support to conduct regional trials. This problem is indeed critical. The national programs ideally should participate in the regional trials from their resources; however, at the moment such resources are quite limited and, therefore, need careful consideration at least on a short term basis. A long term solution may be possible if SPAAR support will be forthcoming. Thus, a temporary solution to the problem was arrived at. The existing budget from USAID has a line item on "network support". This line item can provide about CFA 2.7 million. It was decided that the network will provide supplemental assistance of CFA 100,000 per trial to national programs in the region to the extent of a total of 27 trials for the year 1988. The Coordinator will decide on the deserving national programs for this support. An advance of CFA 50,000 will be sent to the Director of the national institute at the time of dispatch of seeds and the balance amount of CFA 50,000 will be paid after justifiable bills are available to the Coordinator. The

Coordinator indicated that for such financial transactions he is bound by ICRISAT's fiscal rules.

4. WORKPLAN FOR 1988

The Steering Committee decided that the following activities will be developed during 1988:

- 3rd workshop in August 1988 in Maroua, Cameroon followed by the 4th meeting of the Steering Committee.
- Regional trials: in addition to WASVAT-1, WASVAT-2, WASHAT, WASDRN, a Striga resistance nursery will be organized.
- A monitoring tour will be organized during the first week of October, 1988. It would involve representatives from Mauritania, Guinea and Benin. This special monitoring tour would be possible if there are savings from last year's budget for workshop/monitoring tour.
- Training at ICRISAT Center. Each national program may nominate 3-4 candidates for training at technician level. There are also possibilities to pursue degree courses in collaboration with Andhra Pradesh Agricultural University provided the CV of the candidate is accepted by the said University. ICRISAT Center may consider providing research support.
- Training within the network: It was suggested that relevant topics may be listed out such that one topic can be selected as a training theme in 1989. The following topics were listed :
 - Identification and breeding for resistance to diseases;

- Identification and breeding for resistance to insects;
- Drought management and data processing (computer analysis).

The Committee recommended that the future training activity will be decided later.

5. PROPOSALS FOR SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Enclosed is a proposal prepared by the Steering Committee.

1987-12

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