

## Scientists launch a multi-million dollar rice production project

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National and international rice specialists have taken part in a meeting to launch a multi-million dollar project on "Stress-tolerant rice for poor farmers in Africa and South Asia" at the Africa Rice Center (WARDA), Cotonou, Benin today.

At a meeting that began on the March 5, the specialists launched the project that has received approval for funding by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation through a grant to the International Rice Research Institute for US\$19.9 million over three years. The research work will be carried out by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and its partners. The project targets resource-poor rice farmers in Africa and Asia, who produce their crop under rainfed conditions, in which drought, flooding, and salinity reduce yields and harm their livelihoods. The Africa component of this project proposal was developed by IRRI in partnership with the Africa Rice Center (WARDA), which will be its main partner in implementing this component. According to a Press Release from WARDA, the project is expected to benefit at least 400,000 households in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa in the short term and 18 million households in the long term. In addition, the project aims to build the capacity of researchers and seed producers and promote the exchange of seed of stress-tolerant rice varieties. In Africa, the project member countries comprise Benin, Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal in West Africa as well as Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda in eastern and southern Africa. WARDA says the project aims to make available to such farmers improved, stress-tolerant rice varieties, which in complement with improved management practices, is expected to bring about a 50% increase in yield in farmers' fields within the next 10 years. Both IRRI and the Africa Rice Center are supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).