Commitment to increase investment and presence in Niger

Emphasizing ICRISAT’s commitment to Niger and exploring ways to leverage the potential of digital technologies were the highlights of the visit of Dr David Bergvinson, Director General, ICRISAT, to Niger.

During his meeting with the Prime Minister His Excellency, Brigi Rafini, Dr Bergvinson outlined ICRISAT’s long-standing and productive partnership with the Government of Niger. The Prime Minister was reassured of ICRISAT’s commitment to Niger by the DG’s visit within his first three months in office. The increased role of women in transforming agriculture; ICRISAT’s partnership with women’s seed producers association; advancements in bio-fortified pearl millet with increased drought tolerance were discussed. HE recommended that ICRISAT create greater awareness of its outputs among the people of Niger.

Dr Bergvinson met His Excellency, Maidagi Allembye, Minister of Agriculture, and emphasized ICRISAT’s commitment to invest more in Africa and to align its work with national strategies. He discussed the role that mobile technology can play in supporting market integration, financial services and knowledge exchange among smallholder farmers.
Investing in agri sector top priority...from page 1

He showed great interest in exploring ways to provide year-round rural employment and reduce migration to cities.

Ms Kane Boulama Aichatou, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was very interested in digital agriculture, especially mobile technology. She was supportive of ICRISAT as an international research organization in Niger. She encouraged ICRISAT to go in-depth with the 3N initiative to strengthen ICRISAT’s engagement in the country. She talked about climate change as being a severe challenge as well as the erosion of the Niger River as a major concern. There is strong political will to reverse the vicious cycle of food insecurity, drought and flooding and Niger is ready to provide whatever diplomatic support ICRISAT needs to deliver on its mission in Niger, she said.

Meeting with partners

In his meeting with a team from Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Dr Bergvinson discussed ways of using digital technologies in agriculture extension. Key areas where ICRISAT and CRS could build some synergies were moving to mobile data collection where CRS is making significant progress. Discussions also centered around ICRISAT-CRS collaborative projects which have been very successful in demonstrating new varieties of millet, cowpea, and groundnut and cultivation of dry-season vegetables through bio-reclamation of degraded lands. ICRISAT is offering backstopping support by training staff and farmers on new technologies for collaborative projects with CRS in Niger. Two areas where ICRISAT can offer more inputs are: technology design and communication and documentation of lessons learned through collaboration.

Dr Bergvinson acknowledged the support and partnership of Institut National de Recherches Agronomiques du Niger (INRAN) since 1981. He met Dr Sido Yacouba Amir, Director HR, Programs and Studies; Dr Aissata Mamadou, Director of Rainfed Crops; Dr Germaine Ibro, Director, Department of Economics, Rural Sociology and Technology Transfer; Boukari Amsatou, Director, Department, Irrigated Crops. Discussions were held on reactivating joint working groups; hosting open field days during September/October to demonstrate technologies; developing proposals for funding by WAAPP (West African Agricultural Productivity Program) and World Bank and linking INRAN with other centers as AVRDC-The World Vegetable Center to support vegetable research (especially onions, okra and lettuce).
Major irrigation policy initiative based on research

In a major policy initiative to boost irrigation the Government of Telangana in India aims to revive and restore 46,500 minor irrigation tanks in 10 districts of Telangana based on scientific research.

This study on the use of tank silt was carried out by ICRISAT and an NGO, Modern Architects of Rural India. The Mission Kakatiya program of the government is based on the study titled ‘Quantification of Nutrients Recycled by Tank Silt and Its Impact on Soil and Crop – A Pilot Study in Warangal District of Andhra Pradesh’.

Tanks were traditionally a major source of irrigation in India. However, with decreasing collective action by the community, inappropriate soil and water management practices, encroachment of tanks and waterways resulted in the neglect and decay of tank irrigation. Good practices such as desilting and application of silt to agricultural fields were abandoned.

Major impacts reported in the study:

- **Double benefit**: De-silting increased the storage capacity of the tanks and at the same time the silt when applied in fields provided nutrient-rich organic manure.

- **Enhanced tolerance of rainfed crops to moisture stress**: Addition of tank silt on farmland improved the available water content in the plough layer.

- **Increase in yield**: The increase in yield of cotton, a major crop in this area, was to the tune of 1,000 kg per hectare. Farmers could achieve this with the application of 100 tractor loads per hectare. The maximum benefit was for chillies and cotton, the gain was negligible in turmeric and no gain was observed for maize.

- **Eco-friendly**: Farmers reported use of less pesticides in fields that used tank silt. This resulted in saving of ₹ 2,500 (US$ 40) per hectare in cotton, chilli and turmeric, respectively. For maize it was ₹ 1,750 (US$ 28) per hectare.

- **Higher plant population and higher plant height**: This was observed in *rabi* maize, 45 days after sowing, in plots that used silt.

- **Economically viable**: Farmers could recover the cost of transporting the silt through increased net profit in cotton and chilli compared to turmeric and maize.

The pilot study is available on [http://oar.icrisat.org/1353/](http://oar.icrisat.org/1353/)

This publication is part of the research project “Knowledge-based Dialogue for Community-based Restoration of Tank Centered Ecosystem Services and Rural Livelihoods” funded by the WWF International, The Netherlands.

### Net income with and without application of tank silt obtained for various crops by farmers in Warangal district of Andhra Pradesh.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crops</th>
<th>With silt</th>
<th>Without silt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>32,020</td>
<td>20,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chillies</td>
<td>5,967</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turmeric</td>
<td>10,315</td>
<td>9,128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>7,721</td>
<td>10,128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Phase 2 launched of a major international effort to link climate, crop, livestock and economic modeling

ICRISAT is supporting seven regional teams in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia to devise and test potential adaptations to climate change under smallholder farmer settings.

This is part of the Agricultural Model Intercomparison and Improvement Project (AgMIP, http://www.agmip.org/) project which launched its second phase recently at a workshop at the University of Florida, Gainesville, USA.

Phase 1 of the project, from 2010 to 2014, devised a range of adaptation strategies that smallholder farmers might adopt to cope with existing climate variability and future climate changes – depending on the region and agro-ecosystem, these might include simple to adopt options such as adjusting crop management (sowing date, variety) through to more knowledge intensive options including changing the farm design (rotations, crop choice) and finding synergies via crop and livestock interactions.

Phase 2 extends this project until the end of 2016 with a stronger focus on stakeholder engagement and knowledge sharing so that our findings are translated into impact in rural communities.

AgMIP uses cutting-edge information technology to produce improved climate change models and next generation climate impact projections for the agricultural sector. The goals of AgMIP are to improve the characterization of world food security due to climate change and to enhance adaptation capacity in the developing and developed world. Analyses of the agricultural impacts of climate variability and change require a transdisciplinary effort to link state-of-the-art climate scenarios to crop, livestock and economic models.

Dr Sabine Homann Kee Tui leads the southern African team, Dr Lieven Claessen’s the eastern African team. Scientists Drs Thiagarajah, Dakshina Murthy, S Nedumaran, Anthony Whitbread, Cynthia Bantilan and KPC Rao attended the meetings in Gainesville in support of the teams in South Asia and West Africa.

Investing in agri sector top priority...from page 2

With Dr Amadou Alahoury Diallo, High Commissioner for Nigeriens Nourissent les Nigeriens (3N) – ICRISAT’s Director General interacted on areas of collaboration that included crop improvement (sorghum, pearl millet, and groundnut), crop management, livestock, and watersheds.

In a meeting with staff, Dr Bergvinson thanked them for being loyal to ICRISAT during challenging conditions over the past three years. “By standing alongside the people of Niger during these difficult times, ICRISAT has solidified its good offices with the government of Niger and our national partners,” he said. The DG articulated the value and need for a country strategy to serve as the vehicle to advocate with donors and government for increased investment in Niger. During a working lunch, the DG met with scientists on the process to develop country strategies and to what end these strategies would serve in strengthening the research for development agenda in Niger.

Dr Bergvinson visited Niger from 4-7 March. At Sadoré station, he reviewed field, lab and office facilities and discussed with staff the challenges and opportunities for improving them for achieving the institute mission within WCA in general and Niger in particular.
A good Malian farmer produces his or her own seeds

McKnight Foundation funded farmer-managed seed systems proves to be the way forward to boost food security in Mali

If you have good seeds, you will be ahead of the game”, says Souleman Ballo, a respected elder from Mpessoba, a village located along the road between Segou and Koutiala, in South Mali. A 62-year-old farmer, head of a 25-member household, and president of the local farmer cooperative Jigi Seme, Souleman knows how important good seeds are for the farmer’s wealth. The cooperative, made up of 65 families, produces sorghum and maize, and legumes like cowpea. They have recently secured a contract from the World Food Programme’s Purchase for Progress scheme to sell sorghum grain. They are also engaged in producing quality seeds including new sorghum hybrids.

About 80% of Malians rely on low yielding agriculture for their livelihood, often jeopardized by unpredictable rains, poor soils, and limited access to productivity enhancing inputs. Most farmers have daily incomes of less than $2, so access to better seeds is often the most promising first step to boost harvests and food security in sub-Saharan Africa.

Agricultural researchers at ICRISAT and the Malian Institut d’Economie Rurale have developed many improved varieties of sorghum and millet, with some remarkable yield gains. For instance, new sorghum hybrids based on well-adapted local varieties, are giving yields 40% higher than the farmers’ best local variety. Souleman was even reporting record yields over three tons per hectare in the best fields when usually farmers harvest one ton or less. This yield increase is life-changing as sorghum is vital for food and income.

Ensuring these improved varieties and hybrids are available to, and adopted by farmers is the next task. Strengthening the capacity of farmer managed seed enterprises like Jigi Seme is a promising way to do this.

Malian farmers are not in the habit of buying seeds. “A good farmer produces his or her own seeds”, as Souleman puts it. This does not mean farmers do not try new seeds. In fact, they regularly test new varieties by obtaining seed through informal means, especially with family and close neighbors. It is a question of trust, which is understandable as varietal adaptation is critical for the farmer and his family’s survival in this highly variable environment.

Supporting decentralized seed production and marketing by local farmer seed cooperatives therefore suits farming communities in Mali. Where cooperatives operate, there is an impressive rate of adoption of improved cultivars. A recent study showed that adoption was 25 to 50% in the villages where the seeds were produced, compared to the national average around 10%. Souleman tells us that Jigi Seme produced one ton of sorghum hybrid seeds...
Tracking future careers of learner-participants

A study to track the future careers of learner-participants of ICRISAT’s Village-Level Studies (VLS) training programs have thrown up interesting results.

- Over half of the respondents said that the training helped them gain employment within a period of three years and also gain promotion in their work areas.
- About 40%, in the first three years, were able to provide training and influence the direction of research in their institution partly.
- The participants include one national minister of agriculture, 18 professors, two World Bank economists, four senior managers, several in agricultural research institutions and four PhD students.
- Among 16 of the respondents, nine PhD scholars indicated that they had written 24 articles, using the VLS related resources during their ICRISAT association.
- Other publications include two books, one MPhil thesis, one seminar proceedings, a book chapter and two project reports.

These were the preliminary findings of ‘Impact Assessment of Capacity Building through Tracing Learner-Participants: ICRISAT Village-Level Studies, 1975-2013’. The study tracked learner-participants who were associated with VLS from 1975 to 2013. More than 200 learner participants were tracked through the survey that aims to measure the effectiveness of the training programs on their later careers.

The preliminary findings were presented by Dr Rosana Mula, Coordinator - Learning Systems Unit, ICRISAT, at the Australian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society (AARES) Conference held in New Zealand recently.

Dr Thiagarajah Ramilan, Scientist, Bio-economic modeling, Markets, Institutions and Policies, ICRISAT, presented a paper on the development of ‘A Bioeconomic Household Model for Assessing the Impact of Technological Interventions in Dryland Systems of South Asia’. It mainly focused on identification of representative farm systems to represent production heterogeneity in Bijapur district of Karnataka. It looked into innovative ways of deriving consumption functions to reflect the household consumption behavior. This model captures the key features of smallholder farming such as heterogeneity, non-separability of production and consumption decisions due to market imperfections and the seasonability of resource use.

Dr Deevi Kumara Charyulu, Scientist - Agricultural Economics, Markets, Institutions and Policies, ICRISAT, presented a paper entitled ‘Impact of Pigeonpea Research at ICRISAT’. The study found that extent of adoption of cultivar ‘Maruti (ICP 8863)’ released in 1986 reached its peak, i.e. around 70% by the late 1990s through the neighboring states, namely Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh through farmer to farmer networks. The study made a systematic effort to document its adoption pathway and also quantify the increase in welfare benefits among the farmers due to the availability of improved pigeonpea technology.

The AARES 2015 Annual Conference had over 250 delegates from all over the world.

---

A good Malian farmer produces his or her own seeds...from page 5

in 2014 and sold it all in 1 to 5 kg bags (enough seeds to sow up to one hectare). He expects even greater success in 2015.

Yet, recent seed policies do not adequately recognize the contribution of such farmer organizations. Constraints such as rigid and expensive seed certification procedures exclude smallholder farmers. Hopefully, when law-makers hear about the success of Jigi Seme, procedures will be modified so that Malian smallholder farmers will indeed be able to produce and market their own high quality seeds as Souleman and his cooperative aspire to do, and by so doing help their neighbors achieve a better life.

Story and Pics: Jerome Bossuet
Nutri-kitchen Gardening program launched on International Women’s Day

Amidst felicitations of women leaders and various other celebratory events on International Women’s Day, ICRISAT Development Centre (IDC) launched its Nutri-kitchen Gardening program in its watershed project areas. More than 4,000 women participated in the events held in three Indian states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

As part of this program, women and school children who have enrolled their names will be given a kit containing vegetable and fruit seeds to grow either in their school premises or in their backyards which will be followed by an orientation program. The Nutri-kitchen Gardening program was launched at all ICRISAT-led watershed projects in India to address the issue of malnutrition in India. According to current statistics, 34% of women and 45% of children are malnourished. This initiative aims to educate women and children on the importance of nutrition and to teach them how to grow various fruits and vegetables to meet their nutrition needs.

One of the highlights of the celebrations was the public acknowledgment of the contributions of leading women in the project areas in various developmental activities. The aim was to bring them together on one platform to share their experiences and inspire more women to participate in ICRISAT’s watershed project activities.

Women’s Day celebrated in Kothapally for the first time

Three hundred women farmers in the state of Telangana participated in the celebrations which started with folk songs and highlighted the importance of nutrition in everyday diet for women and children. They also explained the importance of watersheds for achieving prosperity and food security. Ms Shoba Rani, the first woman sarpanch (president) of the gram panchayat (village-level governance institution) in the village, chaired the event. She said that the villagers felt proud as International Women’s Day was organized for the first time in Kothapally and she thanked team ICRISAT for developing Kothapally as a model village that was replete with success stories.

The women were from two watersheds projects – SABMiller and Model Watershed of Government of India, and one watershed at Bhanoor in Ranga Reddy district (under the Asian Paints watershed project) participated in the event organized at Adarsha watershed, Kothapally, Ranga Reddy district.
Telangana. The program focussed on orientation of women participants on Nutri-kitchen Gardening, watershed management, crop management including integrated nutrient management, integrated pest management and good crop husbandry.

IDC recognized the contributions of women leaders by felicitating them. These progressive women farmers from different watersheds shared their experiences as well as achievements.

The program ended with a field visit where participants were oriented on soil and water conservation measures, aquifer recharging, precision farming using micro-irrigation as well as site specific nutrient/input management, etc. There was an interactive session on-field with the participants, who sought information about the interventions.

Similar celebrations were held at Mahbubnagar in Telangana state and Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh state.

**Celebrations in Karnataka**

Enthusiastic women farmers participated in the events organized by ICRISAT in collaboration with the State Government in all the 30 districts of Karnataka state and other watershed areas comprising Bhoochetana Plus, Bhoochetana, Power Grid Corporation of India, Coca Cola Foundation and JSW Foundation watershed projects.

At many of these events, women achievers were invited as special guests. They spoke on women empowerment; social and economic development; women and child health; and issues like malnutrition. The speakers also emphasized the role of watershed initiatives in improving livelihoods through Self-Help Group (SHG) activities.

At each location 100 to 300 women members participated and shared their experiences. Outstanding women SHG members were felicitated by the invited dignitaries, officers from Karnataka Department of Agriculture and elected representatives.
Global consortium maps out strategies to revitalize agricultural education

One Agriculture-One Science, a global consortium of agricultural education and research institutes across Asia, Africa and the USA, has mapped out plans and strategies to expand its initiatives to revitalize and bring systematic changes in agricultural education, capacity building and technology transfer in developing countries.

Bringing this global partnership to the next level, technology platforms to deliver Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), learning and experiences from other online education initiatives, and current challenges and opportunities in agricultural education were deliberated on toward coming up with a strategic plan of action during a recent global planning meeting.

The ‘One Agriculture-One Science’ Global Planning Meeting focused on ways to expand and strengthen the consortium in order to encourage more youth into agriculture and to reach out to millions of farmers to use scientific innovations to transform agriculture into a dynamic sector. It was held at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) global headquarters on 9-10 March 2015.

“In order to provide nutritious food for 9.6 billion people and create economic opportunity for farmers, specific attention is needed to leverage ICTs and modern knowledge exchange methodology to train the next generation of agricultural researchers, extension officers and farmers. One Agriculture-One Science is an exciting coalition to support demand-driven human and institutional capacity building. MOOCs offer an exciting opportunity to scale up knowledge exchange of best practices to empower farmers, especially youth, to increase their profitability and adaptability in the face of climate change,” said Dr David Bergvinson, Director General, ICRISAT.

The ‘One Agriculture-One Science’ consortium (http://www.oneagriculture.org/) aims to use latest advancements in technology to address changes and adaptations required for agricultural education to better contribute to development goals, particularly to the attainment of food and nutrition security and sustainable agricultural production.

It envisions to provide members with shared access to learning resources such as MOOCs among and across higher education learning networks, extension agencies and agriculture professionals; technology delivery platforms; and ways to enable organizations to expand their impacts and partnerships.

“The task of revitalizing global agricultural education requires all of us to work together in developing an education and capacity building roadmap focused on how we can better contribute to nutrition and food security on a global scale, through this global education consortium for development,” emphasized Dr Peter Carberry, Deputy Director General - Research, ICRISAT.

“With the One Agriculture-One Science initiative we are aiming at modernizing the way we educate agriculture students, young scientists, farmers and other extensional professionals to make them more innovative and get them excited about agriculture as a science and enterprise,” said Dr Guntuku Dileepkumar, Global Leader, Knowledge Sharing and Innovation and Director for Center of Excellence in ICT Innovations for Agriculture, ICRISAT.

‘One Agriculture-One Science’ was initiated in July 2014 by ICRISAT and partner universities in the USA
Global consortium maps out strategies...from page 9

like the University of Florida, Michigan State University, and Iowa State University. It quickly gained support from organizations in India like the National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM), National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University (ANGRAU), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and International organizations Cal Poly Pomona, Auburn University, Cornell University, Colorado State University, and Washington State University.

The initiative in India specifically seeks to contribute to its agricultural education system through strategic coalition of regional, national and international partners. The MOOCs are a recent development in the ‘life-long learning’ initiative in the country, which has now been boosted by the consortium through the pooling of international expertise, experience and resources.

“I believe that the MOOCs platform can help us in reaching out to the masses and thousands of agricultural extension agents in India,” said Dr Satya Gopal, IAS, Director General, MANAGE.

At the global planning meeting, Dr Pradeep Kaul, representative of the National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT), shared the Government of India’s plan to invest in the MOOCs platform and digital interaction video channels and agreed to provide full support to the consortium.

“Policies are being laid out to raise the standard of education and research so that Indian universities can compete globally. This consortium will enable us to offer skills training and break societal stigma by providing academic excellence in vocational education,” highlighted Dr D Rama Rao, Director General, NAARM.

“Capacity development is one of CGIAR’s focus areas critical to the attainment of the goals and objectives of the CGIAR Research Programs. The One Agriculture-One Science initiative provides a great window of opportunity in strengthening the cause of a global education and capacity development in agriculture,” according to Dr Enrico Bonaiuti, Research Programme Coordinator, International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA).

The event was attended by 92 national and international experts/officials composed of Vice-Chancellors, Deans, Professors and Dignitaries from agricultural universities, non-profit organizations, and government institutions; and key senior officials/staff of ICRISAT.

Congratulations

Dr Hari D Upadhyaya, Director ICRISAT Genebank, was awarded the Dr Harbhajan Singh Memorial Award for his lifetime contribution to plant genetic resources management – devising strategies for enhancing germplasm utilization and identification of trait-specific germplasm for crop improvement. The award was bestowed on him by Indian Society of Plant Genetic Resources for 2013–2014 on 5 March at New Delhi, India.

Dr Suhas P Wani, Director ICRISAT Development Center, has been nominated as The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Regional Advisory Group Member for Telangana. NABARD Andhra Pradesh and Telangana has formed a Regional Advisory Group with the key stakeholders in the state for providing appropriate feedback for shaping public policy towards resolving the issues of farmers in a seamless manner.

Dr Hari Upadhyaya receiving the award.

Dr Suhas P Wani, Director ICRISAT Development Center, has been nominated as The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Regional Advisory Group Member for Telangana. NABARD Andhra Pradesh and Telangana has
Trainings

Training on gum exudation technique

A training on gum exudation technique from Acacia Senegal was conducted recently in the action sites of western Rajasthan in India. Acacia Senegal is a very important tree found widely in western Rajasthan and extraction and selling of the gum is an important source of livelihood for the people.

The technique of gum exudation developed by the Center Arid Zone Research Institute (CAZRI) helps enhance gum production during the summer season. Trees that are more than eight years old having a diameter of more than 6 inches are suitable for this technique. Within eight to 10 days of application of ‘Liquid Dose’, enhanced gum production can be observed. Farmers can continue this process till April.

The training was conducted in Dhok and Dhirasar villages in Barmer district and Govindpura and Mansagar villages in Jodhpur district with the collaboration of ICRISAT, CAZRI and Gravis. Dr Shalander Kumar, Dr TK Bhati and Dr JC Tiwari guided the participants.

A total of 68 men and 12 women were trained. Liquid Dose was distributed free of cost to farmers for 725 plants in Barmer and Jodhpur sites.

Global Gender Study in Niger

As part of the Global Gender Study of Gender Norms, Agency and Agricultural Innovation (GGSGNAAI), a training course was conducted at ICRISAT-Niger. Dr Wenda Bauchspies, Gender Specialist, ICRISAT, conducted the training. Three pearl millet breeders, Tahirou Boye, Issa Karimou and Kadiatou Daouda will be involved in conducting surveys in villages associated with three farm unions in Niger.

This study is being conducted as a CGIAR system-wide initiative. The GGSGNAAI will generate in-depth understanding of how interaction between gender norms and capacities for agency in agricultural innovation shape agricultural development and natural resource management outcomes in CGIAR Research Program target regions.

Nominations Invited

Crawford Fund Fellowship

Nominations are invited for the Crawford Fund Fellowship which provides further training for an agricultural scientist whose work has shown potential.

Candidates should be below the age of 35.
Nominations must be made by two proposers, one of whom must be an Australian.

Closing Date: 30 April 2015.
Contact: Crawford@crawfordfund.org

Chinese Government Scholarship-Chinese University Program

Nominations are invited for scholarships for Master’s programs and Doctoral programs with the South China Agricultural University.

Closing Date: 15 April 2015

For details: www.csc.edu.cn/laihua or www.campuschina.org and click Application Online for International Students.
Welcome

**Dr Mathieu Ouedraogo**, a Burkinabe national, joined on 4 March at ICRISAT-Mali, as Scientist–Participatory Action Research. He will work for the Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) (CGIAR Research Program, West Africa Regional Program) as part of the Research Program - Resilient Dryland Systems. Mathieu has a PhD in Economics from the University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. He also holds an engineering degree in Agricultural Economics from the Hassan II Agronomic and Veterinary Institute, Morocco, and a master’s degree in Development and Environment from the University of Liège, Belgium.

Mathieu worked with ICRISAT as Visiting Scientist, CCAFS-West Africa, during July 2013 to December 2014. His key achievements included implementation with National Agricultural Research system teams the “Farms of Future” approach in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Senegal; analysis of CCAFS household baseline survey data for West Africa region; economic assessment on the use of seasonal climate forecasts in Burkina Faso and Senegal as well as mainstreaming of gender and social differentiation agenda in CCAFS research in West Africa.

**Dr Krista Isaacs**, an American national, joined on 11 March at ICRISAT-Mali as Post-Doctoral Fellow-Sorghum Plant Types and Adoption in the Sudan Savannah of West Africa, as part of the Research Program - Dryland Cereals. She will work on the ICRISAT-USAID Collaborative Project on “FARMSEM” (cropping systems).

Dr Isaacs recently acquired her PhD from the Michigan State University in Crop and Soil Sciences. She has a Master’s degree from MPS Cornell University (2007) in International Agriculture and Rural Development. She conducted participatory variety selection trials on-farm in Rwanda for common bean and maize intercropping systems and explored farmer perspectives on the ecosystem services provided by agro-biodiversity as part of her PhD dissertation. Her research interests included genotype by cropping system interactions, participatory research methodologies, the co-development of resilient cropping systems, and agriculture-nutrition pathways.

We welcome Dr Ouedraogo and Dr Issacs to Team ICRISAT and wish them all success.

Consultative meeting on enhancing exports of sorghum & seeds from India

The Agri-Business Incubation Program of AIP-ICRISAT is organizing a two-day consultative meet on developing a strategy and Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) proposal to enhance the export marketability of sorghum, sorghum products and seeds from India.

The workshop is being held during 17-18 March, at ICRISAT-India.

More information: [www.aipicrisat.org](http://www.aipicrisat.org)

Sad news

We are grieved to learn about the demise of Dr Charles Renard on 7 March. Dr Renard, a Belgian national, born on 12 August 1940, served ICRISAT during April 1985 - August 1996. Dr Renard joined ICRISAT as Principal Agronomist (Cropping Systems) at the ICRISAT Sahelian Center, Niamey. He was appointed as Executive Director of ICRISAT West African programs and Director of ICRISAT Sahelian Center Niamey from July 1992. He moved to ICRISAT-India in March 1994 on his appointment as Regional Executive Director, ICRISAT Asia Center. He was instrumental in building the ICRISAT research team and high quality international scientific collaborations in West Africa. His funeral took place in Grez-Doiceau, Belgium on 12 March.

Team ICRISAT expresses its deepest condolences to the family at this time of grief, and pray for his eternal repose.