PRiDe II NEWSLETTER

MAY 2022

OUR RICE OUR PRIDE

Message from the new Chief Advisor, PRiDe Project Phase 2

It is my pleasure to work for Rice Development in Uganda as a member of JICA Team in PRiDe II. Rice is increasingly becoming important as a food crop and also as diet in everyday life of Ugandan people. However, Uganda depends on imported rice around a half of its consumption, although efforts have been made for increased domestic production. Rice demand is expected to grow even larger in the future as dietary habits change and the population grows.

For the past forty years, I have been working with farmers in Africa, Asia and the Pacific Regions, particularly for rice. I started my career as a rice agronomist in the Lake Victoria basin in Kenya in 1982. I was assigned to a District Agriculture Office to help rice farmers grow both of lowland rice and upland rice. Lowland rice production was reasonably productive and stable under irrigation, but upland rice production was unstable. In those days, there were no upland rice varieties suitable for the African agro-environment. The same lowland rice varieties were planted in the uplands as planted in lowlands. The efforts to produce upland rice ended up to produce empty grains, because rainfall was not enough to sustain lowland rice under upland conditions.

The situation changed in the 1990s when NERICA rice varieties (New Rice for Africa) were released for Africa. It was an innovation that brought a technical breakthrough to rain-fed rice cultivation. While dissemination of NERICA remains as one of our major activities, PRiDe II has been working hard for rice research and extension in collaboration with MAAIF and NARO. We will keep you updated on the progress of our daily activities and the results achieved through this Newsletter!

14th PRiDe Management Meeting (PMM)

On 4th May, PRiDe II and its counterparts organized the 14th PMM at NaCRRI. The former and the new

PRiDe Chief Advisors attended the meeting to share the current progress of the Project and establish strong relationship with the counterparts in MAAIF and NARO.

Training of Trainers (TOTs)

The NaCRRI Training Unit organizes TOTs with the main objective to build capacity of extension workers and practical rice farmers in improved rice cultivation through provision of enhanced hands-on training including each stage of field work such as sowing seed, harvesting, and threshing in a short training period.

Through the TOTs for the Northern region (Abi and Ngetta ZARDIs) and Western region (Bulindi and Rwebitaba ZARDIs), Agricultural Officers and key farmers were equipped with improved rice cultivation techniques that they will disseminate to other rice farmers in their respective regions.

Mr. Bayega (Centre) explaining to the TOT participants (Northern Region) the lowland varieties trial plots at NaCRRI

During the TOT, PRiDe II had an opportunity to interact with Ms. Birungi RoseMary -AO Mabaale S/C, Kagadi District to comprehend status of rice cultivation in her working area.

What do you think are the benefits of the TOT to agricultural officers (AOs)?

1. To equip AOs with new techchologies from research which will be passed on to the farmers for increased production and productivity.
2. The TOT provided me with an opportunity to create a social network and interact with AOs from different areas for knowledge and exchange.

Do you think the rice technologies will be adopted in the villages?

Through the extension approach that promotes hands-on training utilizing demo-sites effectively, farmers will adopt the improved rice cultivation technologies.

What are the challenges you face and do you think the TOT has addressed some of them?

1. One of the challenges is “insufficient knowledge” on how to improve the low rice production at sub county level. This has been addressed by the provision of knowledge and skills with training posters.
2. Another challenge, “water shortage” results in low rice production. This has been addressed by training on water management and cropping calendar for rice production.

TOT participants who received certificates and training posters

The TOTs were completed successfully and at the end of the training each participant was given 3kg of rice seed (NERICA 4) for seed multiplication. Total 31 participants were also awarded with training certificates.

Research Activities

Rice blast disease is one of the most significant issues to bring low rice yields in Uganda.

PRiDe II has been carrying out various experiments on how to deal with the rice disease through use of chemicals (Carbendazim & Tebuconazole) and appropriate fertilizer application (Basal; NPK, Top-dress; UREA).

The purpose of the experiments is to evaluate the effectiveness of chemicals in controlling rice blast, to determine the appropriate timing, amount of chemical application required and to evaluate blast damage with varying amounts of fertilizer rates. Mr. Yoshino (PRiDe II - Expert) is analyzing the data and supposed to present beneficial countermeasures to handle the issue before the end of the Project.

Hand weeding in the rice blast chemical experiment field - Namulonge

ZARDIs are also proceeding monthly cultivation trials and other experiments under each different environment.

Left: Weeding in upland rice field – Ikulwe Station
Right: Dibbling for sowing seed – Rwebitaba ZARDI
Left below: Sowing seed in monthly trial plot – Abi ZARDI

Installation of bird nets in monthly trial plot – Bulindi ZARDI

Farmers welcome the MFS Approach

In 2022A season (1st rainy season), the Project set up 16 mother demo-sites to teach farmers improved rice cultivation techniques in 13 districts.

Musomesa Field School (MFS) in Ngege subcounty, Kween District started the seasonal training later than other demo-sites due to the weather condition. Farmers who participate in the MFS are thankful for sharing the beneficial techniques. The demo-site in Ngege will teach farmers to grow both lowland (WITA 9) and upland (NERICA 4) rice varieties. Most of the farmers in Ngege subcounty grow maize and are only familiar with lowland rice cultivation. Setting up a demo-site with the upland rice variety will enlighten farmers that the upland rice variety can also grow under the same conditions as maize.

The PRiDe team is hopeful that such diverse ways of rice cultivation will be adopted by the farmers in Ngege.

Sowing seed on the nursery beds at MFS in Ngege subcounty, Kween District

During the training of nursery bed making at the MFS, the farmers were given a poster training on the amount of rice seed required for the field and how to level the field.

In other MFS sites, seasonal training is proceeding smoothly and farmers are learning the importance of basal fertiliser and top-dressing to increase yield. PRiDe II recommends applying basal fertiliser 10-14 days after transplanting by using DAP (contains Phosphorus and Nitrogen) and UREA.

After basal fertilizer application, PRiDe II teaches farmers to carry out top-dressing (56-65 days after sowing). During the panicle initiation stage, UREA is applied for the rice plant to get nitrogen immediately and increase number of grains. In case UREA is not available, PRiDe II recommends any fertilizer with high nitrogen content.

Applying basal fertilizer at MFS in Kigandhalo S/C, Mayuge District

Applying basal fertilizer at MFS in Nawanyago S/C, Kamuli District

Applying Top-dressing at MFS in Bukiise S/C, Sironko District

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