

Seed Production and Gender Mainstreaming Training Workshops For SLARI Scientists and MAFFS Extension Personnel

In order to improve seed production and ensure the clear visibility and effective



RARC Director Dr. C S. Kamara

participation of women, men, boys and girls in the implementation of the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Programme (WAAPP), and more so in the cassava and rice value chains, the Programme (WAAPP) in collaboration with the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI) and other partners has successfully concluded Seed Production and Gender Mainstreaming Training Workshops for 20 and 54 SLARI Scientists and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS) extension personnel respectively in BO.

Speaking at the occasion, SLARI Acting Director General Professor Alpha Lakoh spoke about the importance of and

need for the two training courses, adding that it is to enhance their knowledge so as to ensure that the clients of his organization benefit from effective and efficient services they need. He however observed that while men are no doubt contributing to the development and promotion of the agricultural product value chain, others including women are not only overloaded but are still poor, unrecognized and even marginalized in terms of access to and control of resources.

“Therefore, If holistic development in the sector is to be attained, there is the dire need to examine their constraints, address the disturbing imbalance in a way that they can be empowered by focusing on and delivering to them pro poor development services”, he said.

WAAPP Deputy Coordinator Suleiman Sesay explained the role of WAAPP in capacitating SLARI so as to be able to come up with relevant technologies to develop and promote the cassava and rice products value chains, citing what it has continued to do in achieving this goal saying:

”Strengthening our research system, particularly also in producing and delivering good seeds for our farmers as well as efficiently handling rice and cassava value chains with sensitivity to gender issues and concerns will no doubt improve the productivity and production of actors in the two value chains, improve their standard of living as well as meaningfully contribute to the national economy”.



Cross section of Trainees of the Seed Training Workshop

In his contribution, SLARI Acting Director General Dr. Matthew Gboku reaffirmed the vital role of women and youth in agriculture. He added that too often the notions against them are largely stereotypes and unfounded, holding back the development of the sector. “They therefore need to catch up by giving them equal opportunity, training, decision making positions and resources”, he said.

Rokupr Agricultural Research Centre (RARC) Director Dr. Cherner S. Kamara noted that the use of good seeds is one important requirement for achieving the goal of national food security and moving away from subsistence to commercial farming. He however lamented that it is still an uphill task to make available to our farmers quality seeds as the sub sector has been proliferated by counterfeit seed producers. “You therefore need to be attentive and fully participate in this training workshop as you have the serious responsibility to train seed producers in selected rice hubs in the country”, he told the trainees.

Other speakers including representatives of the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs and the Mano River Union stressed the role and recognition of women, boys and girls in the development and promotion of the cassava and rice value chains in the implementation of WAAPP in Sierra Leone. It was shown that their backwardness is attributable to how they have been viewed by society over the years than the available facts. From this perspective, the trainees were urged to not only develop winnable proposals reflecting gender dimensions and issues for funding but to also sensitize and train those who hold and practice these negative views in a way that the trend can be reversed that will lead to holistic development of the agricultural sector.

The 20 SLARI Scientists and MAFFS Extension personnel on the seed production training course learned several issues during the duration of the 12 days training. These included understanding and managing the rice plant, seed production and conservation, seed systems; seed legislation, techniques of seed production, storage and conservation, economy of the seed sector as well as marketing.



Cross section of Trainees of the Seed Training Workshop

At the same time, the 54 SLARI scientists and MAFFS extension workers during the five days training on mainstreaming gender issues in the cassava and rice value chains learned among many others about the importance of gender mainstreaming in WAAPP activities ,understanding gender dynamics through relations and transformation, gender approach and legal frameworks; gender analysis and planning tools, gender mainstreaming in WAAPP activities, gender mainstreaming in WAAPP activities through the use of web of institutionalization.