



During his five days visit to some key stakeholders in the agriculture sector in Sierra Leone including President Koroma, Agriculture Minister Dr. Joseph Sam Sesay, Special Adviser to President Koroma and Ambassador at Large professor Monty Jones, Staff of the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI) and the Ministry of Trade and Industry, AfricaRice Director General (DG) Dr. Harold Roy-Macauley said that his institution has done a lot over the years about improving the productivity and production of rice on the continent of Africa, his tenure will therefore centrally focus on consolidating the gains made to meet respective national domestic needs of member states as well as export the excess.



Dr. Harold Roy-Macauley

He aptly described the importance of rice to the continent of Africa and some other parts in the world, adding that the position held by some people in Sierra Leone that it is now self-sufficient in rice production and the opposing view that for the fact that the country spends huge amount of needed foreign exchange to import rice, and therefore, it cannot be said to be self-sufficient as interesting and fascinating. "Whatever could be the merits of each of this view point, there is the urgent and strong need for coming together and work hard to consolidate the ground breaking gains made over the years by AfricaRice by efficiently utilizing them, increasing production and sustaining it", he told his listeners.

Dr. Roy-Macauley pointed at one effective way Sierra Leone can consolidate the gains of AfricaRice to meet its domestic need and outside its national boundary. "We now need to identify and work on the weak points in the rice value chain, and with resources becoming scarce, focus on priority areas", he disclosed. Further clarifying his point, he said that the country has up to five ecologies for growing rice, identifying and prioritizing the most suitable and productive ecology for investment could be far better than wasting limited resources on those that are not productive. In doing so, he added that for such development efforts to succeed, the environment has to be understood and dealt with including the socio-economic and political implications and ramifications. Concerning what AfricaRice will continue to do,

Dr. Roy-Macauley revealed that now that the Ebola scourge is over, AfricaRice Technical Team will soon be returning to provide backstopping to our rice production efforts, advocate for and secure funding for the development of the rice sub sector and an organization of an Africa Heads of State Rice Summit.

He listened to presentations on the activities of AfricaRice and the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Programme (WAAPP) at the Rokupr and Njala Agricultural Research Centres. He commended the efforts made and urged them to keep it up. On the low side, Dr. Roy-Macauley noted that research studies in themselves are not so much important. "Their true values lie in what they can do to help improve the quality of life of the target beneficiaries. He therefore admonished and encouraged them to link their research and development activities to policy direction and impact. "Decision makers can only appreciate and buy our ideas if we not only explain for instance, how many improved rice varieties we have released but how they can contribute to bringing home rice self-sufficiency and improving the standard of living of our compatriots as well as saving needed foreign exchange to meet other important areas for development", he said.

He however acknowledged that making significant impact that will bring better life for all can be daunting and a complex challenge, considering the weaknesses and constraints of other institutions in the sector. "But it is also the business of research to for example look into how their technologies are handled and why the gaps in achieving policy goals. Understanding these issues and sharing them can lead to collaborative efforts in addressing them, maintaining goodwill and support for your institution", he concluded.

SLARI Director General Dr. Joseph Kargbo described the visit as very useful in learning lessons in relating research activities to policy directions and impact. "To this end I will endeavor to improve support to our outreach stations and our communications Unit to provide visibility to our work as well as improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our scientists", Dr. Kargbo told his audience

