

Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Climate Resilient Cereals

In this edition:

Information about the External Advisory Council, a recap from the Sorghum Improvement Conference of North America, highlights from the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute, and more

WELCOME TO OUR

Monthly Newsletter

Thank you for reading the Climate Resilient Cereals Innovation Lab Newsletter. Each month, we'll bring you exciting updates from our consortium partners while spotlighting different cereals. We will report our monthly successes and recap recent activities while giving you a sneak peek into the upcoming programming across our teams. Stay connected and informed with our newsletter as we journey towards a more resilient future together.

Nepal Feed the Future Innovation Lab Council Regional Partners Meeting

Earlier this month, the Feed the Future Innovation Labs (ILs) gathered for their Regional Partners Meeting in Kathmandu, Nepal. This year's theme, "Translating Research to Action," prioritized localization and social inclusion for sustainable scaling of socio-technical innovations. A panel of leaders from Nepal and Bangladesh shared perspectives on the impact of women's leadership on agrifood systems. Other panels highlighted how ILs and national partners work to increase climate and economic resiliency in the food system. CRCIL Director Jagger Harvey chaired a panel on "Opportunities for Inclusive Engagement and Empowering Local Communities," where regional leaders exemplified why localization is critical for lasting solutions.

The four-day meeting concluded with discussions about key takeaways and future areas of focus.

- Alignment of interest with private-sector and policymakers
- Gender & Youth inclusion – bringing interest back to agriculture and ensuring equitable livelihoods
- Focus on consumers and intermediaries to better supply chain linkages
- Localization, South-South Collaboration
- Leveraging digital tools and mechanization



Director Jagger Harvey facilitates a panel "Opportunities for Inclusive Engagement and Empowering Local Communities – Regional Conversations"

Highlights from SICNA

Reed Middleton and Carolina Ballen-Taborda represented CRCIL at the Sorghum Improvement Conference of North America (SICNA). The conference is a space for the sorghum community to share knowledge and collaborate to leverage opportunities in the industry. Reed presented an overview of CRCIL, giving attendees a picture of our objectives, consortium approach, and Quick Win activities. Audience members were curious about upcoming Competitive Awards, capacity-building efforts, and plans for sorghum improvement throughout the life of the grant.



Carolina Ballen-Taborda, Clemson University and Reed Middleton, Kansas State University stand next to the CRCIL poster used at SICNA



Cornell University



College of Agriculture



Meet the External Advisory Council

The CRCIL External Advisory Council provides strategic guidance to the Management Entity and broader program. The EAC will further help the program adapt to new opportunities and challenges, in consultation with the program's Agreement Officer Representative at USAID.



BOB ZEIGLER, CHAIR

Dr. Robert ("Bob") Zeigler devoted his professional career to sustainably improving cereal production, primarily rice, in developing countries. Originally trained as a plant pathologist, he led increasingly complex multidisciplinary research programs in Africa, Latin America and Asia, culminating in his appointment as Director General of the International Rice Research Institute in 2005. Dr. Zeigler remains active, advising innovative startup companies launching technologies contributing to sustainable agriculture and low GHG emitting rice cultivation. He also actively engages with non-profit organizations working to improve the livelihoods of small holder farmers.



FETIEN ABAY-ABERA

Professor Fetien Abay-Abera is a plant breeding and seed expert and has been a professor at Mekelle University for over 30 years. She was the first female lecturer and the first female professor of Plant Breeding and Seed. During her years at Mekelle, Professor Abay-Abera served as Interim President and Research Vice President, making her the first female president of the university and only woman currently leading a public university.



ERIC DANQUAH

Eric Yirenyi Danquah holds a professorship in Plant Genetics at the University of Ghana (UG). He is a former Dean of International Programmes and a former Director of the Biotechnology Centre at UG. As the founding Director of the West Africa Centre for Crop Improvement (WACCI), UG, since 2007, he has been pivotal in training a new generation of plant breeders focused on enhancing staple crops for Africa.



JEFF EHLERS

Jeffrey Ehlers is a member of the Seed Science and Varietal Improvement team within the Crops R&D initiative at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. He obtained his PhD from the University of California, Davis in Genetics and Agronomy in 1984. His grant portfolio is focused on productivity growth of the foundations target grain legume, sorghum and millet crops.



SHOBA SIVASANKAR

Shoba Sivasankar has over 25 years of experience leading and managing international agricultural R&D programs. Most recently, she served at the United Nations as Head of Plant Breeding and Genetics at its Joint FAO/IAEA Centre of Nuclear Applications in Food and Agriculture. Prior to this, she was global Director for two CGIAR Research Programs, Dryland Cereals and Grain Legumes, and successfully led the design and merger of the two into a multimillion-dollar mega-programme involving eight international (CGIAR) centres.

Drought Awareness Month

In numerous states across the United States, May is designated as "Water Awareness Month." This recognition stems from the arrival of hot summer weather, which can bring temporary drought-like conditions to many regions of the country. Consequently, May is also acknowledged as "Drought Awareness Month," providing an opportunity to reflect on the challenges faced by those living in drought-affected areas, particularly in Africa, where such conditions are pervasive and unpredictable.

May serves as a poignant reminder of the reasons driving our efforts. It serves as a unifying force, bringing scientists together to address water-related challenges and making a meaningful difference in the world.



April 3 was the first monthly CRCIL All Partner Touch-Base meeting with representatives from across the consortium.

Bangladesh Rice Research Institute Visit

Twelve members of the Climate Resilient Cereals Innovation Lab (CRCIL) traveled to Dhaka, Bangladesh, to visit the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI). The hospitality was fabulous, and the content was even better. CRCIL Bangladesh PI, Dr. Iftekhar, and his team presented detailed information about rice, target product profiles, and priority climate resilience traits. The team toured several BRRI substations throughout the country to see the work being done on rice research. The CRCIL team rounded out the week with an opportunity to visit farmers across the country, and to hear their agriculture and rice needs.



Rice Fields at BRRI



Photos Left-Right

- Dr. Jomar Punzalan, Post Doc at Louisiana State University, examines rice in one of the BRRI Fields
- A rice farmer poses with part of her rice crop
- One of the farmers in Bangladesh asks a question to the Director General of BRRI and the CRCIL Team
- The CRCIL and BRRI teams posed for a photo in front of the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute in April.

Do you have a recipe that features Sorghum?

Send the recipe and photo of the finished product for publication in June.

Meet the Management Entity



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DIRECTOR

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ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

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