The Second Africa Rice Congress was held in Bamako, Mali, from 22 to 26 Mar. 2010 under the aegis of the Malian government. It was co-organized by the Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice) and the Institut d’économie rurale (IER) with the theme “Innovation and Partnerships to Realize Africa’s Rice Potential.” The high profile of the Congress is demonstrated by the fact that it was opened by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mali, Dr. Modibo Sidibé, on behalf of the President, His Excellency M. Amadou Toumani Touré.

Over 500 participants were drawn from international and national rice research and extension communities, NGOs, development partners, the donor community, African agriculture ministries, rice farmers, seed producers, rice processors, input dealers, and agricultural machinery manufacturers.

The business of the Congress comprised:

- Three keynote papers—on seed systems, crop and natural resources management and climate change, and rice value-chain development
- A roundtable discussion on opportunities and challenges to investing in Africa’s rice sector
- Six parallel sessions with nearly 60 research papers, including:
  - Rice genetic diversity and improvement
  - Ecological intensification and diversification in rice-based systems
  - Developing competitive rice value chains
  - New alliances and tools for rural learning and innovation and policy implications
  - Integrated management of pests, diseases, and weeds in rice-based systems
  - Rice physiology and modeling
- Over 100 posters
- Discussion to help develop a rice research strategy for Africa in a global context

The Congress provided a broad overview of the state of play in rice research in and for Africa just 2 yr after the food-price crisis had swept the world, providing an opportunity to consolidate the gains made in many African countries, including strengthening of partnerships. Strong participation from African countries demonstrated how serious they are in increasing rice production and averting another crisis. (For details of the response of AfricaRice and its partners to the crisis and progress made to 2010, see AfricaRice [2011b]).

The Congress made 11 concrete recommendations for realizing Africa’s rice potential. These recommendations included the need for investment in the rice sector, in particular in capacity building and implementation of policies to modernize farming, lessen the burden on women, and turn rice farming into a viable agribusiness attractive to young people; a call for a ‘Marshall Plan’ to substantially strengthen training and retention of staff, and update agricultural curricula in vocational schools and universities; and a call for integrated management of pests, diseases, and weeds in rice-based systems.