



Second CARI-BRIA Exchange Visit on Rice Value Chain in Thailand



Rice is one of the leading food crops in the world, representing not only a vital part of the individual's nutrition in everyday life, but also a great revenue potential for Asian as well as African economies as a whole. Although great efforts have been made to strengthen African rice production in order to meet domestic demand and increase farmers' revenues, there is room for improvement in terms of strategic investments in research and development, production and trade infrastructure.

The programme “**Competitive African Rice Initiative**” (CARI) realised that the Asian know-how in producing, trading and setting policies can be valuable benchmarks for fighting deficiencies in the African rice industry. Known as the world's top rice exporter, Thailand serves as role model. Therefore, a cross-continental learning exchange was established in 2016, a collaboration between CARI and BRIA. This year's second exchange visit between BRIA and CARI partners from Nigeria, Ghana, Burkina Faso and Tanzania took place from 21– 25 August 2017 across different provinces in Thailand.



The main objective of the exchange was to provide participants with insights and thus a better understanding of the Thai rice value chain and its stakeholders. Consequently, participants from four West and East African CARI countries were given guided tours and extensive discussion time at several locations, from which four can especially be highlighted:

The first stop of the exchange led to **Klang Community Rice Centre** in Ubon Ratchathani province, which works together with Olam in order to improve their rice production based on the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) standard. The visit to this community-based farmers' association gave the opportunity to discuss challenges and recommendations concerning rice farming practices, post-harvest techniques and packaging as well as the management and organisation of the farmers' group, highly relevant topics for the visitors from Africa.

At **Raitong Organics Farm Co. Ltd.**, an organic rice farm in Sisaket province, discussions centred on topics of organic farming processes (from land preparation up to marketing level), innovative technologies and trials such as biological weeds management, and processes of packaging materials and quality control. Even though there might not yet be a large market for organic rice in African countries, the holistic concept of the farm, run as a social business, was surely inspiring and might hold large potentials for the future.



The visit to **Ubon Ratchathani Rice Research Centre** gave insight into the key rice varieties and consumer preferences in Thailand. The participants learnt about challenges related to rice production, plant protection and therewith the importance of the rice research. The research centre has more than 1,000 genes in its gene bank, allowing continuous improvement of seeds and their resistance to pests and diseases, which is crucial for the support of farmers as well as Thailand's rice brand. Current research areas include rice genetic and variety selection, seed technology, biotechnology, soil fertility and natural resource management, important topics that help address upcoming challenges.

Thai Jasmine rice is very well known across the world. At the **Office of Commodity Standards**, Ministry of Commerce, the group learnt about the Jasmine rice quality standards, classification schemes, quality assurance and certification in accordance with Thai law. Even though the majority of participants work in the private sector, they acknowledged the importance and benefit of government involvement and regulations in respect to commodity standards. They not only hold restrictions and additional responsibilities for companies, but also support the creation of brands as well as hold additional employment opportunities, an aspect with high importance for the African continent.

The experience of this field visit has been extremely rewarding and appreciated by all participants. By learning more about rice cultivation in Thailand and exchanging with different organisations along the Thai rice value chain, ideas and expressions were gained, which left the participants optimistic in being able to improve rice production processes in their home countries. BRIA and CARI are looking forward to continuing the cooperation and support of mutual learning and knowledge exchange in the future.

The CARI-BRIA Exchange Visit took the participants to the following eight locations:

Places	Objectives
Klang Community Rice Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation and management of farmer group • Exchanging information on challenges and recommended practices
Office of Commodity Standards, Ministry of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jasmine rice standards, quality assurance and certification • Function of the organisation and policies • Other Thai rice standards in development
Olam (Thailand) Ltd.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trends of Thai Rice and African Rice • Observing processing, storage, packaging and marketing
Raitong Organics Farm Co. Ltd.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and farm management • Moving up the value chain • Marketing and challenges
Rice Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies related to rice production, including sustainable rice production • Rice zoning strategies and support • History of policy support and implementation
Ruangchai Tractor Co. Ltd.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing market of agricultural machinery in Thailand • Financial package
Ubon Ratchathani Rice Research Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key rice varieties in Thailand, consumer preferences of these varieties, suitable areas for cultivation, seasons • Function of rice research, achievements and current activities • Visiting the laboratory
Ying Paiboon Rice Mill Co. Ltd.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buying mechanisms and rice grading • Milling and storage for good quality rice



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