



*Prosperity for the Poor,
Health for All*

Our mission

To alleviate poverty and malnutrition in the developing world through the increased production and consumption of safe vegetables.

Our strategy at the Regional Center for Africa

The vegetable sector in sub-Saharan Africa is severely underdeveloped and vegetable consumption is extremely low. In the region's diverse agroclimatic zones, there is enormous potential to produce numerous vegetable crops for both domestic and international markets. AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center, through its Regional Center for Africa (RCA) in Tanzania and sub-regional office in Mali and country offices in Cameroon and Madagascar, focuses on developing appropriate vegetable varieties and vegetable seed production systems for Africa. We train staff of national agricultural research and extension systems (NARES), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private seed sector, progressive farmers and community leaders, promote indigenous and exotic vegetables, and strive to improve small-scale seed production and supply systems. In West Africa there is an emphasis on integrating vegetables into Sahelian cropping systems.

Research

The Regional Center for Africa conducts research on indigenous and exotic vegetable crops strategically important in the major regions of Africa, and on vegetables particular to AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center's mandate, such as tomato, pepper, eggplant, onion, shallot, garlic, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, vegetable soybean, and mungbean.

Research at the Regional Center aims to enhance the genetic potential of the mandate crops, and to develop technology packages to maximize vegetable production and use. Protecting the environment and land use in areas where vegetables are grown and improving the incomes of the people who grow them are key aspects of our research work. The Regional Center for Africa carries out activities to develop resistant varieties and strengthen vegetable seed systems in sub-Saharan Africa.

AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center has a joint outreach vegetable breeding project office at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in Niamey, Niger, where it contributes to ICRISAT's crops and systems diversification program for poverty alleviation in the region, including an okra breeding project.

Technology dissemination

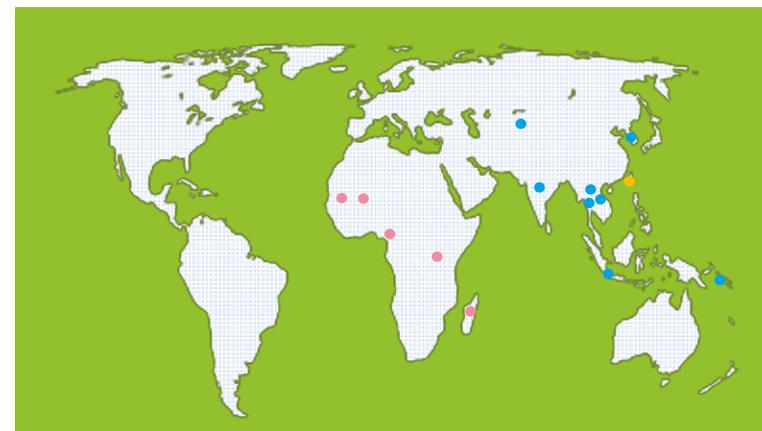
In close collaboration with NARES, NGOs and the private sector, the Regional Center for Africa promotes vegetable research and development and seeks out solutions to the problems of vegetable production and use in sub-Saharan Africa. Technology dissemination plays an important role, as do initiatives to build capacity, such as training courses or field days.

Training

The Regional Center for Africa regularly conducts several training courses on vegetable production systems for the benefit of researchers and extension specialists working with NARES, NGOs, progressive farmers and the private sector in sub-Saharan Africa.

Four-month-long and short-term skills oriented courses are organized from time to time. In-country training courses of three weeks on need-based topics mutually identified by African NARES, sponsors and the Regional Center for Africa are also conducted for vegetable researchers and extension specialists.

Opportunities are available for research internships, postgraduate thesis research, and postdoctoral placements in agronomy, production, breeding, crop protection, and other topics. The aim is to enhance the capacity of staff working with NARES, NGOs, and the private sector in Africa to carry out vegetable research and development programs.



Some highlights

Strengthening the African vegetable seed sector

Smallholder farmers need access to high quality supplies of indigenous and exotic vegetable seeds at affordable prices, and the local seed sector is their main source of supply. The Center has established hubs in Tanzania, Madagascar, Cameroon, and Mali to train, supply, and strengthen the local seed sectors in neighboring countries. In a major project more than 100 new indigenous and exotic vegetable varieties suited to African conditions are being developed and released, and small African seed companies strengthened to take over the task of providing a sustainable supply of seed to farmers across the continent.

Developing technologies for West African vegetable production

The Sahel contains some of the poorest countries on Earth, and there is a major need to provide extra sources of income for farmers and improved options for nutrition. Onion is an important crop in the region and a valuable export from Niger. Improved lines with better keeping qualities and higher yields are being selected and seed supplies increased. Africa is the world's leading producer of okra, an important ingredient in many traditional dishes. Okra lines are being collected, evaluated, and improved for regional release. African indigenous vegetables are important sources of nutrition, especially for the poor; opportunities for improving insect resistance and processing are being investigated.

Disease resistant, nutritious tomatoes

Tomatoes are an important vegetable crop in Africa, providing a good source of income for smallholder farmers and an important source of vitamin A. They are particularly suited to the highlands of Eastern and Southern Africa. New lines developed by the Center in Tanzania have increased national production by 40%, leading to major improvements in the lives of farmers and national self-sufficiency. Crops face many disease problems, particularly when grown in the more humid lowlands. Tomato lines are being screened and tested for resistance to both pests and diseases, including thrips, whitefly and fruitworm, bacterial wilt, phytophthora leaf blight, tospoviruses and geminiviruses. In addition, well-adapted lines of tomato with high levels of beta-carotene and lycopene are being selected to improve the nutritional quality of African tomatoes to help overcome widespread vitamin A deficiencies.

About the Center

AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center is the world's leading international, not-for-profit institute for vegetable research and development. Founded in 1971, the Center develops vegetable varieties and other technologies to increase vegetable production and consumption in developing countries, leading to more income opportunities and healthier diets for the poor.

The Regional Center for Africa (RCA) started in 1992 in Arusha, northern Tanzania. Located adjoining the Horticultural Research and Training Institute of Tanzania, the Regional Center has facilities for research and on-campus training courses. In 2003 the Regional Center expanded into West Africa, with a sub-regional office in Mali and an outreach station in Niger. The Center now partners with over 40 national institutions in Africa and many international organizations. RCA established offices in Cameroon and Madagascar in 2007 and now partners with over 40 national institutions in Africa and many international organizations.



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