The Irrigated Rice Research Consortium (IRRC) held its third annual steering committee meeting in Hanoi, Vietnam, from 8th to 10th October recently. The meeting’s agenda was to review the progress of the IRRC, and consider future needs and priorities for natural resource management in the lowland intensive rice production areas. Organized by IRRI and the Vietnamese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (VAAS), the meeting coincided with the start of a two-week external review of the IRRC.

His Excellency Dr Dao Xuan Hoc, vice minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) Vietnam, officially welcomed the 66 participants from 13 countries who graced the opening session. He mentioned that Vietnam is looking forward to strengthening its collaborative relationship with IRRC scientists to assist the country in tackling emerging issues that need a sustained investment in research on natural resource management of rice production systems. Methods are also needed to deliver the outputs of this research in a timely manner to smallholder farmers. Dr Dao emphasized that the IRRC will continue to be an important partner of MARD for many years to come.

Distinguished guests attending the consortium included Dr Walter Meyer (head of East Asia Division, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation [SDC], Switzerland); Dr Michel Evequoz (SDC Hanoi); Dr Carmen Thönnissen (Program Manager of SDC); Mr Geoff Morris (ACIAR Country Manager, Vietnam); Dr Christian Witt (director, Southeast Asia Program, International Plant Nutrition Institute, Singapore); and Dr TP Tuong (deputy director general of IRRI).

The IRRC, with major support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, promotes and sustains partnerships...
between national agricultural research and extension systems and the International Rice Research Institute to help farmers achieve increased profitability, food security, and environmental sustainability. The IRRC operates in the Philippines, Bangladesh, China, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam.

For the past 10 years, the IRRC has worked with Vietnamese partners, mainly from VAAS institutes. The research, chiefly in farmers' fields, with the strong involvement of farmer communes, has shown that farmers can increase production by as much as 15% through better timing and a more balanced use of fertilizers. Also, farmers are able to reduce their water usage by 15%–20% in the dry season and still maintain their rice yields.