



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Mali and FAO

Building resilience and sustainable food and nutrition security

FAO has had a permanent presence in Mali since opening a country representation in 1979. Assistance has spanned the food and agriculture sector, comprising support to key policies and strategies as well as technical development and capacity building. As a result of food crises and civil strife – compounded by climatic disasters – recent cooperation has focused on emergency and rehabilitation assistance. Interventions aim to achieve food security and resilient rural livelihoods by transforming agriculture into a productive sector of the Malian economy.

Supporting climate resilience in agriculture

The urgent need for strategies supporting risk management, resilience and adaptation to the effects of climate change is a challenge for sustainable agricultural development in Mali – a large country of the Sahel, with diverse agro-ecological systems and a fast-growing and predominantly rural population.

A recent FAO project has been successful in building a good understanding of climate change issues and promoting the adoption of climate change adaptation practices among producers. Aimed at (and entitled) Integrating Climate Resilience in Agricultural Production for Food Security in Rural Areas of Mali, the project has contributed significantly to strengthening the technical knowledge and capacities of men and women farmers in adaptation to climate change. Thanks to adoption of the farmer field school approach, farmers have acquired knowledge of good practices, which they now replicate on their own farms. They have also gone on to share their new knowledge and experiences with other producers, leading to broader dissemination of good practices in their communities and villages.

The intervention has also been effective in ensuring consideration of climate change issues in rural development programmes and policies. Successful lobbying activities, targeting political and technical authorities, have led to positive developments in local policies and practices. For example, the application of a “climate proofing” tool, is helping officials to mainstream climate change in their local programmes.

Project activities contribute directly to FAO's Strategic Objective 2 – Making agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable.

Matching FAO's expertise to Mali's development priorities

FAO assistance in Mali is shaped by the 2013-2017 FAO Country Programming Framework (CPF), which centres on three priority areas:

- **Support to agricultural production, competitiveness and food security**, with a focus on the intensification and diversification of production and increased opportunities for income-generation in the private sector. Increased productivity is to be achieved by adopting a value chain approach based on improved technologies, institutions and policies, from the supply of inputs to agribusiness and agro-processing support. Priority will be given to security of tenure for smallholders.
- **Sustainable natural resource management and environmental improvement**, with a focus on mechanisms for climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as resilience and restoration of natural resources. Activities will include obsolete pesticide management and sustainable development and protection of local livestock breeds and production systems.
- **Disaster risk reduction and management, and strengthened resilience of vulnerable population groups affected by food and nutrition crises and conflict**, including rebuilding destroyed production capacity and infrastructure, and helping crisis-affected populations to resume agricultural production and marketing. This priority area includes building up both food and feed stocks, particularly cereal banks, and strengthening resilience and capacities of producers as well as institutions.

Jointly developed with the Government and other development partners, the CPF reflects relevant priorities in key national development policies, in particular the **National Investment Programme for the Agriculture Sector**. The CPF is also aligned with the UN Development Assistance Framework for Mali.

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Sustainable income generating rice-fish production

The project, Validation and Dissemination of Integrated Rice-Fish Production Using the Farmer Field School Approach in Mali” has contributed significantly to the promotion of integrated aquaculture as a sustainable income-generating activity. It has likewise been promoted to complement local fisheries production as a means of increasing the availability of fish as a source of food.

Well over 1 000 farmers have been trained in the 54 farmers field schools set up by the project. A team of extension agents and officers have also been sensitized to the approach.

Related training integrates innovative practices, not only including integrated rice-fish production but also integrated management of soil fertility and the restoration and diversification of production systems. Alternatives to chemical pesticides, for example bio pesticides and the use of natural enemies to fight crop pests, have also been disseminated through the field schools.



Given the encouraging results, the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries of Mali has considered the possibility of validating and disseminating similar integrated strategies, using the farmer field School methodology. A national integrated aquaculture development programme has been formulated for this purpose.

Farmer field schools offer the opportunity for producers to “learn by doing”. They are directly involved in technical trials, discussions and decision-making processes. Farmers can then analyse their own practices and identify solutions adapted to their environment and their specific needs.

Following the adoption of integrated rice-fish production systems, rice production has increased while farmers and their families have generated additional income. This has in turn improved their food and nutrition security.

Great Green Wall for the Sahel

Mali is participating in the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative, which aims to address the detrimental impacts of land degradation and desertification in the region. The innovative initiative combines livestock, agriculture, food and nutrition security and social services with reforestation efforts – the objective being to improve living conditions and resilience of livelihoods as well as natural systems.

“We need to transform our food systems to meet the challenge of ensuring food security and sustainability.”

José Graziano da Silva
FAO Director-General

FAO is collaborating with the Environment, Water and Sanitation Ministry and National Directorate for Water and Forests in the preparation of a proposal for Great Green Wall activities in Mali. Under the same initiative, FAO is also supporting a cross-border project involving Mali, Burkina Faso and the Niger.

Global knowledge transfer

Horizontal exchanges under South-South Cooperation arrangements have proved to be an effective and popular means of implementing appropriate sustainable development solutions in partner countries.

Mali and Morocco recently signed an agreement under FAO’s South-South Cooperation framework, providing for the sharing of Moroccan agricultural expertise in Mali. Programme plans include training of livestock experts and activities aimed at increasing access to improved seeds. Technical assistance is also envisaged in the area of “agropoles”, a centrepiece of rural and peri-urban agricultural development in Mali. The purpose of the country’s agropole initiative is to accelerate modernization and transformation of the agricultural sector by supporting new forms of agribusiness, commercialization of family farming activities, and partnerships with agro-industries.

