



Women in Mandela village work together in a community garden and tree nursery, where they harvest their own fruit and vegetables, and learn how to improve soil fertility, increase water retention and add valuable yields. *Photo by Michael Stulman/CRS*

CRS in Agricultural Livelihoods

SUSTAINABLY STRENGTHENING SMALLHOLDER PRODUCTION AND MARKET ACCESS

Underlying all of CRS' agricultural programming worldwide is its commitment to providing a pathway to prosperity for millions of rural households. In Mali, this commitment translates into CRS' support of smallholder farmers to help them organize themselves into highly functional farmer cooperatives, adopt diversified production strategies and improve their livelihoods and nutritional status.

CRS' agricultural programming serves as a driving force connecting research, local government extension agents, and farmer associations. CRS collaborates with national and international research institutes to broadly disseminate innovations to farmer associations by working directly with local branches of the Government of Mali's technical services. With this approach, CRS introduces farmers to new technologies, crop varieties and techniques that are adapted to their agroecological conditions while strengthening government structures from the ground up. CRS works closely with the Regional Directorate of Agriculture, or DRA, on all its agricultural projects and has recently expanded its partnership to include the Regional Directorate of Production and Animal Industry, or DRPIA, and the Regional Directorate of Veterinary Services. Improving the quality of government services and restoring people's faith in them is a core component of CRS' approach, especially during the prolonged period of insecurity in the country.

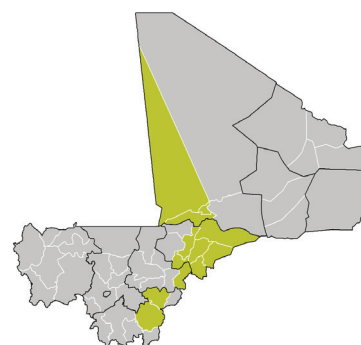
TOTAL VALUE OF CRS 2016
AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMMING

\$2.01 million

NUMBER OF PEOPLE
REACHED DIRECTLY IN 2016
BY AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS

43,840

CRS MALI AGRICULTURE
PROGRAMMING AREAS



Disseminating best practices and latest innovations

Farmers need to maximize production to make it through the year with enough to eat. CRS introduces farmers to the latest agricultural technologies (including climate-smart practices and drought-tolerant crop varieties) and organizes them into training groups that enable these technologies to cascade down to the most remote farmers. Working with extension agents from the DRA and the DRPIA, CRS reinforces the capacity of lead farmers, who then disseminate these technologies on a large scale to other producers. CRS' innovative use of electronic tablets and video projectors has been key to enabling these projects to reach a wide audience.

CRS has reached more than 43,000 farmers and producers through its collaboration with 4 of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) research centers on several USAID-funded Feed the Future projects in the Mopti, Sikasso, Segou, and Timbuktu regions. Farmers working with CRS in the Africa Rising Large-Scale Diffusion of Technologies for Sorghum and Millet Systems project have adopted seed treatments, improved varieties, hybrids, microdosing fertilizer, new composting techniques and intercropping. By employing these technologies, farmers have improved their yields (on average) from 572 to 1,210 kg¹ per hectare for sorghum, and from 910 to 1,174 kg² per hectare for millet. The increased yields have translated into overall positive impacts for the farmers and their households. For example, Afou Ouattr, a lead farmer in Mopti, harvested 1,800 kg of sorghum in 2016. She stored 800 kg for her family's annual food consumption and sold the remaining 1,000 kg to help buy a draught animal.

1. 1,261 to 2,667 pounds
2. 2,006 to 2,588 pounds

OUR WORK IN MALI

Placing partnership at the core of our programming, CRS works closely with counterparts in relevant Government of Mali ministries at the national, regional and district levels, as well as with local civil society partners in nearly every program. Working in Mali since 1999, CRS has proven experience coordinating complex, multi-stakeholder emergency and development projects, and has established offices in Bamako, Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao, and programming in all regions of the country, except Kidal.



By using the latest agricultural technologies, farmers improved their sorghum yields by more than 100 percent. Photo by Michael Stulman/CRS

Creating inclusive value chains

With funding from the World Food Program and Purchase for Progress, CRS provides production and leadership training to almost 1,200 farmers and has guided them in organizing into successful cooperatives. The Logo/Bankass Cooperative in Mopti has increased its sales exponentially—from 28.7 metric tons of millet in 2009 to 70 metric tons in 2016 (143 percent) and from 1.1 metric tons of cowpea in 2010 to 100 metric tons in 2016. The same cooperative also mobilized over 5 million CFA francs in 2017 to buy 30 metric tons of fertilizer to cover 345 hectares of millet and cowpea production.

Commitment to authentic farmer participation

CRS implements livelihoods projects that are identified by farmers and empower them to direct resources as they see fit. With private resources, CRS enabled five farmer associations to establish fertilizer credit unions. These lend fertilizer to their members at the start of the rainy season, and the members repay in millet, with interest, after the harvest. Unions then sell the millet when the price is high, and use the proceeds to buy more fertilizer the next season. This simple, locally managed structure provides members with access to expensive inputs, unions with profits earned from member loans, and communities with increased savings capacity to mitigate shocks and stresses.

Establishing private service providers

CRS' poultry field research has showed that smallholders raise chickens to stabilize consumption during the lean season but that their flocks are decimated by disease, particularly the Newcastle virus. Collaborating with the Regional Directorate of Veterinary Services, CRS used private funds to improve backyard poultry production by training village-level vaccinators to provide a suite of poultry health services, and training smallholders to be more educated clients of veterinary services. The project employs a private service provider, or PSP, model to ensure long-term accessibility of reliable veterinary services in remote villages. By studying the effectiveness of a village-level PSP model, CRS is building knowledge on market-driven delivery mechanisms that reduce production risks and increase smallholder resilience.

