



SUCCESS STORY

Digging Delectable Dogon Shallots

USAID's Global Food Security Response increases quality of Mali's agricultural products.



Shallot processors from the Dogon Plateau display their new processing equipment provided by USAID. The use of a mechanized crusher has not only reduced processing time, but also changed the drying process altogether, which improved shelf life and quality of their dried shallots.

In 2009, an integrated approach, involving improved inputs, new storage facilities, and new processing equipment led to increased competitiveness of Dogon Plateau shallots. Per hectare revenues increased from \$10,700 to \$21,300.

Photo by Mairoumatou Touré, Abt Associates, Inc.

Along Mali's Dogon Plateau, farmers are digging up their shallots and buyers in local and sub-regional markets are digging their quality. With an integrated package of assistance provided by USAID's Global Food Security Response (GFSR), farmers and processors are learning new techniques to increase productivity and quality. In 2009, this assistance increased production by 27%, boosted revenues by 150%, and increased competitiveness of the Dogon shallot in the marketplace.

A year prior, Malian shallots faced a difficult future in sub-regional markets. Yields for the past 6 years stagnated from inattentiveness to the shallot's particular growing requirements. Fresh shallots spoiled easily and processed shallots would get moldy—turn-offs for most buyers. USAID/Mali's Integrated Initiatives for Economic Growth program (IICEM) saw potential in shallots, however, and worked with cooperatives, local NGOs, and other donors to launch a comprehensive plan to improve shallot competitiveness.

With funding from GFSR, IICEM partners tackled strategic points across the value chain. Shallot producers now use appropriate fertilizer and application techniques that increase harvests. They store shallots and seed reserves in improved storage facilities, which keep the shallots more hygienically preserved and give sellers the luxury of waiting for the most advantageous prices. Women use a new drying process and new, simple machines to process up to 1 ton per hour, improving on the old, hand-processing method that would yield 50 kilograms after a day's work and lead to quick spoilage.

Along the Dogon Plateau, 1955 cooperative members benefit from USAID's shallot initiatives (1454 women). At the end of the 2009 season, IICEM and USAID's regional trade program sent a handful of these women to an agro-foods fair in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. As testimony to the efforts in quality improvement over the past year, the Dogon women won a \$1700 first prize for their quality dried shallots. One female shallot processor from Bandiagara left the fair with an order for 25 tons of the celebrated shallot, proving that the future in shallots is bright.