



AVRDC

The World Vegetable Center

Improving Vegetable Production and Consumption in Mali, Phase II

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1. Introduction

This monthly Feed the Future (FtF) report describes the current and up-coming activities conducted during the period from 1-31 March 2014. It focuses on consultations/visits and major events that have occurred during this period. It also highlights outstanding achievements for the reporting period in the phase II of the project "Improving Vegetable Production and Consumption in Mali (Sikasso)".

2. Current and up-coming consultations/visitors

Under the sponsorship of His Excellency the Governor of the Sikasso region of Mali, a field day was organized on 17th March 2014 in the village of Sokourani, one of the AVRDC's four Best Practice Hubs (BPHs), located between the districts of Sikasso and Koutiala. In addition, a team of AVRDCcollaborators from the University for Development Studies (UDS), Tamale, Ghana comprising of Dr Yakubu Issaka Balma and Prof. George Nyarko visited two AVRDC demonstration sites (Sokourani and Molobala) in the Sikasso region from 27 to 28 March 2014. The purpose of this visit was to share the experience of the AVRDC team in Mali in the approach of BPHs and also to build synergies with another USAID funded project – Africa RISING Sudano Sahel project which covers Mali and Ghana

3. Current key activities and events of the reporting period

3.1 Key activities

The activities carried out during the reporting period include:

- Monitoring on-station and on-farm trials for generation of improved technologies in vegetable production as well as seed production.
- Continuation of extension of the project benefits and lessons to other FtF community recipients in the Sikasso region, notably in Bougouni and Kadiolo districts (training of farmers in the new technologies of vegetable production such as composting, establishment of improved techniques of nursery, plant protection).
- As the water issue for irrigation became more and more a major constraint, increasing the depth of existing wells to meet the water table has proved to be a necessity in all the sites.
- Training of 46 local seed producers comprising of 18 women and 28 men in order to satisfy availability of good quality seed around the sites of Molobala, Soukourani, Finkolo and Blédougou.
- Preparing and holding a regional field day in 17 March 2014.
- Awareness creation on environmental mitigation issues among the project beneficiaries in compliance with USAID requirements.
- Harvesting all of vegetable species tested in the gardens and collecting data on production, quality of fruits or leaves.

3.2 Events

As the impact of AVRDC's intervention is becoming more and more visible, the local authorities and technical partners expressed their interest to visit AVRDC's activities carried out in the region. In this perspective, a field day was organized on 17 March 2014 in the village of Sokourani. The participants consisted of direct and indirect AVRDC collaborators such as regional and local authorities and agricultural and health representatives. It aimed to enable the larger public to better understand AVRDC's intervention strategies on the ground to increasing good quality vegetable production and how important it is to promote its consumption.

The Governor of the Sikasso region, accompanied by a large delegation composed of local administrative and municipal authorities, representatives of national and regional agricultural research and development services, NGOs, farmers' organization representatives, national media and a large representative of farmers from Sokourani and the satellite villages attended the event.

After the welcoming address from the Chief of Sokourani village, the Mayor of Kouoro Barrage and the representative of AVRDC's Regional Director for West and Central Africa, the Governor's speech focused on the action of AVRDC through vegetable promotion in order to increase farmers' income and improve dietary diversification and health. The field visit started by presentation of the experiment design of the BPH of Sokourani [i.e., similar to the four other Hubs located in Molobala (Koninguié commune), Blédougou (Domba commune) and Finkolo Ganadougou (Finkolo commune)]. The experimental design consisted of a combination of four different types of irrigation in each hub, of which three varieties of five vegetable species are being tested. The participants appreciated the outcomes from the BPH in terms of performances of improved vegetable varieties developed by AVRDC, irrigation systems and mulching.

After the field visit, women of Sokourni who had received training by the project demonstrated two postharvest handling techniques, including tomato juice extraction and conservation of fresh vegetables using double canaries system. This system consists of putting a small canary in a bigger one, and putting moistened sand between the two canaries. Vegetables can be stored in the little canary for around 2 - 3 weeks without rotting through the freshness provided by the moistened sand. Tomato juice can be stored in sterilized bottles for over 6 months while fresh vegetable can be kept for between 2 – 3 weeks after harvesting. The newly built training center of Sokourani site was visited by the participants. The visit ended with the testimonies of three farmers including one woman and two men on the positive impact of the project intervention in their villages that has improved their vegetable production systems and created awareness on the nutritional importance of vegetable consumption.

4. Upcoming activities and events of the forthcoming reporting period

4.1 Activities

The key activities for the upcoming period of reporting are mainly:

- Pursuing the extension of the project benefits and lessons to beneficiaries of other FtF communities in the Sikasso region notably in Bougouni and Kadiolo districts (training farmers in the new technologies of vegetable production).
- Monitoring the project activities around the HUBs and in Bougouni and Sikasso.
- Monitoring seed production fields in the demonstration sites and supervising the activities of the seed companies engaged in vegetable seed production through contracts with AVRDC.
- Collecting FtF indicator data on areas under improved technologies or management practices, farmers and organizations and their members receiving and applying improved technologies or management practices.
- Pursuing harvest of vegetable species tested in the gardens and collecting data on production, plant protection.
- Pursuing awareness creation activities on the environmental mitigation issues among the project beneficiaries in compliance with USAID requirements.

4.2 Events

No specific events are expected in the next thirty days.