

Sorghum Technology and Marketing Strategies Increase Farm Income in West Africa

The INTSORMIL Production-Marketing Project with support from the USAID Africa's regional program collaborated with national programs, local NGOs and farmers' organizations to introduce new technology and marketing strategies for sorghum farmers in Mali, Niger and Senegal. The project involved 300 ha of sorghum and worked with approximately 400 sorghum producers in the three countries. The three component program consisted of (1) a technology component aimed at increasing output through the use of improved technologies (the combination an improved variety, inorganic fertilizers, water harvesting techniques and other agronomic improvements), (2) a marketing component aimed at getting a price premium for grain quality and taking advantage of the price recovery later in the year by not selling at harvest and (3) a capacity building component to develop farmers' associations into viable marketing organizations (see field day photo).

Farmers in this project made income gains from both yield and price increase. Sorghum yields of 118 project farmers in Gabi, Niger increased 428% (2.14 t/ha) over traditional farmer average yields (0.5 t/ha). Price increases due to the marketing strategy were 56% in Niger, 55% in Senegal and 31% in Mali.



Total income gain increased due to the higher sorghum yields achieved (due to technology) and the higher prices received (due to marketing strategies). The average total income gain was 179% in Gabi, Niger with 92% due to technology and 87% due to price effects (marketing strategy). Total income gain for the best farmers (correctly applied the technology and had good field management) in Gabi was an exceptional 445%. Total income gain in Senegal was 58% with the best farmers getting 196%, and in Mali, 43% with the best farmers gaining 121%.



The Production-Marketing Project provides feedback to scientists to assist them in developing more effective technologies. For example, the introduction of shorter stature, higher yielding grain varieties, such as the new Caudatum-type sorghum (photo) developed by IER breeder Acar Toure, will further increase farmers' yields and incomes in Mali.