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The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative



Learning Brief

Multi-Stakeholder Platforms:
a sustainable solution
for creating inclusive,
competitive, and profitable
market opportunities



Tombouctou MSP visits stand and presents products to the regional governor at the Agricultural Fair.

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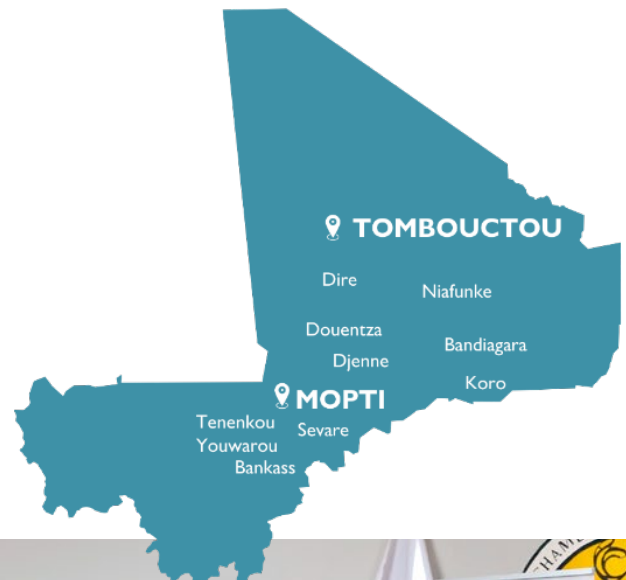
1. Project overview

Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa is a five-year cooperative agreement funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), aimed at strengthening the resilience of farming and business communities in the Delta Zone through market-driven, inclusive, nutrition-sensitive, and agriculture-driven economic growth. The Activity is implemented by a consortium of three NGOs – CARE, AMASSA Afrique Verte, and AMPRODE Sahel – with CARE International serving as lead partner. Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa covers eight districts in the Mopti region (Mopti, Bandiagara, Bankass, Koro, Douentza, Tenenkou, Djenné and Youwarou) and four districts in the Tombouctou region (Tombouctou, Goundan, Niafunké and Diré).

In the Delta Zone, Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa organizes regular marketing activities – throughout the year – with the active involvement of different categories of market actors to improve the supply of quality products and services in the Mopti and Tombouctou regions. These marketing events garner participation of producer organizations, Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs), cereal traders, livestock traders, private sector actors, market actors, agro-processing enterprises, input suppliers as well as banks and microfinance institutions.



Working session between members of the Mopti MSP and Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa. © CARE Mali/Sugu Yiriwa, 2023



Conference-debate on the conditions for a good agricultural campaign by the MSP and agricultural producers from Mopti during the B2B workshop. © CARE Mali/Sugu Yiriwa, 2023



2. Problem statement

In sub-Saharan Africa, agriculture and the sale of agricultural products are the main activities and sources of income for rural populations.¹ Mali's agricultural sector - mainly dominated by smallholder farmers - has long been weakened by various challenges, notably institutional, which have limited its development. Specifically in the Delta Zone (Mopti-Tombouctou), organizing and involving stakeholders in addressing market system development issues - through the creation of inclusive, competitive, and profitable market opportunities and tailored capacity building - has always been challenging due to the absence of formal frameworks for meeting, consultation, and planning.

A literature review of previous USAID-funded projects – conducted prior to the establishment of the MSP, notably CVC Mali and IFDC-MC,² revealed an organizational deficit in the organization of agro-pastoral and commercial activities. Productivity certainly increased with new cultivation methods, but marketing opportunities remained insufficient. Therefore, it proved necessary to create an institutional environment (e.g., policies, infrastructure, and regulation of market principles) conducive to the production of knowledge and innovations adapted and accessible to the various market actors in agro-pastoral value chains. This required the involvement of local communities and organizations, state agencies, NGOs, and the private sector. Although this approach may require more time and intensive facilitation, the results are likely to be sustainable and far-reaching as they will give sustained attention to interactions and collaborative learning between market actors with similar goals.

3. Multi-Stakeholder Platforms: A potential solution

Implementing activities at the local level requires strong involvement and ongoing support from local actors to ensure effective ownership. Since the conception of Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa, it was clear that the Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) approach would enable a strong involvement and continued support of local stakeholders to sustainably address the existing organizational and institutional challenges in the agro-pastoral value chains in the Delta Zone. The MSP approach would also contribute to the creation of a framework conducive to collective action, learning, and knowledge sharing and improve the governance and development of priority agro-pastoral value chains for the Mopti and Tombouctou regions.

Thus, Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa, together with the regional technical services and market actors in Mopti and Tombouctou, set up the MSPs in 2021. The MSPs are composed of market actors and service providers including producers, input suppliers, agro-distributors, traders and processors, researchers, and government entities. The MSPs have been a useful platform for discussing sector-specific challenges and solutions; identifying common opportunities; sharing knowledge or evidence; building business networks and advocating for policies and regulations. MSPs also serve as critical market information hubs, including digital. To enhance sustainability, MSP leadership are selected from active members and meetings/activities.

MSPs have three main functions:

1. **Market linkage facilitation:** connecting supply and demand, promoting commercial links between different categories of market actors, and facilitating contract negotiation and access to financial services.
2. **Interconnectedness of markets:** improving socio-economic relations between the various links in a value chain and seeking solutions to common problems, agreeing on quality, price and logistics standards, and setting up dispute settlement mechanisms.
3. **Political dialogue and advocacy:** facilitating relations between market actors and public authorities and influencing public policy in a way that favors market systems development (through regulations, infrastructure, taxation, research and training, etc.).

¹ <https://www.privacyshield.gov/ps/article?id=Mali-Agricultural-Sector#:~:text=and%20trade%20data.,Overview,Center%20regions%20of%20the%20country>

² CVC (Chaines de Valeur des Céréales) in Mali and FDP-MD (Fertilizer Deep Placement and Micro Dosing Technologies) are USAID-funded projects designed to increase cereal productivity among small-scale producers in Mali.



The MSP is chaired by the Regional Development Council and brings together all the main agricultural producer organizations in Mopti and Tombouctou, including rural women and youth federations, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Trades, agricultural input enterprises; transporters; the Association of Professional Farmer Organizations, the Interprofessional Livestock and Meat Association and agro-processing units, etc. These actors are the real driving forces behind agricultural and market system development in the Delta Zone. The overarching objective of this structure is to unite the market actors around the Regional Development Council, to anchor all interventions and activities in the agro-pastoral value chains beyond Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa.

“The strength and legitimacy of a Multi-Stakeholder Platform stems from its diversity, i.e., the participation of women, youth groups, farmers, pastoral breeders, fishermen, traders, etc.”

Moctar Traoré, cereal producer and President of the Mopti MSP

There are two MPSS – one in Mopti and one in Tombouctou. Each MSP has approximately 67 members (including 38 women) and is made up of a president, a vice-president, an executive committee and a permanent secretariat that holds regular monthly meetings with all members. To ensure proper follow-up of activities – through transparency and good governance. In late 2023, Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa supported the creation of a local branch, called the Local Unions of Market Actors (ULAM), which function under the umbrella of the MSP, with approximately 33 members (including 11 women) each.

Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa uses the MSPs to promote a dynamic development approach to inclusive market systems through:

- Capacity building and resilience of local market systems.
- Dynamic collaboration with private sector actors to address constraints linked to market system development.
- Economic inclusion of the most vulnerable groups, especially women and young people; and
- Stimulating change and innovation to ensure greater impact and sustainability.

Key elements of an effective Multi-Stakeholder Platform





4. Strengthening Multi-Stakeholder Platforms: a solution for sustainability

To ensure MSPs' long-term ownership over activities, in March 2023, Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa commissioned a diagnostic study to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and Threats of the MSPs and identify their reinforcement needs. The results of the study highlighted the importance of implementing a varied and diverse training strategy for MSPs to facilitate skills transfer by the end of the project, and the provision of functional equipment (office furniture and rolling stock). Based on the study's recommendations, Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa developed a capacity-building plan to equip the MSPs with the necessary technical and organizational skills to enable them to organize - with complete autonomy - marketing events beyond the life of the Activity. The MSPs received training on a variety of topics, including but not limited to governance, roles and responsibilities, strategic planning, business plan development, organizational principles of marketing events, digital platforms, and entrepreneurship. These training sessions enabled them to gain the required knowledge; enabling them to properly coordinate and organize marketing events (agricultural and livestock fairs, cereal stock exchange, B2B workshops, etc.).

4.1. Developing methodological guides for organizing marketing events: A collective learning process

As part of a collaborative process involving key public and private actors,³ as well as other stakeholders (implementing partners, government technical services, etc.), Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa developed four methodological guides for organizing and holding marketing events, namely: Regional Cereal Fairs, National Cereal Fairs, Agricultural Fairs, Promotional Livestock Sales (small ruminants), and business-to-business (B2B) workshops. Among other things, the methodological guides emphasize the need to organize a series of After-Action Reviews following each marketing event. This is intended as a retrospective review of major successes, shortcomings, and points for improvement to be considered in future events.

“The region’s market actors need a standard document to guide them in organizing trade events. This will provide a consensus tool capable of contributing to the development of commercial activities in the Mopti region”

Colonel Abass Dembélé, Governor of the Mopti region

4.2. Some key results

Beyond the organization of their own commercial events, MSPs generate resources for their operations. They have succeeded in exploring opportunities for commercial partnerships in the Delta Zone, of which two concrete examples are: the organization of the Mali Artistic and Cultural Biennial Trade Fair for the Mopti MSP and the “Festival du Vivre Ensemble” Trade Fair for the Tombouctou MSP.

Through their own activities and those with other partners, MSPs have generated thus far nearly **FCFA 20,000,000 (USD \$32,675)** in profits – starting in 2022. As part of the ongoing learning on how to organize marketing events and manage MSPs, key MSP members have organized and participated in several exchange visits throughout the country (Mali) and in the Sahel region.

In Mali:

- **In the Sikasso region**, the MSPs met with the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) to learn about the operating model of their innovation platform and exchange views with livestock sector actors.
- **In the Delta Zone**, the Mopti and Tombouctou MSPs met to learn from each other's experience in organizing marketing events.

At Sahel region level:

- In Niger, the Mopti and Tombouctou MSPs traveled to Niger to learn about the post-harvest storage models used by producers, and the possibility of drawing inspiration from them in the Delta Zone.

³ In 2021, after the first commercial event, Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa thought it would be useful to capitalize on the organization of commercial events by drawing up methodological guides. These would standardize events by providing explanations and simple steps for organization. To this end, two design workshops were organized, with the participation of some 15 technical departments, projects/NGOs/programs and private sector actors working in similar industries. These included Malian technical services (the governorates of Mopti and Timbuktu; the Chamber of Commerce and Industry; the Chamber of Agriculture; the Regional Councils; the DRPIA; the DNPIA etc); for NGOs-Projects-Programs (SVN; Albarka; ILRI; CGIAR; Catholic Relief Services; Save the Children etc.) for the private sector (banks and microfinance institutions such as BNDA, Soro Yiriwaso, Kondo Jigima, CAECE Jigiseme).



5. Evidence of the role of the Multi-Stakeholder Platforms in creating inclusive, competitive and profitable market opportunities across the Delta zone of Mali.

In January 2024, Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa conducted a survey that focused on a sample of 74 groups and organizations of market actors (54% of them women) from 24 villages across Mopti, Bandiagara, Douentza, and Djenné. A questionnaire was configured on the ONA platform⁴ and the data collection method consisted of semi-structured interviews with agro-suppliers, processors, producers, agricultural equipment manufacturers, and traders who had participated in – at least – one marketing event since 2022.

The following statistics were generated through the survey data analysis:

72% of those interviewed attended more than one marketing events organized by MSPs – with the technical support of Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa – between 2021 and 2023.

81% of respondents have established reliable market linkages with other market actors during the marketing events.

95% of those interviewed were fully satisfied with their participation in the marketing events. According to them, this participation has brought about significant changes in their production/marketing activities. The rationale behind their satisfaction includes increased sales, network expansion, knowledge gains in marketing techniques, and online trading via the SIMAGRI digital platform.

78% of the respondents stressed that the organization of the marketing events have been having positive impacts on the household-level consumption as more local and nutritious food are available at the local markets.

88% of the respondents believe that their participation in the marketing events has allowed them to contribute to providing social support to the vulnerable categories (Internally Displace People, Widows and Orphans) of their communities. For example, women-owned agro-processing enterprises have introduced solidarity funds, with each member contributing monthly to support the neediest members of the community. Producer Organizations, for their part, contribute to building up security stocks for vulnerable members of the community by offering cereals (mainly rice, millet, and corn) from their harvests. The field survey demonstrated the positive change brought about by Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa through the MSPs in the organization of marketing events.

“Before we met Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa, because of the insecurity that affected our region, we found it hard to do our business and provide for our families. Since we’ve been working with Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa, we’ve had punctual customers and our sales have increased. Thank you to Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa for breathing new life into the economic activities of women in the Tombouctou region.

Zeynabou Cissé, member of the NAFAGOUMO cooperative and president of the Timbuktu women’s network.

From 2022 to date, with the technical support of Sugu Yiriwa, the MSPs have organized **22 marketing events** in both Mopti and Tombouctou with the effective participation of 1,798 farmers (including 648 women) and generated **XOF 754,781,165 (\$1,322,183)** in sale transactions.

⁴ ONA is a mobile data collection solution and application designed to empower field personnel. The platform is based on the Open Data Kit, which means it integrates easily with ODK briefcase.



The Following elements were highlighted by the market actors that participated in the survey:

- **Market actors have seen the way forward:** connecting with customers at trade events has fostered connection and collaboration between private and public sector actors. They are increasingly aware of the importance of taking the initiative to maintain and develop their businesses. As a result, since FY22, some market actors have begun to use their own funds to participate in national and international trade events. For example, in 2023, the Koto Gnogon Tala processing unit in Mopti used its own funds to take part in the Foire Internationale de l'Agriculture et des Ressources Animales⁵ (FIARA) in Dakar, Senegal.
- **Income and profits are re-invested in processing equipment and materials to further develop activities:** Agro-processing enterprises and Producer Organizations invest a large part of their economic profits from sales in the acquisition of equipment to help them in the production and processing of their products. For example, the Jinekoye cooperative (Tombouctou) has purchased motor pumps and agricultural production machinery to meet the needs of the 2022-2023 crop year. The “Ma Famille”, cooperative, winner of the Best Entreprises Competition organized by Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa in Mopti, acquired a labeling machine capable of meeting their customers’ ever-growing demand for products.
- **Producer Organizations draw inspiration from each other to adapt their working methods:** under the impetus of the MSPs, Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa encouraged the creation of frameworks for the exchange and sharing of knowledge on production, conservation, and processing techniques for agricultural products. To this end, the Jinekoye youth cooperative (Tombouctou) visited a producer group and a women’s cooperative in Niger to exchange and share experiences and learn from improved models for storing and preserving agricultural produce. Once in Tombouctou, they set up a space for the adoption and implementation of this model.
- **Market actors seize opportunities offered by the SIMAGRI digital platform in their commercial activities to boost their revenues:** The opportunity for market actors to connect to the SIMAGRI digital platform constitutes a virtual marketplace where offers for sale, national purchases, information on market trends, and product prices are available. With this interface, actors can sell their products directly, without intermediaries and without transport or other handling charges. Additionally, because insecurity in the Delta Zone limits the movement of market actors, SIMAGRI enables them to sell larger quantities of produce without having to travel. This form of marketing considerably mitigates the risks of accidents, damage, and losses linked to the transport and sale of products. For example, in 2023, the Union des Producteurs de Yawacanda (Bandiagara) sold 50 metric tons of shallots via SIMAGRI, representing a profit of nearly FCFA 30,000,000 (\$49,194).

6. Conclusion

MSPs constitute a solid foundation for sustaining, promoting, and interlacing multipurpose faceted relationships between different categories of actors with the sole aim of strengthening the resilience of farming and business communities in the Delta Zone of Mali. MSPs should be at the forefront of all marketing trade events to foster sustainable market linkages between different value chain actors, negotiate contracts, and access financial services to create inclusive and profitable market opportunities for small-scale farmers and businesses. MSPs still require capacity building to play their role effectively. This is why Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa continues to support the MSP (e.g. official recognition, methodological guidance, equipment...) while gradually shifting greater responsibilities to them.

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For more information and resources about the Feed the Future Sugu Yiriwa project, visit the website:

<https://www.care.org/our-work/food-and-nutrition/markets/sugu-yiriwa>