

AMINATA

Improving Access to Agricultural Innovations for the Agroecological Transition



Purpose of the project

The project sets out to help build the capacity of Malian producers to adapt their production systems. The aim is to consolidate the emergence of sustainable and responsive agricultural innovation support mechanisms to facilitate producers' access to the knowledge and skills necessary to develop innovations adapted to their needs and means as well as to the evolution of local production contexts.

Background

The physical and economic environment for agricultural production has changed dramatically in Mali over the past few decades. To achieve their goals, rural families must constantly adapt their production systems. Until now, producers have developed strategies in terms of adaptation and resilience based on the constitution of food stocks, savings in the form of livestock, complementarity between activities, seasonal migration and interdependence within social groups.

These resilience factors have allowed strategies in terms of adaptation to be applied progressively to production systems. Today, environmental changes are picking up pace, forcing producers to identify ways to accelerate these transitions towards more sustainable and agroecological systems. To do so, they must develop their knowledge and skills.

The last three decades have seen a continuous decrease in the number of support mechanisms for producers provided by the State or by the sectors. At the same time, we have seen the emergence of new initiatives led by producers' organisations or non-governmental organisations. The AMINATA project is based on the assumption that consolidating these new mechanisms will improve their responsiveness and provide effective and sustainable support for a large number of producers in the transition to more efficient, adapted and inclusive systems of activity. In order to consolidate these new support models, it is necessary to gain a better understanding of the functioning of local innovation mechanisms and to test ways of consolidating the innovation dynamics already at work.

The theory behind the change

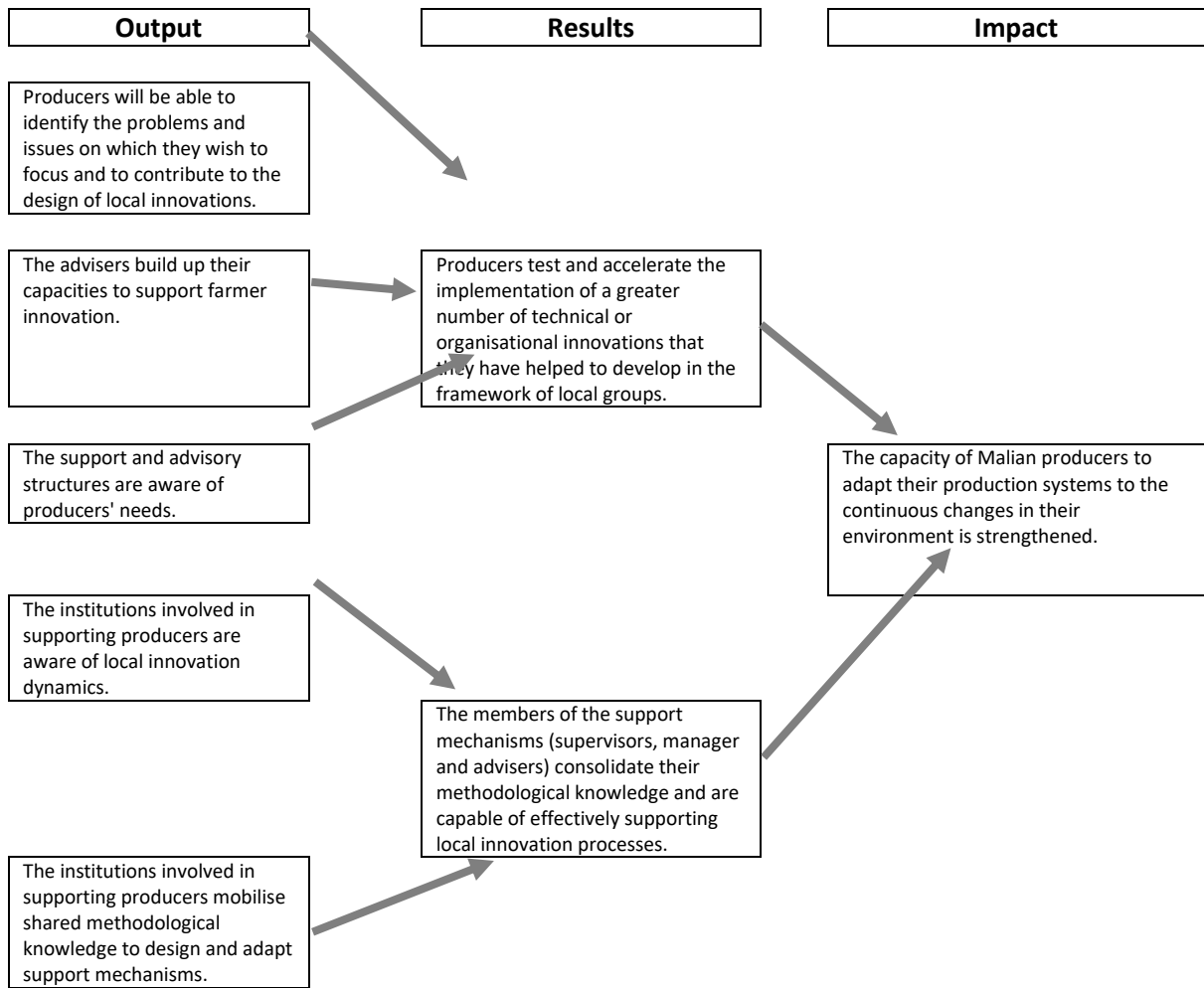
The project aims to help strengthen the capacity of Malian producers to adapt their production system in the face of constant changes in their environment. To do so, the project seeks to consolidate the emergence of sustainable and responsive support mechanisms for farming innovation to ensure that producers have rapid access to technical or organisational innovations adapted to their needs, their means and the changes in local production contexts.

Specifically, this implies a strategy that aims:

- to consolidate the individual or collective dynamics of learning and sharing this new expertise as regards innovations introduced by development organisations or by research, but also farming innovations that have already proven their worth.
- to support producers in the construction and appropriation of innovative, more ecological practices, identified in partnership between farmers, research institutes, agricultural advisers from farmers' organisations (FOs), the State and NGOs.
- to share lessons learned from the project approach with the various actors interested in innovation mechanisms in the field of agriculture in Mali, in order to help consolidate national expertise in engineering innovation support within FOs, NGOs, technical services and agricultural training centres.
- to capitalise on and exploit results and experiences drawn from the creation and promotion of technical, organisational and social innovations with a view to more ecological practices in the fields of sustainable animal and plant production in Mali and West Africa.

In order to consolidate the emergence of sustainable and responsive agricultural innovation support mechanisms, the project will aim to achieve the following two results

1. With revisited support methods, producers test and implement more quickly a greater number of technical or organisational innovations that they have helped to develop and that are compatible with their means. To achieve this result, the project proposes to steer the producer support mechanisms currently operational in the project area by (i) designing and testing the methods adopted to support local groups of innovative producers and (ii) organising and supporting the functioning of these groups;
2. The supervisors and managers of the support mechanisms consolidate their methodological knowledge and are able to support local innovation processes effectively, thanks to better coordination at the different levels of the innovation mechanisms (local/regional/national). The project therefore proposes to develop several activities. Firstly, it will distinguish the innovation support mechanisms of the project partners and analyse the innovation mechanisms in the area in question and their evolution during the implementation. Secondly, the project will aim to set up and facilitate a diversified community of supporting actors. In the first instance, this community will be based on the producer support structures with which the AOPP collaborates. The objective is to allow the sharing and a collective capitalisation of the experience acquired to put together progressively a community of practice that will contribute to methodological debates at the national and regional levels. Thirdly, the project will train national experts to provide the support and will produce training materials (guides) for producer facilitators, FO leaders, field advisers and other technical staff.



Main activities

The project will implement a series of activities to understand the existing innovation dynamics and work hand-in-hand with innovative producers and their organisations. These activities include:

- conducting surveys to distinguish the dynamics of farming innovation, the innovation support mechanisms in the project area and their evolution during implementation;
- testing new tools and methods for supporting farming innovation dynamics that can help pave the way for the agroecological transition of production systems;

The project will also ensure the sharing of knowledge and experiences of the project. This entails:

- organising workshops to constitute and coordinate a hub of supporting actors in order to capitalise on and share the outputs of the programme at the national level;
- ensuring the continuous training of future national experts in the field of innovation support and the academic training of young researchers in this field;
- producing training materials for producer-coordinators, FO leaders, field advisers and technical executives that will be used in initial agricultural training and in continuing education modules.

Organisation

The project is divided up into two components.

Component 1 revolves around the design and testing of new methods for supporting the dynamics of farming innovation so that producers can test and use more quickly a large number of technical and organisational innovations - which they have helped to develop - that meet their needs while being compatible with their means.

Component 2 focuses on consolidating the methodological knowledge of the supervisors and managers of the support mechanisms and on the appropriation of the project's organisational innovations by the actors involved in supporting agricultural innovation in Mali and in the sub-region.

The AOPP will oversee the implementation and sustainability of the new support service made available to innovative producers, developed within the framework of the project, in particular the methodological support to grassroots FOs for:

- the consolidation of their current methods for supporting innovative producers;
- the experimentation and appropriation of the new method of access to innovations;
- the validation of the prototype method of access to innovations in other regions of Mali;
- the sharing of project results at the national and regional levels.

AVSF will be in charge of the monitoring and evaluation activities as well as of the coordination of field activities.

The Institut d'économie rurale (IER), the Institut des sciences humaines (ISH) and CIRAD will provide support for the design of the innovation support mechanism. This will include:

- the characterisation of the innovation mechanisms in the project area,
- scientific support for the design and testing of innovation creation mechanisms,
- the follow-up of the implementation of these new mechanisms by the AOPP in other regions.

the IER and CIRAD will also be tasked with supervising academic training and the design of continuing education modules for the dissemination of the project results.

CIRAD will also take on the scientific and administrative coordination of the project.

A steering committee will allow all the partners to be involved in the project's orientation.

Implementation organisation

French agricultural research and cooperation organisation (CIRAD), France

Project partners

Institute of Rural Economy (IER), Bamako, Mali

Association of Professional Farmer Organisations (AOPP), Bamako, Mali

Agronomes et vétérinaires sans frontières (AVSF - Agronomists and Veterinarians Without Borders), Bamako, Mali

Other partners

Institute of Human Sciences (ISH), Bamako, Mali

Interactions and experience-sharing with the following EU projects: FAIR-Sahel, APSAN, GCCA2, PAFAM, IRRIGAR, CRS SANAD, EJOM

Location

Cercle de Kita and Cercle de Bougouni, Mali

Funding

European Union: EUR 2 000 000

Duration

From 1 February 2022 (48 months)

