

## **USAID/Mali Helps Mali Develop its National Agricultural Development Strategy: The CAADP Compact**

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, after 20 years of neglect, African leaders and international development organizations “rediscovered” agriculture. It became apparent that without more vibrant agricultural growth on the continent, it would be impossible to reach the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of cutting poverty in half by 2015. In 2003, African heads of state pledged to devote at least 10% of their national budgets to agricultural development. At the same time, they urged the African Union, through its New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) to launch a Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP). International donors, including USAID, strongly endorsed the CAADP notion.

Agricultural development doesn’t result, however, from high-level political declarations. It takes lots of hard work at the national and local levels to create the technologies, institutions, and policies that empower the women and men of rural Africa to increase their food and fiber production. Thus, the CAADP process evolved into one in which each African country would work with its stakeholders to develop a national agricultural investment and policy plan, laying out clear priorities and plans to mobilize the resources to reach them. The national plans would be complemented by regional plans (e.g., for West Africa) that seek to deal with agricultural development challenges that transcend national boundaries, such as the management of shared river basins. Once the national plan was agreed upon by all key stakeholders (government, private sector, civil society, and development partners), all would sign an agreement, known as the national CAADP Compact, pledging to support the plan. The central notion behind the CAADP approach is to create a single national strategy and investment plan, supported by all the stakeholders, rather than each development partner and government agency pursue its own strategy, which often conflicts with the approach of other actors. The CAADP Compact is thus a key step in moving agricultural development efforts away from *a project approach* towards a *program approach* defined by Africans themselves.

Starting in late 2008, USAID/Mali, through its Project to Mobilize Food Security Initiatives in Mali – Phase II (PROMISAM II) with Michigan State University, has provided strong support to Mali as it has gone through the process leading to the drafting of a CAADP compact. PROMISAM II provided technical support to a team of Malian analysts as it carried out studies to diagnose the agricultural development challenges facing the country, synthesize the successes and failures of past approaches, and carry out simulation modeling of the impacts of alternative agricultural investment and growth paths on poverty reduction and overall economic growth. Initially, however, the CAADP process in Mali was limited to a technical discussion among a small group within the Ministries of Agriculture and of African Integration. Through its contacts with key actors, PROMISAM II helped to raise the political profile of the process to a very high level, which facilitated efforts to harmonize the emerging CAADP plan across ministries, with other agricultural strategy initiatives in Mali and with the emerging West African regional CAADP plans. The resulting higher political profile for CAADP resulted in the mobilization of Mali’s top expertise across across different relevant ministries (Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Environment, African Integration, etc.) to contribute to the overall process. Without the mobilization of this expertise, it would have been impossible for Mali to meet the deadline of holding its national CAADP roundtable to sign the compact in October 2009.

The stakeholder debates concerning critical decisions Mali faces as it builds its CAADP agricultural development strategy and investment plan have been as valuable to the country as the CAADP documents themselves. Can the agricultural growth rates required to meet the MDG poverty reduction target be attained without huge environmental costs? Are such growth rates feasible by relying just on small farms? If larger farms are encouraged, what are the options for the small rural households “left behind”? Why have agricultural investments in Mali historically been less productive, on average, than those made elsewhere in Africa? How can the country balance farmers’ needs for favorable prices to encourage production with poor consumers’ needs for low-cost food? Debates like these, fostered by the CAADP process, will make Mali’s CAADP compact, due to be signed in October 2009, a living, evolving document that will be central to Mali’s overall development efforts over the next 25 years..