Michigan State University
Food Security III Cooperative Agreement

Increasing the Impact of the Research of INSAH and its West African Partners
by Making it More Accessible via the Internet

Proposal to USAID/West Africa for a Year-2 Work Plan

August 30, 2006

1 Introduction and Objectives

This document proposes a set of activities aimed at further strengthening: (a) the availability of on-line resources on West African agricultural research, development, natural resource management, and population and health and (b) the capacity of various stakeholders, including NARS, SAKSS and NEPAD/CAADP, to use them. It builds upon and continues the very successful work carried out in 2005-06 by Michigan State University (MSU), the Institut du Sahel (INSAH) and the Data Analysis Support Center (DASC) to put 4 major INSAH databases on line, make most of INSAH's publications downloadable, and strengthen the skills of INSAH and its stakeholders to use other important on-line resources such as AGORA, HINARI, and the Food Security and Food Policy Information Portal for Africa (FSIP). The achievements of these year 1 activities are described in detail in a companion report to USAID/West Africa entitled *Year 1 Project Report to USAID/WARP: Increasing the Impact of the Research of INSAH and its West African Partners by Making it More Accessible via the Internet* (May, 2006). The proposed year 2 activities would take place as via incremental funding to the existing USAID/West AfricaAssociate Award to the MSU-USAID Food Security III Cooperative Agreement and direct funding to INSAH via its IL.

In summary, year 1 activities included:

- Restructuring and making available through INSAH's website four major databases. The databases, which can be queried on-line and the results downloaded, cover:
    - Pesticides approved for different uses in the CILSS member states;
    - Directories of Sahelian researchers, research institutions, and technologies in the areas of agriculture, natural resources, and demography;
    - Socio-economic profiles for the CILSS member countries;
    - INSAH's publications and documents in its RESADOC database.
- Developing an Intranet to maintain and update the databases.
- Training INSAH staff to maintain and further develop the website and databases.
- Conducting an outreach workshop to inform stakeholders in Bamako of the changes.
- Helping organize a training program for librarians and researchers from Mali, Senegal, and Burkina Faso on AGORA and HINARI (portals allowing free on-line access to nearly 2000 journals in agriculture and the health sciences).

Year 2 activities build on these achievements by completing improvements to the socio-economics database, decentralizing (to Mali and Burkina Faso as test cases) the intranet system for updating the databases, and conducting outreach with various stakeholders to strengthen their capacities to use these and related on-line tools to be more productive in their policy analysis, research, teaching, and outreach activities.

2 Proposed Program of Work

In early 2005, INSAH and MSU submitted a two-year project proposal to USAID/West Africa requesting funding to enable INSAH to: (1) make its databases and research reports easily accessible through its website (2) improve the capacity of INSAH's staff to maintain the website, and (3) provide training for researchers, policy analysts, and other potential

stakeholders (e.g., private-sector actors) in the use of the improved INSAH website and other on-line and electronic resources of relevance to the INSAH/CILSS mission. USAID/West Africa agreed to fund the activity for one year, with second-year funding contingent on the success of the first year's efforts. This work plan outlines more details on the 2nd-year planned activities, to be implemented by MSU/INSAH/DASC. The work plan focuses on 4 key activities:

(1) Finishing work on the country socio-demographic and economic profile databases that could not be finished within the first phase due to the complexity of the restructuring required. This work would include consultations with SAKSS/West Africa and the NEPAD/CAADP teams that will help negotiate CAADP country compacts to assess their potential interest in the database and ways of accommodating their needs
(2) Decentralization of the updating system to involve INSAH partner institutions in Mali and Burkina Faso, including training of national counterparts who will be doing the updating;
(3) Developing procedures that INSAH and its partners can use to increase the accessibility of the national partners' publications, reports, and databases on the web via links to the INSAH website and the FSIP website and testing these for key partners in Mali and Burkina Faso;
(4) Providing training to INSAH-affiliated researchers in national research systems in Mali and Burkina Faso and other partners (universities, government services, private sector, SAKSS/WA and NEPAD/CAADP teams) on the use of resources on the Internet with relevance to their food security and agricultural development missions (e.g., INSAH's improved website and the FSIP).

Each of these activities is discussed in more detail below.

2.1   Completing work on Country Profile Database

DASC has prepared a detailed list of activities required for getting the country profile database completely restructured, verified, and on line. These activities include a combination of DASC and INSAH inputs to accomplish the following tasks:

- Finalization of the profile data management system
- Identification/analysis of the indicator variables by country, administrative level and aggregation variables
- Standardization of the administrative codes (requires INSAH contacts with member countries)
- Detailed documentation of the sources and technical characteristics of the databases (referred to as meta-data by DASC)
- Data entry and validation
- Development of the database query system

Based on the high interest in this database that was apparent at the recent Bamako workshop and the fact that it has the potential to serve as a solid source of information on indicator variables currently being used across the Sahel (e.g., by those working with Millennium Development Goals, SAKSS and NEPAD/CAADP), we will be consulting with the SAKSS/West Africa team

during the identification/analysis of indicators. Ideally, a SAKSS representative would participate when the discussions take place in Bamako to identify the final set of indicators and distributional variables. At the request of USAID/AFR, beginning in 2006 MSU is serving as the US representative to the new NEPAD/CAADP Expert Reference Group for Food Security, which should help facilitate these discussions.

2.2   Decentralizing the Updating of the INSAH Website

The task of adapting the current intranet system (which now only exists within INSAH) for data updating to a decentralized system in the CILSS countries so that the updating is timelier, less dependent on INSAH, and less expensive requires about a month of additional programming time from DASC. This programming work would be followed by training representatives of partner institutions in Mali and Burkina Faso (as test cases) on how to update their data in the system. Trainees would then train other colleagues at their home institutions and other potential users in their countries (government services, private sector). We propose that this training be conducted in these two countries in order to develop the procedures, which can in subsequent years be extended to other CILSS member countries. Each training session would be led by an INSAH team with assistance from DASC and MSU. The training on updating the databases would be combined with training in general internet use (activity 4 listed above) and also provide an opportunity for INSAH/DASC to develop plans for linking national partners' databases and publications to the INSAH website and the FSIP (activity 3 listed above). In-country training will permit INSAH trainers and DASC/MSU to assess the hardware/internet capacity of partners and the structure of their existing websites. It will also permit rapid identification of any problems that may arise in terms of updating INSAH's databases or expanding them to include materials from partner institutions.

Each training mission would produce a report describing the partner institution's existing capacity to work with the INSAH website project (personnel, equipment, website), identifying databases and/or documents that the institution wants to put on line and link to the INSAH website, outlining a tentative work plan and budget for accomplishing the desired linkages, and an evaluation of the training program (number of trainees, effectiveness of the training modules, suggested revisions, plans for trainees to train others, etc.).

2.3   Increasing Website and Publication Visibility for National Partners

The initial project proposal included work on a pilot basis with national researchers in Mali and Burkina Faso who are members of INSAH networks to develop procedures that INSAH and its partners could use to increase the accessibility of the national partners' publications and reports on the web via links to the INSAH website and the FSIP. Once these procedures are developed, they can be extended to other countries in the subregion as additional funding becomes available. By developing these links, INSAH will be building the type of regional node capable of making important contributions to other regional efforts (CAADP/NEPAD, SAKSS, etc.).

The objective for this second year is not to fully implement a program of adding data and documentation from all national partners in Mali and Burkina Faso to the INSAH website, but to assess the potential in each country and develop a work plan and budget for accomplishing this. Given INSAH's location in Bamako, we propose that the first assessment be done with Mali's *Institut d'Economie Rurale* (IER) for agricultural information and the Mali Ministry of Health's Food and Nutrition Strategy Monitoring Division (DSSAN) for health and demographic information. The DSSAN has the advantage as a pilot case because its website design is similar to that of INSAH and may thus provide ideas for website design for other partners who don't already have websites in place. For Burkina, the plans would be developed during the training mission as discussed below. Any aspects of the plan that can be implemented without special funding can be initiated during the year; aspects needing special budget support will be consolidated into a program for which funding would be sought from a range of donors in subsequent years.

2.4   Training Partners on the Use of Internet Resources

The training and outreach component of the initial proposal aimed at strengthening the access of INSAH and its partners to full-text documents and learning tools to improve applied research and policy outreach. The objective was to improve the skills of West African technical and social scientists to use the wealth of scientific knowledge and experience currently available on the Internet more effectively to carry out research, policy analysis, and policy outreach. The need for this type of training was mentioned by several participants at the Bamako workshop organized by INSAH in April 2006 to demonstrate the improvements in its website. We propose that such training involve three main tools: the greatly improved INSAH website, the Food Security and Food Policy Information Portal for Africa, or FSIP (http://www.aec.msu.edu/agecon/fs2/test/index.cfm), and AGORA (a portal developed by the FAO and Cornell University that gives free on-line access to over 700 journals in agriculture and natural resources).

The INSAH website is described in detail in the year 1 activity report. The FSIP is a joint project of Michigan State University, the UN Economic Commission for Africa, and several regional African policy research networks, including INSAH. This site gives researchers and policy makers a one-stop location for (a) data and analytical reports on food security and food policy for every country in Africa; (b) a location where they can share their own work with colleagues across the world; (c) training materials in a broad range of practical professional skill-building areas, including more effective use of the Internet for research and policy analysis; and (d) a forum to share experiences on how to improve the effectiveness of policy extension efforts. The site offers all these services in English, French, and Portuguese.   The training in AGORA would be organized in conjunction with Cornell University and the Information Training and Outreach Center for Africa (ITOCA), based in Harare. MSU collaborated with these partners in organizing a training workshop on AGORA and HINARI (the "sister" portal of AGORA, focused on the health sciences) for Mali, Burkina Faso and Senegal during the first year of the project, and ITOCA has expressed interest in collaborating in organizing other workshops in the subregion. MSU will work with Malian and Burkinabé participants in the year 1 workshop to explore ways of extending their knowledge about AGORA and HINARI more widely in their countries.

The training in INSAH website use would take place in Mali and Burkina Faso in conjunction with the "database updating and maintenance" training described in section 2.2 above. This training could begin as soon as the 3rd month into the new project year, as the revisions to the database maintenance procedures are expected to take only one month of DASC time. The INSAH website training would cover the pesticide and expertise databases. Because the country profile database will not be finished for approximately 6 to 8 months, a brief overview of that database will be included, but in-depth training on this database will not be included. The approach would be similar to that outlined in the initial proposal, with MSU providing support to strengthen INSAH's capacity to act as an agent for training members of its associated networks in the use of the Internet for improved research, policy analysis, and outreach. It would include an introduction to other Internet tools of particular relevance to the INSAH/NARS mission (e.g., the Food Security Information Portal and AGORA). The content of the training would be developed jointly by INSAH/DASC/MSU. INSAH staff Aguibou Coulibaly and Fadima Diarra would be the key trainers with input from other INSAH departments to help with particular subject matter areas (i.e., DREAM—the Département d'Etudes et de Recherches sur l'Environnement l'Agriculture et Marchés, and CERPOD—Département d'Etudes et de Recherches sur la Population et Développement).

The first training session (probably held in Mali) would serve as a test run and be revised if necessary before being extended to Burkina. DASC and MSU would also participate in the Burkina workshop, along with the INSAH specialists. The aim would be to train a minimum of ten persons per NARS and ask them to train additional staff in turn; depending on the country, the numbers of trainees could be greater and include other stakeholders (NGOs, private sector).

As noted above, the trainers would also collect information from the NARS on their current procedures for posting general information, databases, and documents on the web. This information would be used in preparing a report that will include recommendations on next steps for improving the Internet links between INSAH and partner institutions and a budget for accomplishing the recommendations.

Each mission would require 4 to 5 days in country, with training conducted in half-day sessions and the other half day used to by the team to collect information about national databases and publications, computer and Internet capacity, websites, and other topics of relevance to future planning.

For SAKSS and NEPAD/CAADP, the on-line database on socio-demographic and economic profiles of the CILSS countries and the database on technologies, expertise, and research institutions will be particularly useful in designing development strategies under the CAADP compacts and in monitoring the impacts of these activities. Therefore, close consultations with both groups will take place both to explain the nature of the databases and their utility and to explore the extent to which the data tracked in the country profiles database can include indicators most useful to their efforts.

3.   Monitoring Results and Impact Indicators

Throughout the project, INSAH/MSU will use a variety of methods to evaluate growth in the use of the INSAH website and other on-line tools and to solicit feedback from trainees on their experiences with these research tools:
- Website use statistics (number of visits; origins of visitors) will be tracked regularly.
- Key OPIN indicators will be tracked, including:
    - Number of partner organizations and active institutional members of those partner organizations benefiting from the project
    - Number of male individuals who have received training
    - Number of female individuals who have received training
    - To the extent that private-sector and NGOs also make use of the sites, we will track those OPIN indicators as well.
- Information on the number of INSAH partner publications made available on line will be tracked.
- Reports prepared from the training missions will include user assessments of the INSAH website and updating tools made available through the project. Results will be used by INSAH and collaborators to improve the INSAH website, national partner sites, and the FSIP and related support activities and to evaluate what follow-on activities, if any, are warranted. If the evaluation documents a high payoff to project activities and strong demand for follow-on actions, INSAH and MSU will develop proposals for future activities, including implementation of the plans to get more partner databases and documents linked to the INSAH website.

INSAH/MSU/DASC will prepare a project report that includes a description of how country-level and regional organizations in Mali and Burkina Faso have organized the posting of data and documents on the web (including recommendations for improvements), and a discussion of what is needed to ensure the sustainability of the regional and country-level activities required to expand scientific exchange and food policy outreach via the Internet.

4. **Budget and Proposed Funding Mechanisms**

The proposed program will be implemented over 12 months (from October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2007) through an Associate Award to the Food Security III Cooperative Agreement and through direct funding by USAID/West Africa to INSAH via the Institute's IL and INSAH's own resources. The total cost of the proposed program is $161,500, of which $135,000 would be financed through FS III and $26,500 through funds already available at INSAH from USAID-West Africa and other sources.