

**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**

Since the 1970s, INSAH/CILSS, USAID, and partners (including the National Agricultural Research Systems of CILSS countries) have made large investments in developing databases and publishing research related to agricultural development, environmental and resource management, and demographic and health issues. The value of such information depends, however, on its being readily available for critical policy, research or investment decisions. Yet prior to this project much of this information had not been widely diffused. Making this information available via the Internet responds to INSAH's strategic objective of adding value to its previous and current research efforts. In so doing, the project also contributes to three AFR/WA strategic objectives:

- Build West African human and institutional capacity to shape agricultural policy and research;
- Strengthen West African capacity for trade policy formulation and implementation;
- Improve communication between researchers, policy analysts, and public and private sector actors.

The project also contributes directly to all four of AFR/WA's reporting lines: Improved Economic Policy and Business Environment, Increased Agricultural Sector Productivity, Improved Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and Biodiversity Conservation, and Improved Emergency Preparation and Disaster Mitigation.

First-year results from this joint Michigan State University – INSAH activity include:

- Four interactive, searchable databases, covering critical development information, are now available on the Internet via the INSAH website ([www.insah.org](http://www.insah.org)).
- An intranet has been established to allow decentralized maintenance and updating of the databases.
- INSAH staff has been trained to maintain and further develop the website and databases.
- A training program for librarians and researchers from Mali, Senegal, and Burkina Faso on AGORA and HINARI (systems allowing free on-line access to nearly 2000 journals) was carried out.
- A workshop in Bamako was held to inform stakeholders of these developments.

The databases newly available on line include:

- All 703 INSAH/CILSS publications (available in PDF format)
- A directory of Sahelian expertise, including:
  - 766 researchers associated with INSAH's partner institutions.
  - 136 institutions doing research in the Sahel.
  - 224 technologies developed by INSAH and partner institutions.
- A database of CILSS member country profiles containing demographic and health data, much of it relevant for monitoring poverty indicators.
- A database of over 400 pesticides approved for use within the CILSS member states.

The 4 on-line databases provide access to information critical to researchers and policy makers for **improving the economic policy and business environment, increasing agricultural sector**

**productivity and improving sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity conservation.** In addition, having the pesticides database on line and available to emergency response planners throughout the world should greatly **improve emergency preparation and disaster mitigation** in the case of a recurrence of the 2004/05 locust infestation that hit the Sahelian states.

Users' response to the website improvements has been very positive. Participants at the Bamako outreach workshop included donor representatives, Malian government services, research institutions and universities, and project representatives. Strong public interest in the topic was shown by the surprisingly good press coverage for a relatively small workshop, with videos appearing on the evening news the same day and also being run again during the weekend. Participants were enthusiastic about the website. Several participants made suggestions about eventually linking the INSAH website to their sites and coordinating the databases. As a result of the success of the project, the CILSS Executive Secretariat and AGRHYMET leadership have decided to restructure their websites along the same lines as the INSAH site, and ROPPA (the Network of West African Agricultural Producers) has invited INSAH to present its website at the ROPPA annual meeting and discuss how the organization can utilize the site to strengthen its access to information on improved technology and agricultural policy analysis.