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## SUCCESS STORY

# Trade Forum reaps over one million dollars for trader

**Attending Shea Butter Forum provided Issa Keita with a much-needed opportunity to increase the number and size of trade deals.**



Issa Keita (standing at lower left), a Malian trader and a member of AMEPROC (Association of Malian Exporters in Agricultural Products and Cueillette), profited from posting offers for sale for diverse commodities during 'bourse' event at Shea Butter Forum. The number of sales resulting from his participation continues to exceed his expectations.

Issa Keita, a Malian cereal trader and President of AMEPROC, was skeptical that attending the Shea Trade Forum in November 2005 would help expand his business. "Before the forum, I received many inquiries about my commodities, but few customers could come up with the funds to actually make a deal," said Keita.

Although this was the fourth year of the Shea Trade Forum, this was the first time that MISTOWA assisted PAF (The Bio-Food Sub-Sector Support Project) in organizing the annual event. In November 2005, MISTOWA not only sponsored the participation of 16 representatives of partner associations from Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal, but also introduced the *bourse*, or public postings for offers to sell and bids to buy commodities. While the focus of the Shea Trade Forum was on promoting shea butter and nuts—an increasingly important ingredient in beauty products—the *bourse* allowed participants to advertise other commodities.

Keita took advantage of the open *bourse* by advertising all of his diverse range of commodities available for sale. As a result of the November 2005 offerings, he has continued to reap profits through his numerous, successful trade deals.

The first deal made by Keita occurred during the forum when he sold 100 tons of almonds and 10 tons shea butter to a willing buyer from Burkina Faso at a value of \$23,381. That same day, he made contact with a female Malian trader, Velegda de Mamounata, who received grant from the Italian government for food security in Mali. This grant allowed her to purchase sorghum from him at the value of \$202,578 in January 2006. Keita also managed to sell 200 tons of white sesame for \$91,075 in February 2006 to another Malian trader. One week later, he sold 20 more tons of shea butter for the same amount to a female Senegalese trader. "All of these sales occurred because of the *bourse* and the relationships I developed at the Shea Trade Forum," commented Keita.

The benefits from attending the fair continue to materialize into profits for Keita's company. In April 2006, he sold 150 tons of local maize valued at \$35,000 to a trader from Niger. The following month, he sold 80 tons of cashews valued at \$27,200 to a Senegalese trader.

Keita also reaped unexpected financial rewards when he convinced a large Danish company, Aarhus Corporation, that he could provide a steady supply of shea nuts. He has already delivered 200 tons of shea nuts and is currently negotiating a memorandum of understanding.