



## SUCCESS STORY

# Attendance at Regional Trade Fairs Makes 'Impossible' Deals Possible

**The International Agricultural Trade Fair (FIARA) held in Dakar, Senegal in March 2005 provided the opportunity for traders, supported by MISTOWA, to access a larger and potentially more lucrative market.**



Photo: Kofi Debrah, COP MISTOWA

Hassane Sambo and fellow traders walk their livestock on the exhibition ground at the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual International Agricultural Trade Fair (FIARA) held in Dakar, Senegal in March 2005.

Hassane Sambo, a retired animal breeder in Niger and member of the Niger Traders Association, had prime livestock to sell but no buyers on the horizon. He wondered whether he should immediately sell the specially-bred livestock below cost, or wait for a market price increase in Niger.

USAID-funded MISTOWA (Market Information Systems and Traders Organizations in West Africa) realized that Mr. Sambo's dilemma was not unique. To address this situation, MISTOWA subsidized travel and attendance fees for more than 30 producers and traders for the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual International Agricultural Trade Fair (FIARA) to Dakar. The fair was organized by the National Council for Rural Consultation and Cooperation (CNCR), in collaboration with West Africa Network of Farmers' Organizations (ROPPA).

Taking advantage of the opportunity provided by MISTOWA, Mr. Sambo exhibited his finest 10 bulls and 30 sheep. After brief negotiations, he sold his livestock for about \$4,000. No small amount, when one considers that through this transaction he made the equivalent of an average annual salary for a senior civil servant in West Africa. Mr. Sambo observed that, "not only was I able to sell all the animals I brought, but I was able to take new orders for delivery at the next fair in 2006."

Trade fairs are not the only way for agricultural producers and traders to transact business outside of their communities. Other 'face-to-face' events such as *commodity fora* and *outlook conferences* are also effective. MISTOWA organizes *commodity foras* so that producers and traders may focus on all the aspects of a particular commodity chain. The annual *outlook conferences* bring together stake-holders to evaluate and forecast food security issues.