

MISTOWA

Networks of Regional Market Information Systems and Traders' Organizations in West Africa
Réseaux Régionaux de Systèmes d'Information de Marché et de Commerce Agricole en Afrique de l'Ouest



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Crop Outlook Conference held in Ouagadougou1

Senegalese Prime Minister visits MISTOWA Village3

Ghanaian farmers upgrade organizational management skills ..3

New Staff4

Upcoming Events4

Editorial

This issue features the Crop Outlook Conference, the “MISTOWA Village” at the FIARA trade fair in Dakar, Senegal, and the APFOG training to increase management skills. The support MISTOWA currently provides is assuring the growth and future sustainability of these organizations. The overwhelming success of this year’s first Crop Outlook Conference in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso demonstrates the importance of active participation by traders and producers to increasing trade in West Africa.



The Prime Minister of Senegal, Macky Sall, learns how the MISTOWA trade portal increases trade ...see page 3

West African Crop Outlook sparks over \$50 million in potential trade deals

Producers and traders attending the Regional Crop Outlook Conference in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso unanimously agreed that this year’s conference far surpassed last year’s efforts because computer technology was utilized to match offers for sale and bids. “Last year MISTOWA staff attempted to manually connect sellers and buyers creating some degree of confusion,” explained Ibrahim Toure, Mali Country Coordinator for MISTOWA. “However, this year’s conference was much more effective since two weeks before the opening of the conference, participants could make their offers or bids electronically.”

As in the past, the conference was co-sponsored by MISTOWA and CILSS (Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel). This year MISTOWA also contracted *Afrique Verte* [Green Africa], an NGO focusing on all aspects of food security and development in the Sahel region, to manage the agricultural commodity exchange. This new partnership will result in more systematic monitoring of information on deals made through the commodity exchange and their value. In addition, *Afrique Verte* will ensure that all possible deals are followed through for the next three months. At the close of conference, *Afrique Verte* recorded 289 offers for sale and 46 offers to buy,



Placide Koulibaly of Afrique Verte shows a colleague how offers to buy and sell are recorded at the Outlook Conference.

amounting to a potential value of at least 50 million dollars (including 170, 000 tons of grain and 88,000 head of livestock.)

Apart from the business deals, Philippe Ki, *Afrique Verte* Coordinator, sees this process as an important food security tool. According to Ki, “If we can manage to circulate information, we will not need to import millions of tons of basic foods into the region; the conference shows people in a concrete way that the food demand in Africa can be satisfied internally.”

This year’s conference brought together 56 delegates representing primarily producers and traders’ organizations from most ECOWAS member countries. Participants included development partners, sub-

>> continued on page 2

NEWSLETTER

regional and international organizations tackling food security issues, and concerned civil society organizations and NGOs.

Conference begins in Ouaga market place

The Outlook Conference prides itself in offering a practical forum for traders to make contacts necessary for business deals. It is therefore, appropriate that the unofficial launching of each conference commences with a 'business opportunity day,' whereby participants can discover the principal markets while meeting the key economic operators. This year traders visited Sankariare grain market and Tanghin modern livestock market in Ouagadougou.

Stakeholders affirm Crop Outlook Conference is essential

In addition to bringing together West African private economic operators to negotiate possible business deals, the Outlook Conference seeks to evaluate agricultural and food conditions in the Sahel (Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, The Gambia, Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Mauritania) and West Africa. Stakeholders commended the organizers of the conference for involving producers and traders in the food security discourse. Much of the conference examined the process by which economists evaluate the possibility of future food shortages and how participants can fill future commodity gaps. Participants also exchanged information on regional agricultural policies and political developments. Through presentations offered by WAEMU (West African Economic and Monetary Union), CILSS, and *Afrique Verte* as well as several government representatives, attendees gained a deeper understanding of food security and current trade issues in the region.

Producer and trader organizations actively participate in conference

Producer and trader organizations were not only recipients of knowledge, they also provided new information to stakeholders based on their own relevant experiences. The Niger trader, Hassane Sambo, captivated the audience with a detailed recounting of his experience in cross-border road harassment while transporting livestock to a regional trade fair. Throughout the conference, association members presented their



Outlook Conference participants meet key economic operators at Tanghin livestock market, Ouagadougou.

experiences in the grain and livestock sectors, and emphasized the importance of MISTOWA's support in their organizational transformation and development. Towards the end of the conference, traders made recommendations based on the conference discussions.

Burkina Crop Outlook Conference 2006 makes recommendations

Previously, Crop Outlook participants have made recommendations too ambiguous to be implemented in time for the next conference. Patrice Annequin, MISTOWA Deputy Chief of Party, compared the recommendations and resolutions made last year with this year's findings and concluded that the quality of the recommendations had greatly improved because they were more concrete and measurable. He saw this as a reflection of MISTOWA's input into organizational development during the last year and commented that, "Most of the recommendations made last year were too vague for any follow-up, but this year participants not only made more specific proposals, but also designated which organization would be responsible for its implementation."

Altogether, the plenary session approved two resolutions and eight



Hassane Sambo, livestock trader from Niger, gives participants a detailed look at road harassment en route to Dakar.

recommendations. The first resolution involved advocating for the rapid implementation of one-stop checkpoints and joint border posts throughout West Africa. The second resolution was to encourage discussions with regional organizations, the ECOWAS Court of Justice, and regional and central banks, to participate in the Crop Outlook Conference to be held in Nigeria.

Four of the recommendations involved providing increased support to assist ROESAO to fulfill its role of facilitating and improving regional trade in agricultural produce. Plenary discussions indicated that participants believed that supporting ROESAO would assure the long-term sustainability of MISTOWA's project goals. They also recommended that ROESAO advocate on behalf of victims of road harassment, as well as to collect and report on such incidents so that they may later provide relevant evidence to national and regional Courts of Justice. ROESAO should also take the lead in helping its national affiliates to disseminate information and educate its members on regulations governing regional trade. Lastly, it was recommended that ROESAO assist in exploring potential production contracts between producers and institutional/contractual buyers, such as the World Food Program or large commercial food processors.

Roles of other partners identified

Participants recommended that WAE-MU play a lead role in the dissemination of information to regional traders about key guidelines and procedures concerning regional trade in food crops. CILSS was assigned to develop a common methodology for regional trade data collection to facilitate an analysis of cross-border trade. They were also charged with forecasting trends in food production and agricultural trade. In addition, CILSS is expected to actively encourage trader organizations throughout the region to use the *système de grille plombée* (SGP) for the secure transportation of goods in transit. [SGP is an internationally-recognized transport system whereby the merchandise is sealed from departure to arrival.]

Traders and producers attending the next Crop Outlook Conference in Abuja, Nigeria from September 18-22, 2006 will evaluate the progress of the Burkina recommendations. ■

Senegalese Prime Minister visits MISTOWA Village

Macky Sall's interest was piqued when he spotted signs for the 'MISTOWA Village' at the FIARA (Foire Internationale de l'Agriculture et des Ressources Animales) fair in Dakar. The Senegalese Prime Minister's surprise visit to the MISTOWA Village was greeted with posters and a colorful banner describing the USAID/WARP-funded project while MISTOWA staff demonstrated how to access market information on the Internet and send and receive information using their mobile phones. The Prime Minister and his delegation, which included the Minister of Agriculture, learned more about MISTOWA's efforts to bring market information to producers and traders using technology. "The official delegates listened closely to us and took copies of our literature; they did not have time to observe the website demonstration, but before leaving our display, the Prime Minister promised to visit our website [www.wa-agritrade.net]," recalled MISTOWA staffer Yachina Dete.

FIARA - an annual trade fair

FIARA is organized each year by the National Council of Rural Consultation and Cooperation (CNCR), the Senegalese Association for Basic Development Promotion (ASPRO-DEB) and the Network of Peasant Organizations and Agricultural Producers of West Africa (ROPPA). Hundreds of producers and traders from all over the Sahel attend the Dakar trade fair hoping to make business deals not locally available to them. A variety of West African agricultural produce is displayed, including livestock. Thousands of prospective buyers inspect the commodities and make bids or contract for future deals. Participants also make important contacts and learn more about technological innovations in agriculture.

MISTOWA facilitates traders' participation

For trader and producer association members to experience the benefits of attending such a trade fair, MISTOWA sponsored five traders from Senegal and Niger for the March 1-8, 2006 FIARA. With MISTOWA's support, the Senegalese association members of ROPPA and ROESAO (Network of Economic Operators in the Food Industry) had



Senegalese traders stop at the "MISTOWA Village" to learn more about the project and how they might benefit.

only to pay their transportation and hotel. The members also represented their local associations—Transfruileg, le RADEC, La FEITLS, FENATRA-PROMER—during the event.

MISTOWA's competitive grant enabled three traders from Niger to pool their resources and transport 189 heads of livestock from Niger to Dakar. Knowing they would need extra travel time and funds to deal with road harassments along the way, the experienced traders planned the trip weeks ahead of their departure. "What helped me most was the L'Ordre de Mission (travel authorization) provided by ROESAO to present at official and unofficial stops," explained Hassane Sambo, one of the MISTOWA-sponsored traders. "Everyone along the way knew about ROESAO and took the travel document seriously. We [arrived three days in advance] ...so our animals could recuperate from the stressful journey and look their best at the opening of the FIARA," said Sambo.

Missed the Minister

Although Sambo would have enjoyed meeting the Prime Minister, he was busy making trade deals for the livestock. "We are just beginning to know the Senegalese market, but it has certainly been worth our efforts, especially when all of our livestock was sold within a matter of days," noted Sambo.

Many traders want to participate in FIARA but are not convinced that their time and financial investment will pay off. Traders in the Sahel know Dakar is the economic hub of the region, but many producers prefer to wait for traders to visit their local markets to make sales. With MISTOWA's support, Sambo participated in his sec-

ond trade fair. Attendance is not cheap; a display booth—the size of a small room—runs \$1,000. "By pooling our resources, many of us can manage to attend on our own in the future," said Sambo. He added, "If a trader wants to engage in serious trading, the FIARA fair is a must."

Transportation barriers

"The main deterrent to intra-regional trade in livestock is the lack of proper transportation in the Sahel region. Trucks have not been adapted for the transportation of these animals, making the journey more risky and [subjecting traders to] lawful fines as well as harassment by government officials," noted Sadibou Gueye, the Senegalese National Coordinator for MISTOWA. "Even the FIARA needs to improve their infrastructure to facilitate the unloading of livestock into the FIARA pen," said Gueye. Sambo added, "We have lots of other commodities that we could trade if we had better trucks. For example, we could easily transport meat from Niger if we had refrigerated trucks, but we don't have [the] resources, nor are banks willing to make loans to us."

A deal in the works

This year the Niger traders are actively negotiating the most lucrative sort of deal for a livestock trader—to sell breeding-quality livestock. Despite the challenges of bringing the livestock to market, the traders recognize the real value of their participation in FIARA. ■

Ghanaian Farmers Upgrade Skills

MISTOWA collaborated with APFOG (Apex Farmers Organization of Ghana) to provide 45 members of farmer-based organizations (FBOs) in the northern sector of Ghana with management and organizational training in Tamale, Ghana from March 14-16, 2006. The training will up-grade FBO members' management skills. Specifically, the training agenda included membership development, financial sustainability, partnership building, proposal writing and action plan preparation. Farmers also learned how to use ICT to access market information by mobile telephone, and were introduced to the MISTOWA trade portal through which they can access information on traders, contacts, transporters, offers, etc. ■

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New Staff

Claudia LaLumia has been appointed as the MISTOWA Business and Trade Advisor. Among other management responsibilities, she is responsible for ensuring the professional growth and helping evaluate the progress and impact of MISTOWA interventions with the traders and producers partners. Ms. LaLumia brings over 13 years of experience from various international development sectors in West and Central Africa. In her most recent position, Ms. LaLumia served as Deputy Director for Programs with World Education in Mali, coordinating various technical aspects of a large USAID-funded primary education program. She also worked for the United States Peace Corps as Associate Director



for Small Business Development and Environmental Protection in Togo and also served two terms as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in The Gambia. Ms LaLumia received a Masters' Degree in Public Administration from New York University's Wagner School of Public Service, focusing in particular on international development and NGO management.

Regine Dupuy is a consultant working as the Public Relations/Communications Officer for MISTOWA. Among other responsibilities, she will produce the monthly newsletter, brochures, success stories, press releases and perform other representational duties.

Since June 2006, Ms. Dupuy has worked as a consultant in Ghana with organizations such as ActionAid International and the New York University Exchange Program. From November 2000-2002, she worked in Ghana as the West African Representative of the U.S. State Department-funded Overseas Processing Entity, an organization charged with processing refugees.



Prior to returning to Ghana, she practiced law, representing clients for Legal Services of New Jersey. Regine Dupuy received a Juris Doctorate from Rutgers University and is admitted to the New Jersey Bar Association.

Upcoming Events

10-14 April - Accra, Ghana: ICT and Agribusiness Information Point (ABIP) management training for Information and Communication Officers of Chambers of Agric in W.A. and Regional Observatories members of RECAO. Contact: Patrice Annequin pannequin@ifdc.org

20 April - Bamako, Mali: Shea partners consultative meeting for POs & TOs. Contact: Marie Laurentine Ilboudo lilboudo@ifdc.org

24 April - Cotonou, Benin: Regional Advocacy Training Workshop Follow-up: Civil society meeting with Transparency International concerning road harassment issues. Contact: Alain Soglo asoglo@ifdc.org

24-27 April - Accra, Ghana: ICT & Agribusiness Information Point (ABIP) Management Training for IT Officers & Trainers. Contact: Musa Taylor mtaylor@ifdc.org

26-27 April - Cotonou, Benin: Advocacy Training Workshop—follow-up meeting. Contact: Alain Soglo asoglo@ifdc.org

9-13 June - Abuja, Nigeria: Africa Fertilizer Summit convened by New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Contact: Henry Ekpiken henry@ifdc.org

19-23 June - Bamako, Mali: Organizational Management Workshop for POs & TOs. Contact: Emmanuel Alognikou ealognikou@ifdc.org

18-22 September, 2006 - Abuja, Nigeria: Second Annual 2006 Crop Outlook Conference. Contact:

Patrice Annequin
pannequin@ifdc.org

September (Date & venue to be announced): Workshop for public/private sector specialists in MIS and agribusiness trade organizations. Contact: Henry Ekpiken henry@ifdc.org

In our next issue:
 Special Edition on the
 Regional Advocacy Training
 Workshop at the ECOWAS
 Secretariat in Abuja,
 Nigeria.

ICT & Agribusiness Information Point (ABIP) Management Training for IT Officers & Market Enumerators:

24-28 April - Cotonou, Benin
 Contact: Alain Soglo
asoglo@ifdc.org

25-26 April - Dapaong, Togo
 Contact: Raoul Klutse
rklutse@ifdc.org

15-19 & 29-31 May - Ouaga, Burkina Faso Contact: Sami Traore straore@ifdc.org

24-25 May - Kano, Nigeria
 Contact: Henry Ekpiken henry@ifdc.org

5-7 June - Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso Contact: Sami Traore straore@ifdc.org



More details on MISTOWA can be found at <http://events.mistowa.org/>.
 If you wish to announce an event in this column, please send us a message,
 before the 25th of the month to: info@mistowa.org.