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MISTOWA Promises to Increase Agricultural Trade in West Africa

Quality and timely information is a strategic input for the development of agricultural markets. The information era offers tremendous opportunities to transform farming into a profitable enterprise by making market-related information accessible to and from remote and resource-poor farmers and traders. To address this issue, a new project named "Strengthening Networks of Regional Market Information Systems and Traders' Organizations in West Africa" (MISTOWA) was officially launched in Accra, Ghana, on February 10, 2005.

Under structural adjustment programs during the 1980s, national market information systems (MIS) were established in seven West African countries to support efforts of donors and governments toward economic and institutional reforms in the agricultural sector. The MISTOWA project seeks to strengthen MIS capacities so that farmers and private entrepreneurs can access accurate information in real time to allow them to make sound production and marketing decisions in a competitive market environment.

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), Republic of Ghana, The Honorable Ernest Akobour Debrah, presided over the launching ceremony. He highlighted the central role of a dynamic trade environment at the regional level. "We at MOFA believe that increased intra-regional agricultural trade in West Africa will undoubtedly accelerate the growth of Ghana's agriculture… I am happy to note that MISTOWA is happening at the very time that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is vigorously pursuing economic integration through the instrument of monetary, legal, infrastructural and trade harmonization policies, to mention a few."

(MISTOWA Photo)

The Honorable Ernest Akobour Debrah, Minister of Food and Agriculture, Republic of Ghana, addresses the delegates during the launching of MISTOWA.

However, various stumbling blocks remain to be overcome. "In spite of the ratification of community protocols and conventions on free movement of goods and services, the level of intra-regional trade in ECOWAS is unacceptably low

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at 11%," noted the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, in a speech read on his behalf by Dr. S. O. Afolabi, Director of ECOWAS Community Computer Center.

Highlighting IFDC's commitment toward assisting sub-Saharan Africa in its quest of regional integration, President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Amit H. Roy had this to say: "For more than three decades, IFDC has been committed to addressing the issues of soil fertility decline, farmers' and traders' access to inputs and product markets, and market information management. With even greater emphasis, the MISTOWA project will address the perpetual problem of low intra-regional trade in agricultural products and inputs. It will provide data regarding market information, the demand and supply situation, trends, and market intelligence for producers and traders to help them make informed commercial decisions to increase trade. We strongly believe that farmer access to both regional and international markets is the key to agricultural development in the region."

MISTOWA is a 5-year project funded by the West Africa Regional Program (WARP) of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It seeks to create an enabling regional trade environment in West Africa by increasing market information flow within and among countries, improving the overall management and networking of existing MIS, strengthening linkages among all market stakeholders, and promoting public and private partnerships.

The project now covers six priority countries—Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal. A second priority group will include Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea and Togo. Thus, weekly data collected by national MIS for 15 agricultural products on 48 prominent West African markets will be transmitted to a consolidated regional database accessible via the website, www.resimao.org. "The project will add value to the MIS by creating a platform that would assist the regional network and its affiliates to collect, share and disseminate data more efficiently and more timely so that they can be of commercial value to users in the sub-region," explains Dr. Kofi Debrah, MISTOWA's Chief of Party.

The highlight of the ceremony was the demonstration of the West African Agricultural Trade Portal, www.wa-agritrade.net, which uses the regional database to make prices and other useful information accessible in different languages, in real time, to clients and partners via Internet, E-mail, facsimile, short message services and satellite radio. "We involve users in data collection and make easy-to-use information technology tools available to all stakeholders," said the MIS Unit Manager, Patrice Annequin. This was the inspiration for MISTOWA's slogan: ***Agricultural Trade Made Simple.***

More than 90 participants and distinguished guests attended the ceremony including representatives of MISTOWA's implementing partners, including RESIMAO (Network of West African Market Information Systems), ROESAO (Network of Economic Operators in the Food Industry), RECAO (Network of Chambers of Agriculture in West Africa), ROPPA (West African Network of Farmers' Organizations), and FACIA (Association of Agricultural Input Dealers).

In his remarks, the Minister of Health, Major (retired) Courage Quashigah, as chairperson, stated that "the project's objectives will not be achieved if the many protocols that ECOWAS has passed, such as the protocol on the free movement of people, goods and services, are not enforced."

USAID Cognizant Technical Officer, Mr. Jeremy Strauss, also stressed the compelling obligation for results: "What we are seeing here is the result of 2 years of consulting with partners to build this project. The project must ensure that the objectives are being met. See you in the field!" he concluded. ♦

IFDC Board Member Visits ANMAT Project in Bangladesh

During January 15-18, 2005, IFDC Board member Hiroyoshi Ihara, visited the Adapting Nutrient Management Technologies (ANMAT) project in Bangladesh. He serves as Auditor for the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Dr. Walter T. Bowen, Resident Project Coordinator—ANMAT II, and IFDC/ANMAT Agricultural Specialist, Mofizul Islam, accompanied the Board member on his visit to the Tangail District to observe JICA's rural development activities and also to visit with entrepreneurs and farmers who are using urea deep placement (UDP) technology.

In addition, the group visited with two briquette-making entrepreneurs who had their machines operating so that the visitors could observe the manufacture of the briquettes. The group then visited a nearby village to meet another entrepreneur and to observe farmers applying briquettes in the field.

"I was impressed with what I observed of the UDP technology, particularly the level of adoption," says Ihara. "We learned that Tangail has the highest concentration of UDP users in Bangladesh. In the village we visited, we were told that about 90% of the farmers are using UDP. The farmers reported that they are receiving good results with the technology—high yields, less urea requirements, one-time application of urea, and more income than with broadcast urea application."

The views of the farmers were very positive concerning UDP. In fact, they are applying the technology on all of their paddy land because they receive higher yields by applying a smaller quantity of urea. The requirement of labor for the application of urea supergranules (USG) was not a constraint to them because the saving on urea was greater than their labor cost. Most of the farmers have used UDP technology for the past 3-6 years, and every year the number of farmers and area of use are increasing. ♦

IFDC Board Member and JICA Auditor, Hiroyoshi Ihara, visits an ANMAT project site.

(Photo by Dr. Walter T. Bowen)

Bangladesh Farmer Profile

Habibur Rahman and his wife

(Photo by Dr. Walter T. Bowen)

Habibur Rahman, a 35-year old farmer, hails from Kumargata village in Bangladesh, 130 km northwest of Dhaka. Rahman is a primary school teacher and model farmer of the area. Because he is a respected teacher, local farmers take his advice on modern cultivation practices. Interested in agriculture since childhood, he learned about UDP technology at a farmers' meeting in early 2003, which was organized by IFDC-ANMAT and supported by a non-governmental organization, Center for International Cooperation in Agronomic Research and Development (CIRAD). The local block supervisor also helped him initially with deep placement of USG/urea megagranules (UMG) in his rice field. On most of his cultivable land (4.85 ha) he grows rice, jute, and banana.

After learning about the UDP technology, Rahman started using it on a small plot of rice land on a trial basis about 2-1/2 years ago. Seeing the astounding growth difference with only a one-time application of urea—increased yield of paddy using approximately 40% less urea in the UDP plot—he was convinced. In the following year he extended his UDP area. Rahman harvested about 25% greater paddy yield, compared with that of broadcast urea. In the dry season 2005 (winter paddy) he further extended his UDP area. More than 2 tons of increased grain was harvested from the area with no additional cost for cultivation of the rice crop. When asked about the cost of additional labor required for deep placement of the urea briquettes, he answered with a smile that the value of saving on urea well covered the cost of the labor. He also observed comparatively less weed growth in the UDP plot.

Local farmers asked him about the secret of better crop performance in his field and how to deep place UMG in their paddy land. He told them where they could purchase UMG. Approximately 50 neighboring farmers used UMG during the dry 2005 season in their paddy field and harvested good crops. Rahman says that he will continue using UMG in his future paddy crops because he has observed that the UDP technology is a profitable technology for him, and he advises neighboring farmers to do the same. ♦

* USG = Urea supergranule (weight, 0.9 gram per granule); **UMG=Urea megagranule (weight, 2.7 gram per granule)

Kyrgyzstan Project Yields Remarkable Results

With funding from USAID, IFDC has been working to improve agribusiness prospects in Kyrgyzstan since September 2001. At the beginning of the project IFDC's activities were concentrated on the creation of the Association of Agribusinessmen of Kyrgyzstan (AAK), which includes 120 private suppliers of agricultural inputs, primarily in the south.

For the past 2 years, IFDC activities have focused primarily on the institutional development of the AAK trade association and the capabilities of its member businesses to deliver inputs of seed, fertilizer, crop protection products (CPPs) and other farm supplies to farmer customers. Other areas of emphasis include demonstrations and dissemination of information on best management practices, which can be transferred by association members to their customers—the farmers.


(Photo by Hiqmet Demiri)

The Executive Director of AAK, Aziza Yuldasheva, addresses the association members as Dr. Amit H. Roy and Scott J. Wallace, Chief of Party, IFDC/Kyrgyzstan (right), look on.

"In 2001 legal imports of fertilizer in southern Kyrgyzstan amounted to only 729 tons, and the contraband market was almost 90% of total fertilizer sales," says Scott J. Wallace, Chief of Party, IFDC/Kyrgyzstan. "In 2004, legal fertilizer imports in the south reached nearly 35,000 tons (a 4,000 % increase) and are expected to reach more than 60,000 tons in 2005! In the past, the supply of fertilizer during the planting season would decline, and the local market price would often double. However, current market prices (as of May 1, 2005) have remained stable, and the warehouses are stocked at an appropriate level to satisfy the local market demand."

Based on an annual IFDC survey of association members, the number of members who conducted fertilizer sales increased by 38.7% in 2004, compared with that of 2003. In addition, in 2003 there were only 3 members who conducted fertilizer sales valued at more that $25,000; in 2004 that number increased to 7 dealers. Thus, a competitive fertilizer market is taking shape in Kyrgyzstan.

"The association lobbied successfully for the removal of a 20% value-added tax (VAT) on fertilizer and CPPs," says Wallace. "The removal of this tax has translated into millions of dollars saved for small and large farmers, fertilizer dealers, and CPP suppliers. Ultimately this saving resulted in increased production of food for the Kyrgyz consumer at lower prices; at the same time the supply of low-quality contraband products was discouraged. The trade association members increased their legal fertilizer sales by 15-fold during the past 2 years."

The IFDC project, in conjunction with the trade association, organized the International Agro Expo, which attracted approximately 3,000 attendees. Exhibitors, representing more than 50 agricultural companies from 14 countries, made more than 650 new contacts for business opportunities. ♦

IFDC Engineer Participates in Pre-Feasibility Study of Nigeria's Ammonia/ Urea Plant

USAID/Nigeria recently initiated a study of the ammonia/urea facility of Nigeria's National Fertilizer Company of Nigeria (NAFCON). Kees Oomen of Stokes Engineering Company (SEC) and Jorge Polo, IFDC Senior Technical Specialist, performed a pre-feasibility study for the urea fertilizer production facility. Of the three possibilities considered—(1) restarting the NAFCON facility, (2) building a new plant, or (3) relocating a used plant to Nigeria—the engineers decided the most efficient way to re-establish urea production in Nigeria is to privatize, rehabilitate, and restart NAFCON. However, to meet the projected fertilizer demand, it will also be necessary to build a new plant that would be operational within a few years.

NAFCON, a government-owned company, is Nigeria's only urea production facility. It consists of a 1,000-tpd Kellogg ammonia plant, a 1,500-tpd Stamicarbon urea plant, five granulation drums of 300 tpd each, and all associated utilities and off-site facilities. NAFCON began operations in 1988 and operated at 120% of capacity for several years. Because of management and other related problems, the plant ceased operations in 1995. The Nigerian government is trying to settle NAFCON's liabilities and sell the facility to the private sector.

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"NAFCON's ammonia and urea plants and associated support facilities appear to be in fairly good condition and can be rehabilitated for an affordable cost," says Polo. "Extensive rehabilitation is needed and can be completed at a reasonable cost. Natural gas is available and is competitive with world prices. Foreign and/or domestic investment could quickly and profitably re-establish NAFCON as the sole urea-producing facility in West Africa."

The privatization and rehabilitation of the NAFCON plant presents a good opportunity for private investment, both local and foreign, and the Nigerian Government is taking steps for its privatization. To satisfy the immediate market demand and keep the agricultural sector growing at its current 7% per year, Nigeria needs about 700,000 tpy of granular urea. Importing urea creates logistical problems; because of high shipping costs to Nigeria, expensive port and handling charges, and local transportation costs, farmers must pay very high prices.

As already indicated, to meet the projected fertilizer demand, Nigeria will need an additional urea plant, which would also use gas that the oil producers are currently flaring. According to Government sources, in the future fertilizer production in Nigeria will be carried out by the private sector only. A copy of the pre-feasibility study for rehabilitating the NAFCON facility and building a new plant is available from IFDC—contact: Jorge Polo at jpolo@ifdc.org.

"The alternative of relocating a used ammonia/urea facility in addition to refurbishing the NAFCON unit can be fully analyzed only after the selling price of a unit and its relocation costs are determined," says Polo. "However, the available used units are smaller than today's designs and are unlikely to be competitive." ♦

NAFCON's 1,500 mtpd urea plant (Stamicarbon design).

(Photos by Kees Oomen of SEC)

An air compressor in the NAFCON ammonia plant.

PRODEPAM Project Targets Economic Growth in Mali

The Program for the Development of Agricultural Production in Mali (PRODEPAM) is a 5-year program, financed by USAID/Mali and implemented by a consortium of international organizations. The consortium includes the leader of the project—Cooperative League of the USA—and IFDC, SHELADIA Associates, Inc., Land O'Lakes, Approtech, and International Biotech Regulatory Services.

The program, covering six regions in Mali, contributes directly to achieve the Government's priorities. PRODEPAM focuses on increasing the productivity and incomes of selected agricultural sub-sectors and Malian finance and trade projects. To achieve this result, program activities are being designed to achieve the following four results:

1. Irrigated land rehabilitated and expanded;
2. Increased access to improved animal feeds;
3. Improved community-based natural resources management; and

(Photo by Sy Alain Traore)

Farmers visit rice seed production fields in Mali.

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4. Access to agricultural inputs and technology, including the promotion of seeds and biotechnology.

IFDC's contribution emphasizes agricultural intensification, input accessibility, and natural resource management. Its approach is based on facilitation of linkages between producers and local development organizations oriented toward market and institutional development.

The initial activities of the IFDC team involved a training course of partners' organizations covering the ideas and tools regarding integrated soil fertility management (ISFM) strategies. Sixty-five field agents have been trained. Furthermore, the IFDC team conducted participatory diagnostics in 15 sites to determine problems specific to each irrigation scheme and facilitated the definition of action plans for every site.

"One of IFDC's main activities during the first year of implementation involved introduction of improved seeds at the local level," says Dr. Kabirou N'Diaye, PRODEPAM/IFDC Team Leader. "To increase the access of producers to improved rice varieties in southern Mali, 73 farmers have been trained to become seed producers. As a group they produced about 10,000 kg of Nerica 4, a variety developed by the Africa Rice Center (WARDA), covering about 30 hectares. The availability and qualities of the Nerica 4 have been promoted during farmer field days that have involved more than 200 farmers."

Simultaneously, support was provided to develop the seed commodity chain at the national level. IFDC organized a national forum for 65 participants including the seed producers' association, international research institutions, and various projects supporting seed production. The main result of the forum was the formulation of recommendations on how to improve the coordination and collaboration between the various actors operating in seed production.

"Other important activities focused on the improvement of the access to and use of fertilizers," says N'Diaye. "These activities included the training of 123 farmers in compost making. The technique that was presented involved a rapid method of compost making that shortens the decomposition cycle to 2 months."

In April 2005 three regional workshops were conducted in Mopti, Gao and Tombouctou and attracted about 100 participants representing farmer groups and unions, micro-financing structures, inputs dealers, local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and projects. On the basis of successful experiences in Togo and Niger, activities were planned to increase the access of farmers' groups to mineral fertilizers and other agricultural inputs. ♦

IFDC Conducts Madagascar Study

The agriculture sector is the backbone of Madagascar's economy, but because of the low use of modern inputs (seeds and fertilizer), agricultural productivity is low, and the incidence of poverty is high in rural areas. Realizing the importance of these modern inputs for the successful development of the agriculture sector in Madagascar, the USAID-funded Business and Market Expansion (BAMEX) program invited IFDC to conduct an assessment of seed and fertilizer markets and propose changes for improving the supply of agricultural inputs. The assessment team's key recommendations stressed the creation of an enabling policy environment, strengthening and development of the dealer networks and market information system, improved access to finance for importers and dealers, and development of a national system for the provision of extension services.

The findings and recommendations of the study were presented at a National Stakeholders' Workshop on January 26, 2005, in Antananarivo, Madagascar. The workshop was attended by more than140 stakeholders. Stakeholders from both the public and private sectors expressed their strong support for the implementation of the recommendations. The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MAEP), BAMEX, and USAID are discussing with other donors options for funding the implementation of the recommendations.

The Government of Madagascar is firmly committed to market reform and privatization. This commitment has been recognized by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) responsible for implementing the Millennium Challenge Account. The Account is a new foreign assistance program designed to provide aid to countries that demonstrate commitment to investing in health and education, economic freedom, and good governance.

In April 2005 Madagascar became the first country to sign a compact with the

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MCC. The compact is for $110 million for 4 years. This grant will support a program for improving livelihood in rural areas. It involves three projects: land reform, finance, and agribusiness.

In this regard, the Managing Director of Agricultural Programs of the MCC, Felipe Manteiga, invited IFDC to make a presentation on March 9, 2005, regarding IFDC's work in general and the Madagascar assessment in particular. Dr. Maria N. Wanzala, Policy Economist, made a presentation entitled "Developing a Competitive Fertilizer Market in Madagascar." She also discussed IFDC's research and development programs in general.

"My presentation covered the functioning and performance of the fertilizer market, constraints affecting its performance, and measures needed to strengthen the functioning of the fertilizer market," says Wanzala. "The private sector has the potential to supply fertilizers in an efficient and effective manner, but this potential must be unleashed by removing the policy, human capital, finance, and regulatory constraints preventing the private sector from realizing its full potential."

Wanzala's presentation was well received and generated discussions on UDP technology developed by IFDC and its suitability for Madagascar, mechanisms for linking farmers to input and output markets, and establishing channels to improve farmer access to inputs and finance. ◆

Angola Fertilizer Supply and Use Strategy Developed

Angola emerged from a 27-year civil war in April 2002. The country is now in a critical period of transition from emergency to development and faces three key socioeconomic challenges: poverty, food insecurity, and soil nutrient depletion. The agricultural sector must overcome these challenges and place Angola on the road to broad-based economic growth.

However, agricultural production is characterized by the low use of external inputs; fertilizer use on food crops is minimal and restricted to localized areas of rice production. To increase agricultural productivity, produce a marketable surplus, and generate income, Angolan farmers must modernize their agricultural practices and increase the use of improved agricultural technologies such as mineral fertilizers.

Realizing the importance of modern inputs in promoting food security and protecting the natural resource base, USAID/Angola requested IFDC to conduct an assessment of fertilizer supply and use and develop a strategy for its improved performance. The assessment was conducted by a team of national and international experts during August 26-September 26, 2004. The assessment team included Dr. Lawrence L. Hammond (Soil Fertility Specialist and Team Leader), Dr. Maria N. Wanzala (Agricultural Economist), and Steven Van Kauwenbergh (Geologist). The preliminary findings and recommended strategy for the development of a competitive fertilizer marketing system in Angola were presented to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER), the U.S. Embassy, and other stakeholders on September 24, 2004.

"In developing our recommended strategy, the team assessed various options for fertilizer distribution in Angola," says Dr. Hammond. "We concluded that the competitive marketing system should be used to supply this input to the farmers because it is relatively more efficient and sustainable and does not strain the fiscal resources of the country."

"We recognized that liberalization and privatization have been necessary but not sufficient to unleash the market forces and, consequently, the fertilizer market in Angola remains weak and undeveloped," Wanzala says. "Therefore, we recommended that the liberalized markets be strengthened by undertaking activities in the areas of policy reform, human capital formation, improved financial services, market information systems, and legal and regulatory frameworks."

The team also recommended that these activities be undertaken in a holistic manner so that the synergies of various activities can be captured. The final report, which incorporated suggestions and comments from the various stakeholders, was submitted in March 2005. IFDC is pursuing options for the implementation of the recommendations under the auspices of a donor-funded development project.

"We also conducted an assessment of the potential for the use of Angolan natural resources for local production of nitrogen and/or phosphate fertilizers," says Van Kauwenbergh. "Two phosphate deposits are located in Angola, and analysis is in progress to determine if the reserves are sufficient to support a phosphate fertilizer industry. Likewise, natural gas is abundant in Angola, and a feasibility study for a liquefied natural gas project and an ammonia project is currently being conducted by the Government of Angola. IFDC is evaluating the merits of including a urea project to consume partially future supplies of the ammonia." ◆

Tanzania Action Plan Prepared

Although agriculture is of critical importance for the economic growth of Tanzania, crop yields are low due to the low use of external inputs. For example, in contrast to 16 kg/ha of fertilizer nutrients applied in Malawi, 51 kg/ha in South Africa, and 103 kg/ha in India, Tanzania uses only 7kg/ha of fertilizer nutrients.

During the 1990s, the Government of Tanzania introduced several policy reforms including privatization of the input supply system. However, these measures have failed to revitalize input use. Guided by low input use and inadequate and untimely supply of inputs in rural areas, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), Government of Tanzania, requested IFDC and SG 2000 to conduct an assessment of input supply systems in the country and suggest suitable measures for improvement.

Between October 2003 and March 2004, a team of international and national experts, led by IFDC, conducted an assessment of the inputs market in Tanzania and developed an "Action Plan for Developing Agricultural Input Markets in Tanzania." The assessment team included Dr. Balu L. Bumb (Policy Economist and Team Leader), M. Feisal Beig (Marketing Specialist), Dr. Maria N. Wanzala (Agricultural Economist), F. Muhhuku (Seed Specialist), Dr. C. Mataya (Credit Specialist), S. Masagasi (Input Specialist), and N. T. Msomba (Private Sector Specialist).

"The assessment of the inputs markets (seed, fertilizer, and CPPs) included an analysis of the structure of the markets, the constraints affecting the performance of these markets, and the measures needed to improve their performance," says Dr. Bumb.

On August 26, 2004, MAFS organized a Stakeholders' Workshop in Dar es Salaam to assess and validate the proposed action plan for improving input supply in the country. More than 100 stakeholders from both the public and private sectors and the donor community participated in the workshop. The workshop deliberations included a keynote address by W. Ngirwa, Permanent Secretary, MAFS; brief remarks by T. McAndrews, Leader, Economic Growth Group at USAID/Tanzania, and Dr. Marco Quinones, Regional Director for Africa, Sasakawa Global 2000; and a detailed presentation of the action plan by Dr. Bumb.


(Photo by M. Feisal Beig)

An agri-inputs dealer's shop in Tanzania.

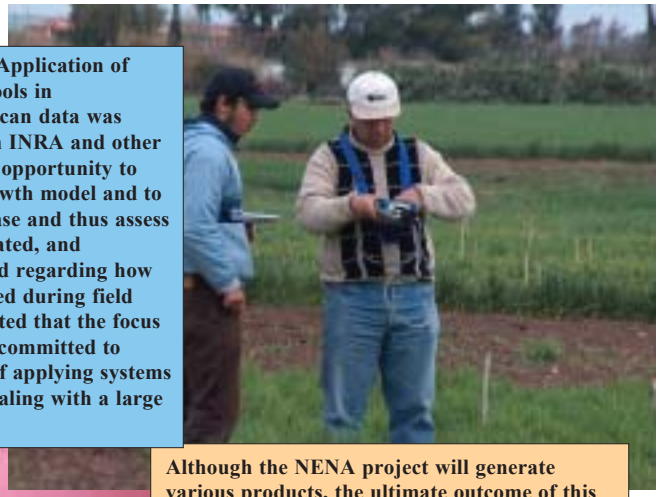
Ngirwa stressed the need for improving input supply in the context of the new agricultural strategy that the country has launched. McAndrews discussed the new USAID strategic plan focusing on policy, regulatory reforms, production groups, and the role that adequate and timely supply of inputs play in fulfilling agricultural growth goals for Tanzania. Quinones explained why SG 2000 supported this activity and how it supports on-going SG 2000 programs for crop production and food security.

Bumb discussed the rationale, nature, and scope for the action plan based on five other action plans that IFDC and its partners have prepared for developing agricultural inputs markets (AIMs) in Africa. He identified constraints in three areas, including macropolicy, market development, and technical constraints. He emphasized that the private sector has good potential to supply inputs, but many factors regarding policy, human capital, finance, and regulation were constraining the private sector from realizing its full potential. He recommended a proactive approach to create the necessary capacity in the private sector for input supply.

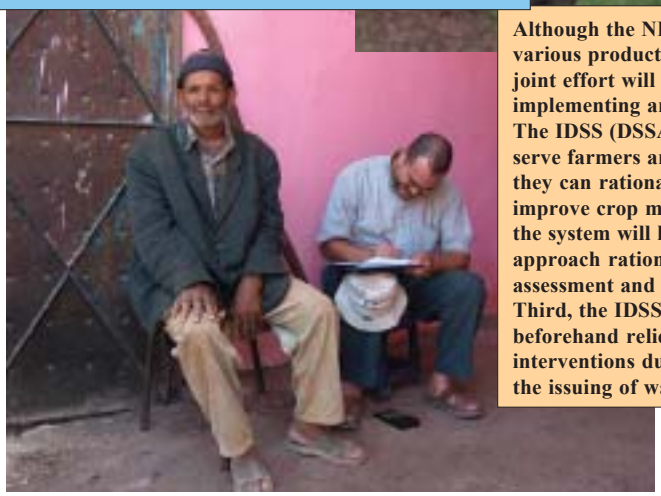
The approach should be implemented holistically, that is, focusing on the five pillars of market development—policy, human capital, finance, information, and regulation—to realize the synergistic benefits of these measures. After the opening session, workshop participants were divided into three working groups—seed, fertilizer, and CPPs—to discuss the input-specific recommendations included in the action plan. The group discussions basically endorsed the recommendations of the action plan with minor modifications.

IFDC is currently exploring innovative ways of implementing the action plan. Tanzania has made considerable progress during the past 5 years, achieved macroeconomic stability, improved institutional and physical infrastructure, and promoted greater private sector participation. A program of policy, technology, and private sector development has a good chance of being successful in Tanzania. ♦

Morocco Project Improves Agricultural Input Efficiency and Reduces Production Risks



A training workshop on Testing and Application of Information and Decision Support Tools in Agricultural Production using Moroccan data was conducted to train collaborators from INRA and other agricultural institutions. This was an opportunity to test and validate the DSSAT crop growth model and to incorporate the socioeconomic database and thus assess impact. The training was positively rated, and recommendations have been suggested regarding how to improve the quality of data collected during field trials and experiments. It was suggested that the focus should be on a small group of people committed to building a core of scientists capable of applying systems analysis and modeling rather than dealing with a large group.



Although the NENA project will generate various products, the ultimate outcome of this joint effort will lead to developing and implementing an IDSS for cereal production. The IDSS (DSSAT-GIS link) will primarily serve farmers and stakeholders in ways that they can rationalize agricultural inputs and improve crop management planning. Second, the system will help insurance companies to approach rationally drought-induced disaster assessment and refine the compensation system. Third, the IDSS will allow policy makers to plan beforehand relief operations, proper interventions during the growing season, and the issuing of warnings.

(Photos by Dr. Mustapha Naimi)

With funding from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), IFDC is helping to improve agricultural input use efficiency and reduce cereal production risks in both Morocco and Syria—the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region. IFDC scientists are working with national agricultural research centers such as the National Agronomic Research Institute (INRA) in Morocco and the General Commission for Scientific Agricultural Research (GCSAR) and the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) in Syria to compile and assess historical and experimental data for the decision support system for validation of the agro-technology transfer (DSSAT) crop growth model.

The goal of the NENA Project is to use climate forecast and crop husbandry information linked with GIS and decision support systems such as DSSAT to offer farmers the best management options to increase wheat yields, reduce risks (climatic and price-related), and improve resource-use efficiency. Water and nitrogen are the key limiting resources for wheat production in the region. "The DSSAT models are being validated using data from field experiments conducted previously by national agricultural research centers in both Morocco and Syria," says Dr. Mustapha Naimi, IFDC Agricultural Systems Modeler—Decision Support Systems. "Unfortunately existing field trials and experiments are rarely recorded and archived; they are consistently poorly documented to conform to model input needs and often lack basic field data."

Results from previous cereal crop production research in the region are in general fragmented and inconsistent from one year to the next and among regions. For many years it has been difficult to furnish reliable crop management recommendations to farmers, particularly in rain-fed areas. For instance, extensive research on fallow-wheat and legume-wheat systems, has proven crop rotation to be effective regarding the use efficiency of water and nutrients. The utility of crop residues management in sustaining cereal production has also been established.

Meanwhile such management practices are rarely adopted by farmers. Even though crops during the present growing season suffered severe mid- and late-season droughts, the crops of farmers who adopted the above-mentioned management techniques have been only slightly affected.

The information decision support system (IDSS) comprised of DSSAT crop models, GIS, soils database, historical and forecast weather data, and socio-economic data is a framework that delivers appropriate management recommendations to farmers. The management options are based on scientifically sound and current information. "By combining these data and changing simulation options, the system will produce valuable outputs to farmers and stakeholders in the region," says Naimi. "A soil database has been compiled from various soil studies, and weather data have been collected from different stations. Crop management options and socio-economic data have been derived from baseline survey questionnaires."

A survey to create a baseline data set that describes agricultural practices of a sample of farm households was conducted. The sample selected was stratified according to agro-climatic zone and farm size. About 100 households were chosen from the general agricultural census in each region. The purpose of the baseline survey is to create a socio-economic and agronomic profile of households prior to the dissemination of IDSS recommendations to improve agricultural input efficiency and reduce production risks for grain. Near the end of the project, a second survey will be conducted to determine the changes in the socioeconomic and agronomic profile that resulted from households using those recommendations. Through this process, the impact of the project will be measured. ♦

The MIR Project Promotes a Regional Cotton Market in West Africa

The Marketing Inputs Regionally (MIR) project began in June 2003 with funding from the Netherlands Minister for Development Cooperation (DGIS). The project supports the creation of an enabling environment for the development of a regional, transparent, and competitive agricultural inputs market in West Africa to improve the availability and affordability of agricultural inputs.

One component of the project is a strategy to promote the regional cotton market. Cotton production is an important example of success in the agricultural development of West and Central Africa, particularly in the countries of the francophone zone but also in Nigeria and Ghana.

This success is due to the adoption of an integrated approach, often called the "cotton system." This approach ensures inputs procurement (fertilizers, pesticides, and credit); the offer of agricultural services (popularization, training and support to the producers' organizations); and the organization of marketing and installation of basic economic and social infrastructure (roads, schools, and health centers). This "cotton system" has had multiplier effects on agriculture (especially, cereals production); the access to household services; economic development of the cotton zones; and the entire economy of the countries.

"This strategy consists of an integrated approach to the management of soils and crops and control of parasites," says Dr. Sylvain Roy, MIR Project Coordinator. "It also organizes the principals involved to improve the procurement of cotton inputs. Since the beginning of the project, cotton companies and farmers' organizations have received MIR's assistance through support, advice and training. This assistance has made it possible to reduce the transaction costs and the price of some fertilizers."

The cotton sub-sector of MIR also provided for the support of researchers on current subjects such as biotechnology and genetically modified organisms (GMOs). For example, in November 2004 MIR co-organized a regional workshop to support decision-making on biotechnology and biosafety. Researchers in many countries from West and Central Africa participated in the event. Thus, the same researchers, who also serve as advisers in their respective governments, are better able to appreciate the opportunities and the risks associated with new technologies and GMOs. The question regarding the introduction of genetically modified cotton is strongly debated in West Africa.

In addition, under the aegis of the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (WECARD) and with the Agricultural Research Center for Cotton and Fibers (CRA-CF) of the Benin National Institute of Agricultural Research (INRAB), MIR contributed to the development and the effective conduct of the Cotton Conference of Central and West Africa, held on May 10-12, 2005, in Cotonou, Benin. This conference covered the general topics of African cotton's future and the expectations regarding sub-sectors regarding agronomic research. Specifically, the following topics were covered: (1) the market's expectations on the qualities of fiber, (2) global fertilizer consumption, (3) the situation of Africa and African cotton, (4) legislation and regulation of crop protection products and their application (genetically modified cotton). More than 150 prospective participants, including cotton researchers of the entire region and that of the northern partners, all international suppliers who co-financed this conference, cotton producers and companies, ginners, spinners, inputs distributors, and the African cotton association, participated in this event.

(Photo by Raphaël Vogelsperger)

Aglow, agri-input dealer in Accra, Ghana.

"In short, within a few months, the MIR Project has started creating a truly contemporary agricultural inputs market in West Africa," says Roy. "However, several actions must be developed and reinforced to reach sustainable results. Other sub-sectors must also be strengthened; particularly non-tariff barriers (illicit taxes, fraudulent imports, and times at the border posts) must be repressed."

MIR has started a support strategy for umbrella farmers' organizations in West Africa to implement a true advocacy plan. MIR is interested in developing access to agricultural inputs credit for traders and farmers. By late 2005, MIR plans to enlist the participation of financial associations representing banks and microfinancial institutions. Ultimately, the objective is to encourage the development of relationships between producers, traders, and credit providers. ♦

Long-Time Friend of the Developing Countries Dies

With the death on March 23, 2005, of Dr. John L. Malcolm, former USAID/IFDC Agricultural Specialist and USAID Representative on the IFDC Board of Directors, the developing countries lost a long-time friend. Dr. Malcolm was always looking for innovative ways that he could help promote agricultural development in the developing countries. Born in 1920, Dr. Malcolm earned his Ph.D. in soils chemistry from Rutgers University. He joined USAID in 1959 and served as a Foreign Service Officer in El Salvador during 1959-63; New Delhi, India, 1963-68; and in the Bureau of Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade, Washington, DC, during 1969-1996. During 1968/69 he was employed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Dr. Malcolm played a key role in the establishment of IFDC and served as Cognizant Technical Officer until his retirement from USAID in 1996. Because of his influence on IFDC's formation and following through on its continued growth, the organization owes a deep gratitude to the man who assisted the Center in its development and growth. Memorial gifts may be made to the South Asia Relief Fund at http://www.er-d.org or by calling 1-800-334-7626, ext. 5129; gifts can be mailed to Episcopal Relief and Development, South Asia Relief Fund, P.O. Box 12043, Newark, NJ 07101. ♦

Announcements

John H. Allgood, Director of the Finance and Administration Department, has been named Interim Director of the Market Development Division. Previously he served as Chief of Party for a major policy reform and technology transfer project in Bangladesh. He has more than 30 years of experience in the evaluation, planning, and development of fertilizer marketing systems in Asia and Africa.

Ed A. Beaman, Chief of Party/Kyrgyzstan, previously served as President and CEO of the Agribusiness Association of Iowa. Beaman has more than 20 years of experience in agribusiness. Previously he served as a consultant to the Albania and Kosovo projects.

Dr. Ylli Bicoku, Interim Chief of Party/Tajikistan, has more than 24 years of experience in government and international development projects. He previously served in various capacities in IFDC projects in Albania, Azerbaijan, and Kosovo.

Dr. Thomas W. Crawford, Jr., joined IFDC in April 2005 as Director of the Resource Development Division (RDD). He received a Ph.D. in soil science and an M.S. in ecology from the University of California, Davis; and an A.B. in religion from the University of California, Berkeley. Prior to joining IFDC, he served the University of Nebraska as Associate Program Director, assisting the Program Director in all aspects of managing a program supporting collaborative research, graduate degree education, and training at seven U.S. universities, a research station of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and in more than 20 countries as Associate Director of the International Sorghum and Millet Collaborative Research Support Program (INTSORMIL).

Dr. Marjatta Eilittä joined IFDC in February 2005, as Senior Scientist – Agronomy. Eilittä received a Ph.D. in agronomy from the University of Florida, M.S. in crop production from the University of Helsinki, Finland, and a B.A. in the history of science from Harvard University. She recently completed an assignment with the Rockefeller Foundation facilitating global networking and information exchange on soil fertility management technologies for tropical smallholder farms while posted in Ghana.

Ian Gregory, Director of the Market Development Division, has transferred to the Office of the President as Principal Scientist. For more than 3 years Gregory directed IFDC's overseas agribusiness projects in Afghanistan, Albania, Azerbaijan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, and Nigeria. Throughout his career he has provided leadership to development projects in more than 40 countries.

Scott J. Wallace, after serving as Chief of Party/Kyrgyzstan for the past 2 years, has returned to IFDC Headquarters as Agribusiness Specialist. ♦

IFDC
2005 International Training Calendar

Training Program/Workshop	Dates	Location	Program Fee, US $	Late Program Fee, US $
1. Fertilizer Marketing Management	September 5-16	Bangkok, Thailand	2,000	2,300
2. Phosphate Fertilizer Production Technology Workshop (on behalf of IFA)	September 26-30	Brussels, Belgium	2,100 (IFA Members) 2,200 (non-IFA)	2,200 2,300
3. Competitive Agricultural Systems and Enterprises (in French)	November 14-18	Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso	1,000	1,200

Note: A non-refundable deposit of $200 is required with each registration. The deposit will be credited toward the program fee, which is due 4 weeks before the program is scheduled. Thereafter, a *late fee* will apply. The program fee, less the deposit, will be refunded for cancellation made 2 weeks before the commencement of the program; thereafter, 90% of the paid fee will be returned and 10%, in addition to the deposit, will be charged to cover administrative costs.

IFDC reserves the right to cancel any program or change the dates and/or venue of any program without liability for compensation.

CASE: An Innovative Solution to Sub-Saharan Food Insecurity

An innovative solution is needed to help remedy sub-Saharan Africa's agricultural marketing dilemma. The challenges include: (1) under-developed markets; (2) lack of coordination among the various actors—farmers, local entrepreneurs, traders, and consumers; (3) limited integration of market segments; and (4) scarcity of managerial and organizational competencies to access and filter information, to develop networks, and to strengthen bargaining power. IFDC's answer is the Competitive Agricultural Systems and Enterprises (CASE) approach, which has developed gradually.

"CASE is a unique mix of ideas and provides a realistic, balanced roadmap to sustainable intensification and market development," says Dr. Arno Maatman, Leader of the Africa Division's Agribusiness Development Program. "CASE is rightly considered an approach at the crossroads between highly diverse farming systems and specialized commodity chains, involving a multitude of actors and diverse requirements related to quality, traceability, and acceptable price ranges."

Although the participatory development of ISFM technologies was a central concept of IFDC's work in Sub-Saharan Africa, the focus gradually shifted to include input distribution and financial services.

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CASE promotes fair competition, which invites farms and enterprises to innovate, maintain, and strengthen their competitive position.

(Photo by W. A. Toose)

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"During the past few years, our projects have also embraced processing and marketing of agricultural produce," Maatman says. "Networking between buyers, producers, and traders has become a very important activity."

IFDC has invested much energy in maintaining partnerships with the traditional partners such as the national agricultural research and extension services and several NGOs. New partnerships are being developed with farmers' organizations, traders' organizations, and private business development services.

The ISFM project in its early stages succeeded in developing learning activities at the village level and validating and disseminating options that improved fertilizer use efficiencies and the ecological sustainability of the agricultural production systems involved. However, the progressive initiatives that relate to the CASE approach have strengthened the integration of farmers and local entrepreneurs in supply value chains. Consequently, the technology push character of the ISFM project has changed, and the innovation is progressively responsive to changes in market outlets and tuned to the preferences of specific consumer groups. Fair competition also invites farms and enterprises to innovate and to maintain and strengthen their competitive position. Improved production technologies and high-quality seeds for tomato production in northern Togo, for example, have provided this region with significant competitive advantages and increased bargaining power. Value can be added to agricultural products by using different varieties and by improving processing and storage.

"The CASE approach has been implemented in small pilot projects in several regions in West Africa, and the results are encouraging," Maatman says. "Our conservative estimate is that at least 75,000 farmers have successfully adopted ISFM technologies. Value:cost ratios of ISFM options adopted are well above 2. Returns to (family) labor are 6 times higher than the average salary in the area, and farm-level incomes of ISFM farmers have increased by 20%-50%. Crop yields have dramatically increased and often doubled. At least 300 local entrepreneurs are involved in input supply, processing, storage and marketing; many of them have received training in business management and building customer relationships. Farmer groups have experimented with inventory credit systems and are gradually developing stronger linkages with microfinancial institutions. Farmer organizations at the grassroots have been linked to national-level organizations to improve access to information and lobby for transparent decision making."

The capacity building and empowerment aspects of the CASE approach are enormously important. This requires the development of clusters of farms, enterprises, business development services, and other facilitating and lobbying institutions at various levels along key commodity chains. CASE has the potential of becoming a strong building block of the Common African Agricultural Development Policy (CAADP) of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), next to national and international initiatives striving for good governance and enabling environments. ♦

Sixteen Azeri Businessmen Participate in U.S. Study Tour

(Photo by Charles E. Butler)

Participants in the Azeri agribusiness study tour pose with IFDC staff.

When Ilyas Valiyev participated in a 3-week agribusiness study tour in the United States, as Head of the International Relations Department of Azerbaijan's Ministry of Agriculture, he was very interested in the structure and implementation of agricultural policy in the United States.

Ilyas and 15 of his countrymen visited both private sector businesses and public sector government agencies in Alabama, Iowa, Maryland, and Washington, D.C., during May 9-27, 2005. The program provided an opportunity for the participants to acquire knowledge about the U.S. agricultural system and develop plans to apply lessons and practices in Azerbaijan.

Accompanying the Azeris on their tour were Dan Waterman, Director of IFDC's Training and Workshop Coordination Department, and Manfred Smotzok, the former Chief of Party of IFDC/Azerbaijan.

Another participant, Farid Firidunov, Executive Director of the Azerbaijani Agri-Inputs Dealers' Association, expressed a concern about trade associations. "One

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of the main problems with trade associations in Azerbaijan has to do with sustainability," he says. "We need 5-10 years of support in order to develop a trade association into a sustainable entity. Many technical assistance projects do not last long enough to provide for this sustainability."

In the United States, the Azeri businessmen learned how valuable advocacy is to the development of the agricultural sector. Firidunov had this to say, "Our association wants to change the seed law in Azerbaijan. We now know that to change the seed registration legislation, we must advocate for this. We must collaborate with the news media by conducting a roundtable discussion of the subject on television. The media is the most effective tool to bring about changes in the agriculture sector."

"On this tour we visited with the Iowa Agribusiness Association and analyzed the lobbying activities of the association—their mechanisms," Firidunov says. "When we return to Azerbaijan, we will begin to collaborate closely with the Ministry of Agriculture and the members of Parliament."

The tour participants gained valuable insights into the relationships between the government and farmers. "In our country, the Ministry of Agriculture protects the interests of the Government; now we will begin to support the interest of farmers—the rural population," Valiyev says.

The participants were struck by the organizational ability of the farmers. "We were very interested in how farmers organized themselves," Valiyev says. "In the United States, the Government does not interfere with the activities of farmers. We were intrigued by the fact that changes occur from the bottom up—from the 'grassroots.'"

During the program the participants worked together on case studies designed to examine constraints confronting agribusiness in Azerbaijan and finding solutions. The group focused on developing a holistic strategy for the tomato commodity chain in Azerbaijan.

The exercise emphasized the necessity for collaboration between the public and private sectors if Azerbaijan is to succeed in revitalizing the agriculture sector and competing for its own and export markets. The case study included the value of forming trade associations and how to use them to improve extension, market information, quality improvements, marketing, policy reforms, expedited registration, and joint efforts to improve production of key crops. ♦

Mali's Minister of Agriculture Voices His Concerns About Sub-Saharan Africa's Agricultural Development

Q: Honorable Minister, what do you foresee on the horizon as far as the future prospects of Sub-Saharan Africa's agricultural development is concerned?

A: The development of agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa is quite promising for several reasons:

- Availability of technologies allowing an increase in production and productivity.
- The policy makers' will to make agriculture the engine of development through the building of integration at several levels: sub-regional with the Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa (UEMOA); regional with ECOWAS; and even continental with NEPAD. At each level, common agricultural policies are developed—the agricultural policy of UEMOA, the common agricultural policy of ECOWAS, and the agricultural component of NEPAD, which has just been adopted in Bamako. In the Malian context, the agricultural orientation law (LOA) illustrates the will of the Malian authorities to focus on food security.

The Honorable Seydou Traore, Minister of Agriculture, Republic of Mali

(Photo by Dr. Amadou Gakou)

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- The high involvement of all stakeholders in the process of designing and implementing agricultural policies. The involvement of farmer trade organizations is essential.

Q: What role do you see fertilizer—both inorganic and organic—playing in that future?

A: Fertilizers play a central role in increasing production and productivity. New technologies can only realize their full potential when mineral and organic fertilizers are applied. However, access to fertilizers from external sources and to the means of adding value to organic fertilizers is problematic. Concerning Mali, the Soil Fertility Management Action Plan, which is being implemented with technical and financial partners, emphasizes the Government's commitment to ensuring food security while preserving the productive potential.

Q: What are the main challenges that agriculture in Mali faces now and in the future?

A: Malian agriculture is faced with many challenges including:

- Low soil and labor productivity
- Poor organization of actors in the agricultural sectors
- Low awareness of quality issues
- Market control problems
- Low level of agricultural produce processing
- Low level of research funding

To these internal challenges must be added the problem of subsidy from some rich countries, which causes distortions at the global market level and jeopardizes the development of some sectors that are strategic for sub-Saharan Africa.

Q: What are the possible avenues through which IFDC can assist Mali's further agricultural development?

A: IFDC can assist Mali through the following:

- Seeking solutions to improve the productivity of various agricultural sectors.
- Improving access to low-cost external inputs.
- Improving the quality of agricultural produce—a necessary condition to increase market shares.

IFDC's support in these areas would be very useful. Moreover, within the regional or sub-regional framework, IFDC can assist in strengthening stakeholders' capacities for negotiations regarding agricultural issues.

Q: What do you view as the policy priorities for boosting Mali's agricultural growth?

A: To boost agricultural growth in a sustainable way, Mali has established some priority areas, including water control management, agricultural produce processing, and the development of regional markets to facilitate exchanges.

Q: What role is the smallholder farmer expected to play in the path to agricultural growth?

A: The smallholder farmer is at the center of Mali's agricultural development policy because this category includes most of the actors involved in agricultural production. However, in the context of market globalization and Government's withdrawal from the agricultural sector, discussions are underway regarding the role and involvement of the private sector in hydro-agricultural improvements. Even with this option, measures should be taken to protect smallholders' interests.

Q: How do you think the smallholders in Mali will benefit from the privatization of the cotton sector?

A: Smallholders will benefit from the privatization of the cotton sector in various ways, including the following:

- Participation in the Malian Cotton Development Company's (CMDT) capital through their organizations.
- Involvement in all decision-making situations regarding the development of the sector.
- Transparency in the sector's management with a better transfer of market prices to producers.

Q: The issue of "agricultural subsidies" is a politically volatile issue for both developing and developed countries. What is your opinion of agricultural subsidies?

A: I have a clear-cut opinion on the agricultural subsidies issue. I maintain that those who have elaborated the rules of the game regarding international trade must abide by them. Therefore, all subsidies that cause market distortions must be removed. ♦

Roy Projects Impact to Expand "From Thousands to Millions"

Capturing the imagination of the audience at the 73rd Annual Conference of the International Fertilizer Industry Association (IFA), Dr. Amit H. Roy, IFDC President and Chief Executive Officer, transported his listeners forward 20 years with his presentation entitled, "From Thousands to Millions." At the June 6-8 conference, Roy envisioned a better way of life for Africa's population through the elimination of hunger and poverty by 2025.

Selecting the village of Abomey, Benin, as his utopia, Roy depicted a place in time characterized by adequate housing, modern roads and other forms of transportation, good schools for all children, abundant food for everyone, suitable clothing for all, and modern farming equipment to make agriculture less labor-intensive—in short, a better way of life for all Africans.

Roy brought his audience back to reality with a flashback to 2005 and the challenges that sub-Saharan Africa faces today. Those challenges include relative overpopulation, overexploitation of the soil, low efficiency of external inputs, political instability, and issues related to globalization and competitiveness issues.

But how can we get to the projected Abomey of 2025? Roy illustrated how that improved lifestyle can be made possible through effective, results-oriented interventions such as ISFM, which improves the soil quality and increases the efficiency of using mineral fertilizers. "Soil fertility improvements make a positive difference, and farmers are eager and capable learners," he said. "However, soil fertility improvement is unsustainable unless farmers have access to markets for their outputs and their risks are reduced."

He explained that the barriers to a better tomorrow in sub-Saharan Africa include risks that are too high, limited available credit, underdeveloped rules for the sale and quality assurance of inputs, little or no access to input or output markets, high transportation costs, and limited market information. There are reasons for hope, including renewed interest in agriculture to drive economic development, the growing activity of sectors other than the fertilizer industry, and a qualified workforce in many African countries.

As Roy pointed out, "Building a vibrant regional market requires harmonization of regulations and other institutional development, reinforcement of the technical and operational capacities of the private sector, and fostering the exchange of information and expertise among all stakeholders in the marketing chain."

Roy illustrated how IFDC's MIR project is focusing on improving cotton production, gaining the interest of new international suppliers, creating a regulatory framework for fertilizer quality control, and assisting cotton companies in inputs procurement and outputs marketing. He further illustrated how the new MISTOWA project is working to strengthen regional market information systems and trade networks on the local, domestic, sub-regional and international levels.

Roy recognized IFA's support and foresight in helping to sponsor valuable soil fertility management projects in West Africa, which are now bearing fruit as witnessed by thousands of farm families whose lives have improved. Looking forward, he envisioned an expanded West African activity with a greater role for the fertilizer industry to scale the transformation up "From Thousands to Millions." He looks forward to an expanded role for the fertilizer industry in increasing the favorable impact on African farm families—going from "From Thousands to Millions."

In offering concrete suggestions for industry representatives, Roy encouraged IFA to be an active partner in broader market development activities and to help nurture the development of nascent input associations. ♦

Nitrogen Fertilizer Production Workshop Attracts 26 Engineers

On behalf of IFA, IFDC conducted a workshop on nitrogen fertilizer production technology during June 13-17, 2005. This activity, held in Maastricht, Netherlands, attracted 26 engineers from 14 countries, including Bahrain, Brazil, Croatia, Egypt, Germany, India, Indonesia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Netherlands, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and the United Kingdom.

"IFDC appreciates IFA's long-standing support, allowing us to conduct the nitrogen workshop periodically," says Dr. Amit H. Roy, IFDC President and Chief Executive Officer. "The latest workshop provided an in-depth view of nitrogen fertilizer production technologies and identified future trends and needs."

The training activity examined the status and most recent nitrogen fertilizer production technologies to produce fertilizers and intermediate materials. It also provided the participants with an opportunity to exchange ideas and disseminate information through discussion of the various technical, economic, safety, and environmental issues.

IFDC Senior Technical Specialist, Jorge R. Polo, was the manager of this workshop; Ramon Lazo de la Vega, Engineering Specialist, and Luisa M. De Faria, Engineering Specialist, assisted Polo.

"Engineers working in the fertilizer industry, particularly those who have recently assumed new responsibilities, increased their technical knowledge in nitrogen fertilizer production, and new engineers became better acquainted with new technologies in the industry," Polo says. "We gave special emphasis to the technology and operational procedures used to produce nitrogen fertilizers."

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The workshop addressed the following topics:

- A global overview and outlook of the nitrogen fertilizer industry
- Economics of the industry
- Ammonia production
- Nitrogen fertilizer production
- Fertilizer chemical and physical specifications and product quality
- Energy, environmental, and safety issues
- Packaging, transportation, and handling ♦

MIS Workshop Furthers MISTOWA's Goal of "Increasing Agricultural Trade in West Africa"

One of the participants in the International Training Program on MIS, conducted during June 20-24, 2005, in Accra, Ghana, summarized the experience in this way: "We learned strategies in data collection, processing, and dissemination. We became more familiar with issues regarding trade facilitation monitoring and evaluation of MIS for market development, market intelligence, and market research operations."

The 50 participants from 16 countries gained a better understanding of how to design, operate, and finance market information systems that generate effective and timely market information for agricultural producers, processors, and traders. Attendees were from these West African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo; the Central African country of Cameroon; the East African countries of Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania; and Indonesia. Tapping the regional network in West Africa, the workshop included lectures, interactive discussions, and practical applications.

"The benefits of increased access to trade-relevant information concerning agricultural production, supplies, wholesale and retail prices, trade, economic growth, and regional integration are well recognized," says Patrice Annequin, MIS Unit Manager of the IFDC/MISTOWA project. "Many developing and transitional countries have some type of public market information services, but in many cases they are not effective tools in promoting production and trade. Private sector service providers can help to fill the gap on a commercial basis. Trade and producer associations can play key roles in the generation and use of good market information."

The workshop analyzed the advantages and lessons of existing MIS. Presentations discussed ways to improve the collection, coordination, analysis, and dissemination of market-relevant data for agricultural trade in key products. Topics covered during the workshop included: providing valuable information regarding increased production, food quality and safety, exports, competitiveness, transportation costs, tariffs, access to credit, and food security.

Designed for public and private MIS managers, leaders of trade and producer organizations, and others who work on data management and agricultural trade-related programs, the workshop drew on the experience of successful MIS currently operating in Africa. These successful MIS professionals discussed the effective design, implementation, and sustainability of systems that meet the commercial needs of traders, agribusinessmen, and farmers. In addition, they discussed the need for linking national and regional MIS with regional economic and political organizations to ensure harmonization, efficiency, and sustainability.

The MISTOWA project, headquartered in Ghana and funded by USAID/WARP, organized the program and sponsored many of the participants. ♦

Conferences, Workshops, and Other Meetings Involving IFDC Staff

Inaugural Workshop on Global Environmental Change and Food Systems Decision Support Systems, January 9-12, 2005, Gainesville, Florida (U.S.A.), Purpose: To develop and use decision support tools for global environmental change and food systems analysis.

Madagascar National Stakeholders' Workshop, January 26, 2005, Antananarivo, Madagascar, Presentation of IFDC's Assessment of Seed and Fertilizer Markets and Proposed Changes for Improving Supply of Agricultural Inputs.

Second Annual Combined TFI Outlook Conference and Fertilizer Industry Roundtable Meeting, February 8, 2005, Orlando, Florida (U.S.A.).

Constitutive General Assembly and Official Launching of the Seed Producers' Association of Ghana (SEEDPAG), February 23-24, 2005, Accra, Ghana.

Planning Meeting for Federation of African Agro Input Trade Associations (FACIA), March 7-9, 2005, Bamako, Mali.

Millennium Challenge Corporation Seminar, March 9, 2005, Washington, D.C. A presentation was given regarding IFDC's work in Africa and the Madagascar assessment.

Advanced Training Course for Members of Ghana Agri-Input Dealers' Association (GAIDA) and Agrochemical Association of Ghana, March 15-16, 2005, Kumasi, Ghana.

Seminar Entitled "Poverty Alleviation As If the Rural People Mattered," March 17, 2005, Washington, D.C. (U.S.A.).

Bookkeeping Workshop for Regional Branches of GAIDA, March 17, 2005, Kumasi, Ghana.

Regional Consultative Workshop: Toward a Regulatory Framework for the Registration of Crop Protection Products in West Africa (in collaboration with ECOWAS and UEMOA, April 5-6, 2005, Abomey Calavi, Benin—Focus: To develop a roadmap for harmonizing the regulatory framework for CPPs in West Africa.

Technical Workshop for National Union of Cotton Producers (UNPC-B), April 5-7, 2005, Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso.

Workshop on Integrated Soil Fertility Management, April 11-15, 2005, Sogakope, Ghana, attracted 30 participants from 10 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Technical Workshop for National Union of Cotton Producers (UNPC-B), April 11-16 and April 18-22, 2005, Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso.

Marketing Training Program, April 12-14, 2005, Argentina, Designed for Profertil customers and staff.

Planning Meeting of the Apex Farmers' Organization of Ghana (APFOG), April 14-15, 2005, Accra, Ghana.

MIS Training Program, April 25-29, 2005, Rarotonga, Cook Islands, Conducted for the Center for Technical Cooperation in Agriculture and Rural Development.

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Southeast Climate Consortium Meeting, April 25-27, 2005, Gainesville, Florida (U.S.A.), IFDC's Role: To develop a geographic information system to display a wide array of climate-based data, including drought, fire hazard, and the impact of the ENSO events on Southeastern agriculture and to develop an expert system for generating crop model results with inputs based on climate neutral, el Niño, and La Niña climate forecasts.

Marketing Training Program for Agro-Input Dealers in Uganda, April 2005, Conducted for the APEP Project.

Agribusiness Roundtable, organized by USAID to stimulate interest in a partnership to support the Africa Union/NEPAD CAADP implementation, May 4, 2005, Accra, Ghana.

Study Tour of Association of Agri-Inputs Wholesalers and Retailers of Burkina Faso (AGRODIA) to GAIDA, May 5-29, 2005, Accra, Ghana.

NEPAD/G8 Meeting, Implementation planning meeting for the CAADP in West Africa, May 6-8, 2005, Accra, Ghana.

Organizational Workshops for Agricultural Input Dealers' Associations From Bauchi, Kano, and Oyo states, May 9-26, 2005, Bauchi, Kano, Abuja, and Ibadan, Nigeria.

Cotton Conference of West and Central Africa, Organized by the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF)/WECARD, INRAB and IFDC/MIR, May 10-12, 2005, Cotonou, Benin—Theme: The Evolution in Progress in the Cotton Sub-Sectors: Consequences for Research and the Acquisition of Inputs by Farmers.

Organizational and Management Training Sessions, Designed for Nigerian agro-input associations, Organized by IFDC's MISTOWA and MIR projects. Kano State: May 11-12; Bauchi State: May 16-17; Abuja/FCT: May 19-20; Ibadan: May 24-25.

Training Workshop for ROPPA National Platforms on Market Information Systems, Data Collection, and Use, May 18-20, 2005, Cotonou, Benin.

Regional Forum on Onion, Coorganized by MISTOWA and the Regional Watchdog for Onion, May 23-24, 2005, Kano, Nigeria.

Trade Fair and Celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Dawanau Market, May 25, 2005, Kano, Nigeria.

Agricultural and Food Outlook/Trade Opportunities in Nigeria, Co-organized by MISTOWA, the FMARD, and the Kano LGA, May 26-27, 2005, Kano, Nigeria.

73rd IFA Annual Conference, June 6-8, 2005, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. ♦

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IFDC Designs and Conducts Workshop for Arab Fertilizer Association

"*I gained a lot of information on fertilizers and fertilizer marketing in the program,"* says Mishel Al Mutairi, one of the participants in an IFDC-conducted Arab Fertilizer Association (AFA) workshop.

AFA requested IFDC to design and conduct a special training workshop on marketing skills and forecasting for 25 employees of SABIC Fertilizer Company in Saudi Arabia. Among the participants were two SABIC vice presidents, Mr. Mosaed Al Ohali, Vice President, Fertilizers, and Mr. Homood Al Tuwaijri, Vice President, Petrochem Coordination; company presidents; and general managers. This program was held in Riyadh during June 18-22, 2005. Feisal Beig, IFDC Senior Marketing Specialist, and Dr. Upendra Singh, Senior Systems Modeling Scientist, conducted this program.

AFA's Secretary General, Dr. Shafik Ashkar, and AFA's Head of Administration, Wael Mazen, attended the workshop. AFA provided the administrative and organizational support in arranging the program**.** SABIC arranged with their fertilizer manufacturing and marketing companies in Saudi Arabia to provide local administrative assistance and nominate the participants.

The workshop covered the following primary areas among several topics:

- Subjects on marketing
- Subjects related to marketing of fertilizers
- Plant nutrients and fertilizer product technology
- New frontiers in agriculture
- International and regional fertilizer markets

AFA indicated that they would like to have continued cooperation with IFDC in this field of training.