



## Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/meeting-president-how-united-states-helping-women-farmers-senegal>

# Meeting the President: How the United States is Helping Women Farmers in Senegal



Stephane Tourné

Anna Gaye prepares to demonstrate rice milling to President Obama in Senegal in June 2013.

When I learned that I had been chosen to present my work with women farmers in Senegal to the president of the United States, the first thing I did was cry.

A minute later my thoughts cleared.

I have important things to tell President Obama, I said to myself, about how women farmers have benefited enormously from partnership with the United States.

Since 2002, I have been a member of a farmer organization of some 600 members—two thirds of whom are women—that works in 52 villages in the rural community of Mampatim, Senegal. I also work for a nongovernmental organization, supported by USAID through the [Feed the Future](#) initiative, that helps the group's members succeed.

### Farming in the valley

Since upland farming areas are traditionally farmed by men, our women members are obliged to work in the valleys, often under difficult conditions due to flooding. With little organization, many of these women worked very hard with negligible results.

Membership in our organization, known as an economic interest group, affords members like me legal recognition through which we can obtain credit. Historically, our group, called *Kissal Patim*, enabled us to cultivate small garden patches near village wells that provide off-season vegetables for market, as well as larger half-acre rice plots that yielded perhaps 200 kilograms during the rainy season.

But our partnership with Feed the Future got us to think much bigger. Feed the Future introduced members of *Kissal Patim* to several recently developed strains of seed that can produce yields as much as three times greater while using less water!

### Meeting the president

On the [big day](#), my mouth was dry as President Obama approached the booth we had set up to exhibit our activities, but he put me at ease right away. First, I demonstrated a traditional method of rice processing. I tried not to smile as he took the heavy ram from my hands and started pounding the pestle himself. "That's painful!" the president said through his

translator, examining his hands a minute later.

“That’s what women lived with every day before our partnership with Feed the Future,” I said.

That partnership brought, among other benefits, a portable, electric rice mill, which was also on display. The mill takes only 20 minutes to separate 40 kilograms of rice, which previously would take an entire day. The president was curious as to who actually owned the machine, and I explained our group manages it for our common use.

The mill, I explained, was very important to our progress. My fellow farmers and I were initially reluctant to grow more rice since the task of having to pound so much more would be huge. Our acquisition of the milling machines changed all that. We were free from the drudgery of the pestle.

The time saved also gives us more time to engage in commercial activities, such as the production and sale of palm oil and nutritious rice porridge made with peanuts, not to mention time to prepare for the next growing season.

President Obama congratulated and encouraged us.

The visit was like a dream. The president of the United States! As soon as it was over, I was eager to get back to Mampatim and tell the story to my fellow women producers.

The visit had a positive impact on all our work: I feel more courageous and ambitious, and the photos I showed my colleagues inspired them to redouble their efforts in their production plots. It has created a spirit of competition among them all!

Begun in 2010, this partnership with Feed the Future through USAID’s Economic Growth Project has helped women access several new varieties of high-yielding rice, as well as introduce fertilizers that have further increased yields. Some of the plots have grown fourfold, up to an entire hectare, each of which yields an average of four-and-a-half tons. In the future, we hope to manage even larger plots.

*(Translated from French by Zack Taylor)*

*This post is part of a series of posts by marketplace participants who met Obama in June 2013.*

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## **Additional Resources**

- [Learn more](#) about President Obama’s trip to Africa
- [View an infographic](#) of the agricultural technology marketplace
- [Read the first blog post](#) in this series, by Nimna Diayaté
- [Read the second blog post](#) in this series, by Salif Romano Niang & Mohamed Ali Niang