



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Resilience-building Framework Revolutionizes Millet Farming in Senegal



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Oumar Niasse with samples of different varieties of millet.

Millet holds a prominent place in the agricultural production system of Paoskoto, in Senegal's District of Niore. But until recently, yields averaged just 500 to 600 kg per hectare due to unsustainable cultivation techniques and poor quality seeds.

Feed the Future, through the USAID Economic Growth Project, collaborated with a local economic network called Revitalizing Millet Cultivation to support Paoskoto millet farmers. The project helps producers organize themselves through membership in the network to boost production and become better integrated in their dealings with providers of raw materials and purchasers of their products. Also, project facilitators deliver trainings across villages on seed quality, conservation farming, organic fertilization, control of parasitic plants, grain quality standards required by industrial processors, and more.

Results have been immediate and clear, with unprecedented harvests and yields. Average yields in the 2013/2014 season were 1.5 tons, and records of up to 3.3 tons per hectare were reached. The farmers affiliated with the network reported that they could now meet their consumption needs for the entire year and also sell grain surpluses. Thus millet's traditional status as a basic subsistence crop has fundamentally changed. With surplus yield to sell, millet growers are able to take care of other non-food expenditures.

"We are no longer faced with the problem of difficult hungry seasons," network President Oumar Niasse explained. "And with the proceeds from the sale of surplus yields, we are able to cover medical costs for the family, pay school fees for the children, purchase fertilizer for next season, and many of us can even afford the luxury of starting to build a real house." He added, "I am serving my homeland better and serving myself better as well. I think that is the essence of local development, or of development, period."

Despite these positive results, the farmers in the area are still affected by climatic stresses. Increasing instability of rainfall impacts their rain-fed maize and makes farmers vulnerable to financial catastrophe due to poor harvests resulting from drought.

To help farmers cope with climatic stresses that still affect them and to facilitate better access to credit from financial institutions, USAID collaborated with the Agricultural Insurance Agency and an intermediation firm to provide rain index insurance. The goal is to help producers protect themselves against rainfall deficits that could have dire consequences for their livelihoods, especially since millet is the main staple of their diet.

For the 2014 rainy season, members of the millet network agreed to contribute their own funds to purchase an index insurance policy that covered nearly all 229 members, representing 271 of the 276 hectares sown for the season. If the rain starts late, as feared, members will receive compensation of about 30 percent of the crop value insured.

“We will be able to pay back our loans,” Niasse said, “which is critical to expand and continue what we have already accomplished.”