



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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International Women's Day: In Her Words



Alina Paul-Bossuet/ICRISAT

Women farmers give their feedback during a tasting of three varieties of sorghum and groundnut.

In her words: A Malian entrepreneur gets the tools to grow

I have always believed that [better tools give better results](#).

For many years, farmers in West Africa have been struggling with low yields because good-quality seeds are not easily available. Most people need a little convincing to upgrade, especially when they are used to a certain way of doing things.

In Africa, the majority of farmers use seeds saved from the previous year's harvest, which often results in lower yields and vulnerability to disease. They don't have access to affordable improved seeds: new varieties that have greater yields and are pest- and disease-resistant. Also, using saved seeds costs nothing and farmers are wary of paying for something when they are not sure of the return they will get.

My dream was to involve our local farmers in producing adapted high-quality seeds that can bring much better returns to smallholder farmers. And this is what's happening now, enabled by Mali's revised seed laws and support from initiatives like Feed the Future. To my knowledge, I am the first woman in Mali to develop a successful seed business through producing and marketing high-quality seeds.

The right support makes all the difference. Since 2008, my company, Faso Kaba, and a Feed the Future-supported seed project in Mali have been promoting improved seeds together on demonstration plots using seeds produced by four seed farmer cooperatives trained by the project. The seeds are then sold at Faso Kaba stores.

This year, the West Africa Finance Fund (supported by the [Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa](#)) enabled me to invest in a seed cleaning and packaging assembly line to ensure quality standards and facilitate packing. In return, we will clean, at reduced costs, the seeds produced by the seed farmer partners involved in the project.

The Feed the Future seed project has also helped me grow and develop Faso Kaba through business management training and international seed industry best practices. I have just returned from a visit to the [International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics](#) (ICRISAT) in India where I discussed the possibility of creating a seed venture incubator in Mali.

I want Faso Kaba to be able to train Malian farmers to become local seed entrepreneurs producing improved varieties. They could then supply the seeds to farmers in their district, helping build local seed industries. Faso Kaba would ensure the supply of improved varieties, provide quality control, and help market the seeds.

I am very proud of Faso Kaba, which shows that a woman can drive this type of pioneering agribusiness in Mali. My mother was my inspiration; she used to produce a very respectable 500 kilograms of sorghum every season, but she didn't have access to improved seeds. That is why distributing these seeds to both male and female farmers is a real source of pride for us.

I'm an ambitious person and I want to see more women involved in agribusiness. This is a tough challenge because women here are juggling so many responsibilities; they don't have the time or support to develop businesses like this.

I hope that I can help show them the way.

Mrs. Maïmouna Coulibaly is founder & CEO of Faso Kaba Seed Company in Bamako, Mali.

- [Learn more about the Farmer-to-Farmer program, whose volunteers assisted Coulibaly](#)
- [Learn more about how Feed the Future is working to empower women farmers](#)
- [Learn more about Feed the Future in Mali](#)
- [Read the original post on the USAID IMPACTblog](#)

More from International Women's Day 2012

- [Read USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah's blog post commemorating the day](#)
- [Test your knowledge on girls' empowerment with this USAID quiz](#)
- [Read about how Peace Corps Volunteers are helping to empower women worldwide](#)
- [Read about how the U.S. African Development Foundation celebrated IWD](#)
- [View a slideshow and read how the Millennium Challenge Corporation celebrated IWD](#)
- [View a photo of the International Women of Courage award winners from the U.S. Department of State](#)
- [Watch and/or read Ambassador Melanne Verveer's International Women's Day remarks & remarks to Oxfam](#)



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Coulibaly examines popular tomato varieties sold at the market.