



1. Project Data:		Date Posted : 08/07/2002	
PROJ ID: P001751		Appraisal	Actual
Project Name: Ag. Research	Project Costs (US\$M)	111.6	56.57
Country: Mali	Loan/Credit (US\$M)	20.0	19.5
Sector(s): Board: RDV - Agricultural extension and research (100%)	Cofinancing (US\$M)	68.1	19.2
L/C Number: C2557			
	Board Approval (FY)		94
Partners involved : USAID, Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Canada	Closing Date	12/31/2001	12/31/2001
Prepared by :	Reviewed by :	Group Manager :	Group:
John English	Christopher D. Gerrard	Alain A. Barbu	OEDST

2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

The objective of the project was to improve the performance of the national agricultural research system by improving the coherence, quality and relevance of research, and accountability for results, through institutional reforms.

The immediate goal of the project was to implement the first six -year phase of the Strategic Plan for National Agricultural Research (SPNAR). The principal objective of this plan was to ensure that adequate technology would become available to farmers as a means to increasing agricultural growth and to reducing the decline in the productive capacity of the natural resource base .

b. Components

The project included four components :

- Institutional Development** - (US\$2.7 million - 2% of project costs). This comprised:
 - transforming the National Agricultural Research Council (CNRA) into an entity which integrates user representatives and through which all official funding for agricultural research is coordinated and screened;
 - supporting the transformation of the National Agricultural Research Institute (IER) into an autonomous institution with an independent board of directors, and reorganizing and strengthening it; and
 - regionalizing research to bring it closer to its users .
- Technology Transfer and User Participation** - (US\$26.8 million, or 24% of project costs). This was to:
 - develop interactive processes between farmers, extension agents, and researchers, through farmer participation in setting research objectives and evaluating its results, to ensure research relevance and to accelerate the dissemination of research results; and
 - create a pilot User Research Fund through which research users (farmers and processors) would contract for particular research topics of interest to them .
- Research Program Implementation and Management** - (US\$37.3 or 33% of project costs). This component was to:
 - improve research quality and relevance through improved research programming, and using participatory monitoring and evaluation methods and procedures;
 - provide research operating funds and introduce research contracting for the implementation of research programs;
 - develop a scientific information, publication and documentation unit at IER; and
 - strengthen external linkages and support the participation of Malian institutions and scientists in regional and international collaborative research programs .
- Resource Development and Management** - (US\$44.8 million or 40% of project costs). This was to:
 - improve and strengthen experiment station development and management;
 - design and implement a management information and accounting system;
 - strengthen human resources development and management and provide in -country and overseas

- training, consulting services and short-term technical assistance; and
- rehabilitate and renew research experiment stations and equipment .

c. Comments on Project Cost, Financing and Dates

As appraised the project was estimated to cost US\$ 111.6 million, US\$73 million of which was to be provided by cofinanciers. The appraisal claimed that US\$47.8 million had been committed by other donors and that "the financing gap of US\$25.2 million represents other donor funding that is expected to continue beyond the individual project periods of the various donors, which has not yet been committed but is expected to continue ". In the event, a total of only US\$19.2 was provided by other donors for the intended operations . The IDA contribution of US\$ 19.5 was 97% of the initial estimate, while the Government contribution of US\$ 17.68 million was 99% of the proposed level. In local currency terms, however, the government contributions were more than doubled because of the halving of the value of the CFA at the 1994 devaluation and its subsequent decline to about 35% of its original dollar value.

3. Achievement of Relevant Objectives:

The achievement of the objectives is not easy to assess because of the vagueness of the stated objectives, and the lack of adequate outcome indicators, see above . This is reflected in the ICR by the fact that it found it difficult to clearly divide the activities among the components . Large elements of the SPNAR, involving the organizational and process changes, were carried out . Whether that ensured the availability of adequate technology is not so clear . The project achieved fundamental changes in the structure and management of research, increased user participation, and external reviews of the quality of ongoing and proposed research activities . There were, however, some serious delays in project implementation that negatively impacted on the strengthening of human resources within the research system, maintenance and upgrading facilities, and improving some of the management systems .

4. Significant Outcomes/Impacts:

Institutional Development. All the planned reforms were implemented, but with long delays . The IER statutes were changed to provide more autonomy and an evaluation of all research and technical staff in the system was undertaken.

Technology Transfer and User Participation. Six regional agricultural research centers were created and, at both the central and regional levels, research panels were established including representatives from user organizations, Government agencies and NGOs . Collaboration with other research partners was strengthened . A total of 120 new technologies are reported to have been introduced by IER, of which 110 were disseminated by the extension services and were adopted to varying degrees by farmers . Inadequate funding by government of extension services after the closing of the extension credit had a dampening effect on this effort . The pilot user research fund was only partially successful. The main weaknesses were: the difficulty for research staff to translate the expressed needs of users into fundable proposals; and the subsequent problems of getting the research users effectively involved in planning, implementing and monitoring research activities .

Research Implementation and Management. All 16 research programs of IER were evaluated both internally by committees (including users), and externally by a panel of independent experts . In 1997 a system of research contracts for all donor funded agricultural research was introduced, and research programs were periodically reviewed by CNRA's technical committee, assisted by external research experts . This appears to have improved the content of research proposals and the rejection rate declined from 80% to 30% during the life of the project . Publication of results and scientific reports was stepped up and the creation of a data base allowed for the immediate availability of research results .

Resource Development and Management. Progress here was generally poor and was mainly the result of delays in obtaining title to land needed for IER facilities; less than expected support from other donors; and weak internal financial management capacity . Most of the training and technical assistance, to be provided by other donors did not materialize .

5. Significant Shortcomings (including non-compliance with safeguard policies):

Funding from other donors was less than 30% of that anticipated at appraisal and, in fact, only about 40% of the funds supposedly "committed" actually arrived. The significant reduction in financial support led to decisions to not rehabilitate laboratories and replace equipment and cut the funding of research activities, including four programs in their entirety. In addition the shortfall in funding led to a reduction in planned training and technical assistance intended to upgrade the quality of research . Thus, although these shortfalls did not hold up the institutional changes they did permit the run down of some of the existing facilities, hamper the ongoing program, and limit the capacity for future research.

6. Ratings:	ICR	OED Review	Reason for Disagreement /Comments
Outcome:	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	The project achieved its major objectives, but with significant, rather than minor, shortcomings. The ICR indicated that it would have preferred a "moderately" or "marginally satisfactory"

			rating [not available under the ICR's 4-point scale]
Institutional Dev .:	Modest	Modest	
Sustainability :	Likely	Likely	Follow-on IDA support has been approved in the Agricultural Services and Producer Organizations Support Project. Without this guaranteed basic level of continued support sustainability would have been rated as unlikely.
Bank Performance :	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Co-financier performance in general would have been rated as unsatisfactory in this case.
Borrower Perf .:	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	
Quality of ICR :		Satisfactory	

NOTE: ICR rating values flagged with '*' don't comply with OP/BP 13.55, but are listed for completeness.

7. Lessons of Broad Applicability:

- A project which tries to achieve profound institutional changes should have a detailed road map showing key steps and expected results and opportunities for mid-course corrections.
- A demand driven national system for technology generation, transfer and training, needs to unite all interested parties in one platform and take into account all related activities that are carried out in the country within an adequate supply framework.
- When, as in this case, other donors are to supply significant funding (65% in this case) some steps should be taken to "lock-in" that funding to ensure that it will be forthcoming. If the financing from the other donors is not locked in, or is not essential for project implementation, it should not be included in the project description and financing plan

8. Assessment Recommended? Yes No

Why? There is continued rhetorical emphasis in conferences, etc. on the need for donor coordination and agreed programs of support, linked to government ownership, as in NEPAD, for example. But, here was a case where project design largely grew out of a multi-donor effort to provide a framework and institutional structure for agricultural research in the Sahel. Two-thirds of project funding, as described in the appraisal, was to have been provided by other donors. Only 30% of this was, in fact, supplied. Why did other donors not follow through and provide funding that the appraisal said was committed? Did they not agree with the project's efforts? Or did much of the research activity continue, unconnected and uncoordinated in any way with the implementation of the project? These issues are not covered in the ICR, but merit further study, especially since so much emphasis is being placed on donor collaboration.

9. Comments on Quality of ICR:

The report makes a creditable presentation of project performance. Because of the vague statement of project objectives and lack of clear distinctions between components in the appraisal, the author of the ICR struggled to provide a coherent assessment of project performance.

Other than noting the fact that most donor money anticipated at appraisal failed to materialize, and the major implications of this shortfall, the ICR does not probe the reasons for the shortfall in any way.