

**THE WILLIAM AND FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION
GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

PROPOSAL SUMMARY

**Strengthening African Regional Trade through Improved Market Information:
Component 1: Improving Grades and Standards**

A. Public Description

In this box, please provide a brief statement of the charitable purpose of the proposed work, which may appear on our website and in our annual report. *Example: For a project to analyze the proposed reform in...* (Limited to 250 characters, including spaces.)

To determine needed changes in grades and standards for selected staple foods in West Africa in order to expand regional trade and to create a private-public sector consultative process at the national and regional levels to bring about such changes.

B. Summary of Work

In this box, please give a summary of your proposed work. This description should be in plain, jargon-free English and directed to a knowledgeable but not necessarily expert audience. It should include the purpose of the proposal, including its objectives and importance, the method for achieving the aims, the expected outcomes, and the criteria for evaluating success. (Limited to approximately 300 words.)

This project will create a process through which national governments, private-sector actors involved in regional agricultural trade, CILSS and ECOWAS (the major West African intergovernmental organizations governing regional agricultural trade) jointly develop market-based grades and standards for key staple crops that are important in regional trade. The purpose is to expand regional trade by creating incentives to produce and sell staples with attributes that are most valued by buyers, thereby raising producer revenues while expanding trade. The current lack of such incentives has led to staple-food products entering regional trade to be of mediocre and inconsistent quality. As a result, customers in the importing countries are forced either to turn to non-African suppliers or engage in costly inspection and sorting of products to try to find the qualities they need.

The project will achieve its goals through: (a) carrying out studies in the 4 countries (Mali, Senegal, Niger, and Guinea) to identify the gaps between product attributes that are most highly valued by the most important market segments and those that are used by authorities to develop existing public grades and standards and (b) creating a consultative process among the key value-chain participants and the national and regional authorities that will lead to the creation of more economically meaningful public and private grades and standards to facilitate regional trade. Indicators of project success will include endorsement by value-chain stakeholders of the findings of the national studies and regional synthesis and stakeholders' endorsement of the proposed consultative process and action plan for defining more economically meaningful grades and standards. An ultimate indicator of success, which may occur after completion of the project, would be actions taken by the stakeholders to extend this approach to products and countries beyond those covered in this study.

C. Outcomes

What do you want to achieve and why is this important? Outline your desired intermediate (shorter term) and ultimate outcome(s). Outcomes are the changes that occur in people, institutions, policies, or conditions because of the proposed inputs and activities. Because ultimate outcomes may result from the interplay of several variables and often are not achieved during the grant period, it is important to identify intermediate outcomes, which indicate progress toward the ultimate goal(s). Please be specific.

The ultimate outcome sought is the design and adoption of a set of grades and standards for key staple crops that effectively signal the product attributes that are most highly valued by different types of buyers and reward value-chain participants for responding to those demands. In fostering the creation and adoption of such market-based grades and standards, the project thus seeks to expand regional trade and agricultural incomes, leading to a broader process of agricultural-led economic growth.

While the project can help create a consultative public-private-sector effort to design market-oriented grades and standards, the project per se cannot guarantee their adoption, as that will involve political decisions at the national and regional levels. The specific, intermediate project outcomes will therefore focus on:

- Improving the understanding of different actors (farmers, exporters, importers, end-users, and government) in the regional value chains for key staples of the product attributes that are demanded by different types of end-users of these products.
- Identifying the effective demand by these actors for grades and standards that effectively signal these product attributes and comparing this demand with how well current official grades and standards meet these needs.
- Proposing strategies and action plans by which national governments work with the private sector engaged in regional trade to reformulate their grades and standards as a function of the evolving demands for different product attributes in the regional market.
 - It is important to note that the proposed strategies will involve more than codifying existing trade practices. It will also involve identifying emerging demands for new product attributes and the processes needed to develop grades and standards that respond to those new demands.
 - The strategies and action plans will also seek to assure consistency (although not necessarily equivalence) of standards for goods entering into regional trade with those entering into international trade (e.g., Codex Alimentarius standards), as regional and international markets become increasingly integrated. The project will thus help link, when necessary, local actors with sources of technical assistance on these international standards (e.g., from USDA and FAO).
- Outreach with regional organizations, such as ECOWAS and CILSS, to help feed the results of this work in the 4 countries into a broader regional process aimed at developing more uniform and market-relevant grades and standards for the entire West African region.¹

¹ CILSS is the Permanent Interstate Committee to Fight Drought in the Sahel, and intergovernmental organization covering 9 countries (Cape Verde, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso and Chad). Its mandate is to promote sustainable food security and natural resource management in the Sahel. Because of its leadership in this area, and particularly in the areas of regional cooperation on agricultural trade and research, in 2006 ECOWAS requested that CILSS take the leadership for the entire ECOWAS region for work on food security and agricultural information. MSU

D. Activities

How do you plan to accomplish this? In other words, what activities do you plan to undertake to lead to or produce the desired outcome(s)? Please attach a timeline for your activities, including specific milestones.

The project will carry out 9 sets of activities to achieve its objectives. The activities will be implemented jointly by the MSU Mali-based and campus-based team; representatives of the private sector (including the regional agribusiness network ROESAO, which is a key partner in the Hewlett-Foundation-supported WAMIP project described in section G); the Malian Chambers of Agriculture, or APCAM ; national offices in charge of setting product standards in the four study countries; and the regional food trade and food-security organization CILSS, with extensive consultation with and outreach to the ECOWAS Agricultural Commission . It will be important to engage ECOWAS in order to help facilitate eventual extension of key findings to the region, so initial consultations with the ECOWAS Agricultural Commissioner and Director of Agriculture will take place early in the project to help frame the work, and subsequent outreach will also involve ECOWAS. In terms of actual implementation of project studies, MSU intends to work closely with CILSS, a subregional organization that has been mandated by CILSS to help implement issues related to regional trade and agricultural information for the subregion. The process will rely heavily on local expertise (though hiring of local consultants) and validation of findings by local stakeholders (essential to building local ownership of the results) through national and regional workshops at key junctures in the project.

1. Review of the evolution of public and private grades and standards

In order to help inform the discussions/debates in the four countries, a campus-based research assistant will conduct a review of the literature synthesizing key issues in the definition and evolution of public and private agricultural grades and standards. This report will be prepared in both English and French and be made available to the key project participants.

2. Initial Consultation with CILSS and ECOWAS

Very early in the project, MSU staff from Bamako and East Lansing will visit CILSS headquarters in Ouagadougou and ECOWAS Agricultural Commission in Abuja to consult with key members of those organizations. The aim will be to make sure that the project is designed in a way that takes full account of the regional organizations' current and planned initiatives in the area of grades and standards, obtain their endorsement of the process, and to engage them fully in the planned regional outreach efforts. As discussed below (section H), MSU has excellent working relations with both organizations and a history of collaboration with the key individuals involved, so we anticipate no problems in obtaining the engagement of CILSS and ECOWAS in this process.

3. Information-gathering and initial evaluation missions to the 4 countries

Small teams (3 people) composed of representatives of the MSU Bamako-based team, CILSS, and APCAM will visit each of the 4 study countries (Mali, Senegal, Niger, and Guinea) early in the project. They will meet with local private-sector participants involved in the trade and with various

has had collaborative research programs with CILSS, through its specialized research organization, the Institut du Sahel (based in Bamako), since 1989, and has worked with CILSS on agricultural trade policy issues since the mid 1980s.

government structures involved in regulating trade, including the setting of official grades and standards; explain the objectives of the study, and obtain local cooperation for carrying it out. The team, in consultation with these local actors, will then:

- carry out an initial rapid reconnaissance of official rules concerning the setting of grades and standards in the country, as well as the existence of any private grades for key products;
- Identify the key actors involved in the staple-food value chains, both in the public and private sector. For the private sector, the project will focus on four segments of the trade that are increasingly important in setting standards for the products that they buy: major staple-food wholesalers; large institutional buyers, such as the World Food Program and major NGOs; food and feed processors; and the restaurant trade.
- Choose 3 products which will be the focus of the study. The study will focus on staple crops, both because of their importance in regional trade and because they are storable products. Establishing a procedure to enforce grades and standards for highly perishable products would involve dealing with the problems of quality deterioration during shipment (and establishing who is responsible for such deterioration and thus who should bear its cost). We believe that as a first step, it is easier to establish grades and standards for the non-perishable staples, and that if this is successfully done, the countries can address the more complicated task of establishing grades and standards for non-perishables at a later time. Subject to agreement from the key stakeholders, the project proposes to focus on maize, millet, and cowpeas. Each of the three products is increasingly important in regional trade and exhibits significant heterogeneity in attributes valued by different end users (hence the need for grades and standards). The regional maize trade is growing rapidly in response to the growth of the animal-feed industry in countries such as Senegal; millet is widely traded to different groups within the region, each with its specific sets of preferences. Cowpeas are a major protein source and widely used by small-scale processors for “street food”, but different users have strong preferences for specific varieties and product attributes. In addition, in 2007, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation launched a major project aimed at radically reducing post-harvest losses of cowpeas through the introduction of improved on-farm storage techniques. If successful, this program should result in a large expansion of the volume of cowpeas available for trade within the region. Finally, as the WFP gears up its local-purchase programs for staples, we anticipate that the demand for all three of these staples will continue to rise, but with increasingly tight product specifications.
- Identify potential local consultants within each country to carry out the subsequent in-depth country studies.

4. Meeting in Bamako to finalize the plans for the country studies

Following the initial country visits, a small study coordinating team (made up of representatives of the MSU team, APCAM, ROESAO, and CILSS) will meet in Bamako to synthesize the information gathered in the country trips and write the terms of reference for the subsequent country studies.

5. Recruiting of local consultants and starting the studies

This step will involve recruiting the country-level consultants, developing and signing their consulting contracts, and launching the studies.

6. Monitoring the implementation of the country studies

The MSU team, in consultation with the other partners, will monitor the progress of the consultants in carrying out the studies and review and comment on draft reports; which the local consultants will subsequently revise.

7. National workshops to review and validate the national reports

The project will organize meetings in each of the 4 countries that will bring together key stakeholders to review and comment on the draft national reports. Participants will include key representatives of the four market segments described above, national government agencies in charge of setting grades and standards, members of the MSU team, and CILSS. These meetings will be essential to building local ownership of the results.

8. Development of a regional synthesis report and holding of a regional workshop to review and validate the results

The MSU team will synthesize the key findings from the national reports, try to reconcile any differences in the proposed approaches, put them in a regional context, and organize a regional meeting in Bamako to review and validate the findings. The key objective of the meeting will be to define and adopt a minimum set of characteristics/product attributes around which regional standards can be built. As in the national meetings, participants will include key representatives of the four market segments described above, national agencies in charge of setting grades and standards, members of the MSU team, and CILSS. In addition, a representative of the ECOWAS Agricultural Commission will also participate.

8. Strategy and action-plan development and outreach

Based on the results of the previous 7 activities, the project will work jointly with CILSS, ECOWAS, and ROESAO (the regional traders organization) to develop and present to government officials and the private trade a strategy and action plan that they can use to work together to develop more appropriate public and private grades and standards to foster increased regional trade. As part of this process, the project will help put the state actors in contact with key technical assistance services on grades and standards available through agencies such as USDA and FAO.

Please see the next page for the calendar of project activities.

Implementation Calendar for West African Grades and Standards Initiative																		
Activity	July 08	Aug 08	Sep 08	Oct 08	Nov 08	Dec 08	Jan 09	Feb 09	Mar 09	Apr 09	May 09	Jun 09	Jul 09	Aug 09	Sep 09	Oct 09	Nov 09	Dec 09
1. Initial literature review and drafting of working paper																		
2. Initial Consultation with CILSS and ECOWAS																		
3. Initial Country missions																		
4. Bamako meeting to finalize plans for country studies																		
5. Recruitment of national consultant and launching of the country studies																		
6. Monitoring of country study implementation																		
7. National workshops to review and validate country studies																		
8. Drafting of regional synthesis & holding regional workshop to review and validate it.																		
9. Strategy & action-plan development & outreach																		

E. Theory of Change

Why do you think doing this will achieve your goals? In other words, why do you believe the activities identified in Section D. will lead to the outcome(s) described in Section C. (also known as your *theory of change*²)? For general operating/program support grants, please provide a theory of change for your entire organization rather than individual programs or activities.

A central characteristic of agricultural market development is product differentiation. As incomes grow, buyers begin to demand more than just basic calories; they seek a wider variety of product attributes (for example, ease of preparation, better storability, healthfulness, variety). Furthermore, preferences for different attributes vary from one type of end user to another (e.g., bakers vs. feed manufacturers). The market thus shifts from a demand for *generic commodities* to a demand for *specific product attributes*. Value chain participants (farmers, traders, etc.) who can develop products with the mix of attributes most valued by their customers are thus in a position to charge more for their products, thereby raising their incomes by satisfying consumers' demands more effectively.

Farmers and traders' ability to take advantage of this increasing demand for product differentiation depends, however, on their ability to (a) understand which attributes are most valued by their customers, (b) organize their production to produce those attributes; (c) effectively signal to consumers that their products contain the desired characteristics; and (d) assure that other products that do not contain those attributes are sold under the false premise that they do have those attributes. Failure to provide such signals of quality often results in buyers having to assume that all products are of mediocre quality (since the buyers cannot easily distinguish the "good" products from the "bad"), thus leading to a low price being offered for product, thereby extinguishing any incentives for farmers and traders to produce the desired attributes. Thus, in the absence of a signal like reliable grades and standards, "bad products drive out the good", leading to a market characterized by low quality products and reduced levels of trade.³ The problem is particularly acute in markets for agricultural products, where the biological conditions of production and genetic variability lead to a wide variation in product attributes.

Historically, grades and standards, either public or private ("brand names"), have provided important signals to buyers regarding product qualities. Public grades and standards often grow out of codification of the language used by the private trade to describe products. To be useful as signals, however, the grades and standards have to communicate information about product attributes that have economic value to the end users. Otherwise, there is no economic payoff to the producer in conforming to the standards.

In West Africa, most grades and standards for agricultural staples do not play their signaling role effectively, for several reasons. First, due to income growth and urbanization, the demands for different product attributes are changing rapidly. For example, maize, which was formerly the "poor person's food" in much of the Sahel (a source of basic calories), is now increasingly in demand as a component of poultry feed for the rapidly growing peri-urban poultry industry. The maize attributes sought by poultry feed manufacturers are quite different from those by a poor consumer seeking just to fill her stomach. Second, public grades and standards, where they exist, have often been imported from other (frequently industrial) countries, with little attention to the attributes that are economically most important in the West African market. While over the longer-run, it is important that West African

² For additional information, see www.theorvofchange.org, a joint venture between ActKnowledge and the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives, which provides theory of change and logic model tools and frameworks. See also Innovation Network Online at www.innonet.org.

³ This is the famous "market for lemons" described by Nobel-prize-winning economist George Akerlof.

grades and standards be consistent with norms for international trade (as regional markets integrate with world markets), it is not necessary that they be *identical*. Third, where groups of private-sector actors have tried to establish their own private grades and labels to signal product quality, they have typically lacked the scale and the enforcement capacity to avoid others undermining the value of their brand, either through “counterfeiting” or selling substandard product under the label.

This project will bring together private- and public-sector actors in West Africa to address this problem. The first task will be to carry out a “gap analysis” in each of the 4 study countries, identifying the key product attributes valued by the major market segments for maize, millet, and cowpeas and comparing those attributes with those identified in (a) existing national grades and standards and (b) the language of the private trade. The project will then institute a process of consultation between the public and private-sector aimed at developing more consistent grades and standards, based in part on codification of existing “trade language” describing the commodities, and in part on other information about product attributes desired by the 4 major emerging market segments (wholesale trade, institutional demand, restaurants, and processing).

This sort of consultative, participatory process has a long history of success in West Africa in building collective action, and is the way in which regional standards have been established for other products, such as pesticides (a process led by one of our research partners, CILSS). We believe that the need for improved grades and standards is widely recognized, and what has been lacking to date is this sort of a roadmap for their development that goes beyond just focusing on technical attributes of products (e.g., moisture content, protein content) to one that focuses on those attributes that are most economically significant to various value-chain participants and for which they are most willing to pay a premium.

F. Indicators

How will you know you are succeeding? How will you measure movement toward the desired outcome(s), and what indicators of progress will you collect to monitor whether your activities are having the desired impact? What constitutes success?

Success will be indicated at the end of the project by the existence of a consultative public/private-sector process at the national level in the four study countries and at the regional level, through CILSS and ECOWAS, to establish more economically meaningful grades and standards for staple-foods in West Africa. An ultimate indicator of success, which may occur after completion of the project, would be initiatives taken by the stakeholders at the national and regional levels to extend this approach to additional products and/or additional countries in the West African subregion.

The most important intermediate indicators of success will be the validation of the national and regional reports by the value-chain stakeholders. Such validation will indicate that the stakeholders agree that the studies have correctly identified:(a) any lack of congruity between the product attributes that the end users deem as having most economic value to them and those that are highlighted by existing grades and standards and (b) the steps that the stakeholders need to take, either individually or collectively, to create grades and standards that more effectively communicate to actors throughout the value chain their effective demand for specific product attributes.

Milestones of project progress will include completing the designated project activities according to schedule laid out in the project implementation calendar in section D.

G. Prior Grant Outcomes

If you have had a grant from The Hewlett Foundation in the past, describe the outcome of the work under the most recent grant.

Since August 2007, MSU has been implementing the Foundation-supported West Africa Market Information Project (WAMIP). The project, funded through July 2009, aims to expand regional trade in agricultural products in West Africa by facilitating the flows of market and commercial information among countries of the subregion and by strengthening the capacity of stakeholders, particularly agricultural traders and farmer organizations, to act on that information. The project covers 4 countries: Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Guinea (Conakry). It builds on the successes of the Malian agricultural market information system (*OMA—Observatoire du Marché Agricole*, or Agricultural Market Watch) by extending some of the techniques pioneered by OMA to other neighboring countries, working through the two regional networks: the West African Market Information System Network (RESIMAO) and the West African Agricultural Traders and Business Association (ROESAO). The current proposal, covering the same four countries, will engage many of the same stakeholders, building on the strong relations MSU has established with these actors through WAMIP and other previous work in the subregion (see section G).

Among its objectives, WAMIP seeks to:

- Identify critical commercial and information needed by the private and public sectors to expand regional agricultural trade in West Africa and develop strategies to produce such information.
- Develop improved methods for collecting and diffusing market information, including testing new ICT-based tools, such as cell phones and wireless Internet connectivity.
- Work with trader organizations to increase their capacity to respond to new opportunities for regional trade created by a better flow of commercial and market information, including:
 - Strengthening the organizations' internal trade facilitation and dispute adjudication mechanisms and expanding their membership.
 - Collaborating with them, policy makers, and customs services to create policies and procedures to facilitate regional trade (e.g., through border conferences that bring together the private sector, policy makers, and customs officials to work out streamlined border crossing arrangements).

Through April, 2008, the project has achieved the following outcomes:

- **Identification of stakeholder information needs and baseline information on regional trade flows for the 4 countries.** Researchers from the market information systems (MIS) of the 4 countries (Mali, Senegal, Niger, and Guinea) have carried out surveys of key stakeholders in each country regarding their met and unmet information needs to participate in regional trade, and summarized these findings in national reports and a regional synthesis. These reports will be validated at national workshops in June and July, and lead to recommendations about additional information that needs to be collected and diffused at the regional level and who should do it. At the same time, the national research teams carried out baseline surveys of agricultural traders in the 4 countries on their current regional trade activities to establish a baseline against which project impacts will be measured.
- **Successful testing of cell phone technology to link local market information stations.** In Mali, the project tested the feasibility of using cell phones by MIS enumerators to send their daily market reports via coded SMS messages to local and national MIS offices for data entry and analysis. The aim was to develop a cheaper, quicker, and more reliable method for

enumerators to report their market data than current methods that rely on radio-phone-based e-mails, land-lines, or postal courier. The test proved very successful. As a result, this method has been adopted by the entire market information system in Mali, and is ready for testing in the other countries.

- **Strengthening the capacity of the private sector to respond to expanded trade opportunities by enlarging ROESAO's membership base.** In Mali, ROESAO's national affiliate undertook three membership drive trips throughout the country in March-May, 2008. The meetings attracted 130 potential new members, both individual traders and trader associations. The meetings also served to identify further information needs sought by potential members and other services they would like the national and regional association to provide (particularly services aimed at facilitating regional trade in light of current border closures). Similar membership drives are planned in the other 3 countries in June-September 2008.
- **Over the next 6 months, the project will carry out the following activities:**
 - Holding of national and regional workshops to validate the survey findings and prioritize the information products that the market information systems will produce and diffuse. This prioritization will be done by traders themselves. The project will support the production and diffusion of at least 5 information products at the regional levels.
 - Holding of border consultations, bringing together traders, MIS staff, and border officials at the borders of Mali with Niger, Guinea, and Senegal. These consultations will identify the main causes of delays of traders at the border, specify unambiguously that type of documentation they need to carry out regional trade, and make recommendations for further trade-facilitating actions. These consultations will not only directly help to build better relations between the actors involved, but will also identify the critical information about rules for regional trade that need to be widely diffused to the private sector.
 - Continue the ROESAO membership drives in Senegal, Niger, and Guinea.
 - Continue to monitor trade flows among participants to measure the impact of the project.

H. Organization

What are your organization's greatest strengths in terms of its capacity to achieve your intended outcomes? What significant challenges do you face in terms of your capacity to achieve the intended outcomes?

Michigan State University's Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics has developed what the Rockefeller Foundation called "the largest aggregation of individuals focusing on African agricultural development anywhere." The Department has unparalleled experience and capacity in helping to build effective agricultural market information systems (MIS) and improve agricultural marketing in Africa. Over the past 20 years MSU has been instrumental in helping create and strengthen MIS in Mali, Mozambique, Zambia, and Rwanda and in promoting exchange of experiences across MIS to promote South-South learning (see http://aec.msu.edu/fs2/mis_dev/index.htm for a compilation of MSU's work in this area). In particular, the core staff proposed for this project have partnered with Malian colleagues since 1989 to help build Mali's agricultural market information system, which has become the recognized leader among MIS in West Africa, coordinating the West African network of market information systems. The MSU team's work in improving Malian farmers' access to market information via innovative use of new information and communication technology (ICT) has been highlighted in Forbes magazine (*Silicon Mali*) and [Public Radio International](#). In 2004, the team was selected one of 8 finalists worldwide (the only one from Africa) for the Gateway Development Foundation's Petersberg Prize for the most exemplary use of ICT for development over the previous decade. This work focused on

improving market information flows *within* Mali, and the current proposal will focus on helping extend some of those improvements regionally.

The MSU team also was instrumental, in a previous USAID-funded project (http://aec.msu.edu/fs2/mali_pasidma/index.htm) in helping create the regional market information network and the regional traders' network that we propose to work with under the current proposal. MSU has also been involved in analyzing regional agricultural trade and information issues in West Africa since the mid 1980s with CILSS, and more recently, with ECOWAS. For example, MSU helped organize for the World Bank its 2007 West Africa consultation on the draft World Development Report, including participation of the ECOWAS director of Agriculture and the current chief advisor to the ECOWAS Agricultural Commissioner. The MSU team therefore has good working relations with all the major West African partners that will be involved in this project.

There are three potential challenges to achieving the project's intended incomes:

- Political shocks in one or more of the countries could limit our ability to work in there. Part of the rationale for working in four countries is to mitigate this risk. If there is political disruption in one country, we still can examine the process of developing improved grades and standards to facilitate trade among the remaining 3 countries.
- Key end users may not be able to precisely specify the attributes they need, leading to the need for laboratory analysis (e.g., testing for protein content) to help establish appropriate grades. This could imply additional costs to the project.
- The national and regional grades and standards authorities could take an attitude that "they are in charge" and refuse to collaborate with this sort of public-private-sector venture. We believe that this risk is low, given the increased recognition in all 4 countries of the need to develop policies conducive to private-sector development and MSU's very good working relations with the key West African partners. In addition, even if the public sector refused to participate in the study (highly unlikely), the information generated could be very useful to a regional private-sector association such as ROESAO in promoting its own private labels/grades to carry out the quality signaling function.

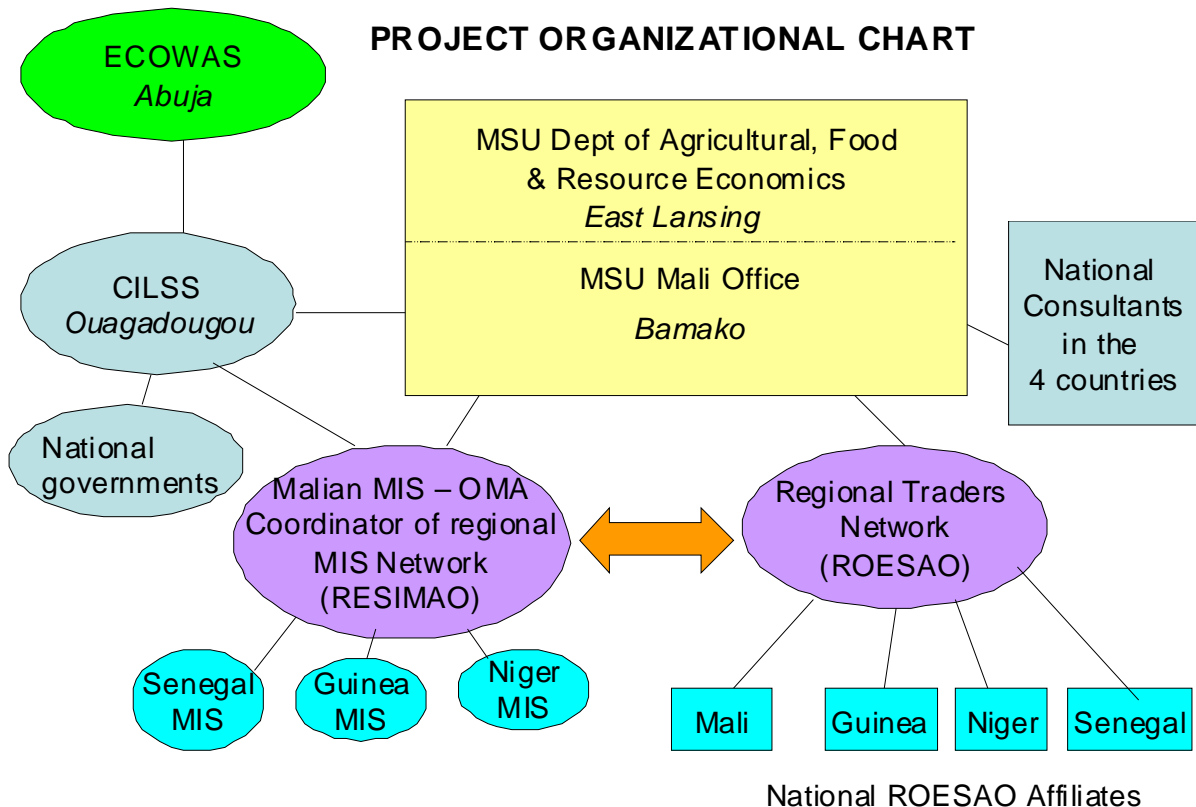
**THE WILLIAM AND FLORA HEWLETT FOUNDATION
GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

THEORY OF CHANGE CHART

<p align="center">ACTIVITIES</p> <p align="center">What specific activities and milestones will this work produce?</p> <p align="center">(Relates to Section D. in the Proposal Summary, including timeline)</p>	<p align="center">INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES</p> <p align="center">What impact do you hope this work to have in the near term? Identify the <i>target audience</i> for each deliverable.</p> <p align="center">(Relates to Section C. in the Proposal Summary)</p>	<p align="center">INDICATORS</p> <p align="center">How will you measure whether your work is making progress toward these outcomes?</p> <p align="center">(Relates to Section F. in the Proposal Summary)</p>	<p align="center">ULTIMATE OUTCOMES</p> <p align="center">What do you hope this work will achieve in the long term, i.e. beyond the grant period?</p> <p align="center">(Relates to Section C. in the Proposal Summary)</p>
<p>Review of the evolution of public and private grades and standards</p>	<p>Improved understanding by different actors (farmers, exporters, importers, end-users, and government) in the regional value chains for key staples about the product attributes that are demanded by different types of end-users of these products.</p>	<p>Existence of a consultative public-private-sector process in the 4 study countries and within the subregion to design market-oriented grades and standards for staple crops.</p>	<p>Decision of the stakeholders to extend this process of designing market-oriented grades and standards to products and countries beyond those covered in this project.</p>
<p>Information-gathering and initial evaluation missions to the 4 countries</p>		<p>Validation of the national and regional reports by the value-chain stakeholders, indicating their agreement that the studies have correctly identified the nature of the constraints and the appropriate steps that need to be taken to relieve them</p>	<p>The ultimate outcome sought is the design and adoption of a set of grades and standards for key staple crops that effectively signal the product attributes that are most highly valued by different types of buyers and reward value-chain participants for responding to those demands. By fostering the creation and adoption of such market-based grades and standards, the project thus seeks to expand regional trade and agricultural incomes, leading to a broader process of agricultural-led economic growth.</p>
<p>Meeting in Bamako to finalize the plans for the country studies</p>			
<p>Recruiting of local consultants and starting the country studies</p>			
<p>Monitoring the implementation of the country studies</p>			
<p>National workshops to review and validate the national reports</p>	<p>Identification of the effective demand by these actors for grades and standards that effectively signal desired product attributes and a comparison of this demand with how well current official grades and standards meet these needs.</p>	<p>Completion of the reports and other activities according to the schedule laid out in the project implementation schedule</p>	
<p>Development of regional synthesis report & holding of regional workshop to review and validate the findings</p>	<p>Proposed strategies and action plans through which national governments & CILSS/ECOWAS work with the private sector to reformulate grades and standards as a function of the evolving demands for different product attributes in the regional market.</p>		
<p>Strategy & action-plan development & outreach</p>			

Project Organizational Chart

The project will be implemented by the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics of Michigan State University, in collaboration with a number of West African partners. MSU has offices in both East Lansing and Bamako. The day-to-day implementation will take place through the Bamako office, coordinated by Dr. Niama Nango Dembélé. Additional support will come from campus-based staff (e.g., Drs. John Staatz and Valerie Kelly). MSU has strong ties with several key West African organizations that will help in project implementation. These include CILSS (the Permanent Interstate Committee to Combat Drought in the Sahel), which has been mandated by ECOWAS to lead West African efforts to facilitate regional agricultural trade; the ECOWAS Agricultural Commission; the West African networks of agricultural market information systems (RESIMAO) and of agricultural traders (ROESAO), as well as the national affiliates of these networks. In addition, MSU has good connections with a number of potential national consultants in the four study countries (e.g., researchers in academic and agricultural research organizations). Working through CILSS, ECOWAS, RESIMAO, and ROESAO, MSU will be able to collaborate closely with private-sector and public-sector actors in all four countries as well as institute the national and regional programs of private-public consultation that are key components of the project.



Key Project Personnel

Niama Nango Dembélé is Assistant Professor, International Development, in Michigan State University's Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics. A Malian citizen, he is based in Bamako, Mali, where coordinates MSU's Mali-based applied research and outreach programs on food security (implemented jointly with the Malian National Food Security Commission and the Malian Chamber of Agriculture). Dembélé is the intellectual godfather of Mali's highly successful agricultural market information system, having helped design and launch the system in 1989 and having co-directed MSU's highly successful USAID-funded project (PASIDMA) that led to the decentralization of that system and the creation of the West African Regional Network of Market Information Systems and the West African Regional Agricultural Traders' Network. In 2004, the MSU-led work with the Malian market information system was named one of 8 finalists (and the only finalist from Africa) for the Petersberg Prize, awarded by the Development Gateway Foundation for the most exemplary use of information and communication technology in developing countries in the past decade. With Dr. Staatz he co-authored a background paper on agriculture for development in Sub-Saharan Africa as part of the World Bank's 2008 *World Development Report: Agriculture for Development*. Prior to joining MSU's faculty, Dembélé served as a research associate in the International Fertilizer Development Center's West Africa program, carrying out applied research and outreach on soil fertility policy issues.

Valerie Kelly is Associate Professor, International Development, in Michigan State University's Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics. She has more than twenty-five years of experience working on agricultural development issues in Africa. Her experience includes working with the MSU Food Security team since 1993, managing a 5-year research project for IFPRI in Senegal, working with NGOs promoting women's cooperatives, and consulting work on the design and implementation of a variety of evaluation efforts focused on natural resource management programs and input supply systems. Kelly's geographical focus has been the Sahel, but she has also worked elsewhere in Africa (Rwanda, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Kenya). Her fields of specialization are agricultural policy and public choice, production economics, farm management, and quantitative methods. She has worked extensively on soil fertility and agricultural input topics and has experience in nutrition and health issues and agricultural growth linkages. A strong focus in all of her work has been (1) on-the-job training of African researchers through the implementation of collaborative policy research and development activities and (2) interdisciplinary work, particularly with crop and soil scientists.

John Staatz is Professor of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics and African Studies at Michigan State University (MSU). He has worked on issues of African economic development for 25 years. He teaches graduate courses and conducts research in the areas of food policy, economic development, information economics and institutional change, and food system organization and performance, particularly as they relate to Africa. Staatz co-edited the widely used text *International Agricultural Development* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 3rd ed., 1998) and *Democracy and Development in Mali* (MSU Press, 2000). He is a former co-Director of the [MSU's Food Security Group](#) (of which both Dembélé and Donovan are members), a highly productive group of faculty and graduate students who conduct collaborative research, outreach, and training with African colleagues throughout the continent. He has worked extensively in West Africa, on food policy reform, market information systems, regional trade, linkages between agricultural growth and rates of child malnutrition, and strengthening agricultural research systems. With Dr. Dembélé, he co-authored a background paper on agriculture for development in Sub-Saharan Africa as part of the World Bank's 2008 *World Development Report: Agriculture for Development*.

Abdramane Traoré is a research associate with the West Africa Market Information Project, the current Hewlett-Foundation supported MSU project on strengthening market information to promote

regional trade in West Africa. Based in Bamako, Mr. Traoré has worked on food security and market information issues in Mali since 1985. He has served as a technical assistant to the European Union-supported program to improve agricultural statistics in Mali, a technical assistant for many years to the Malian Agricultural Market Information System, and as a research associate with MSU's food security and market information support projects in Mali. He also played a key role in launching and supporting the regional network of market information systems in West Africa and has worked closely with the West Africa Network of Agricultural Traders