

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

**PROPOSAL SUMMARY**

**Strengthening African Regional Trade through Improved Market Information:  
Component 2: Alternative Models to Provide Agricultural Market Information**

**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 analyze alternative models for providing market information to African farmers and other key market actors, the models' likely evolution over the next 5-10 years and to draw implications for needed public, private, civil-society and donor support.

**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.)

In recent years, many different, and sometimes competing, models of agricultural market information systems (MIS) have emerged in Sub-Saharan Africa, in an attempt to link farmers to more profitable market opportunities and foster greater regional trade. The purpose of this project is to carry out a comparative analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, and potential complementarities of these different models. A major objective will be to draw implications for investment and grant-making with respect to such systems by the public sector, the private sector, civil society organizations, and donors, including charitable foundations. The importance of this study derives from two observations. First, there is almost universal recognition that farmers and traders in Sub-Saharan Africa need better market information to link them effectively to profitable opportunities in national, regional and international markets. Second, a wide array of public, private, and cooperative models to provide such information have sprung up recently in response to changes in information technology and in the structure of agricultural markets and value chains. Yet there has been no systematic analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, how they might complement or compete with each other, whom they serve and how well, and how sustainable each is. As a result, there is a lot of confusion about what the appropriate roles should be for the public, private, and charitable sectors in helping develop such systems, and how those roles are likely to change over time.

This study will provide such a systematic analysis. It will review the experiences of the major models that have emerged, based both on literature review and field visits. The analysis will focus primarily on Sub-Saharan Africa, but draw on lessons from other regions, particularly South Asia. Built on a firm foundation of information theory and strong empirical evidence, the analysis will examine the advantages and disadvantages of the current systems and how these are likely to change given the rapidly changing market and technological environment. The project will organize feedback and outreach sessions with participants in the agricultural markets, the MIS, information specialists, academic researchers, and the donor community. The insights provided by these debates and the subsequent investment decisions by the various stakeholders will be major indicators of project success.

### **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 major outcome will be an improved understanding by key stakeholders (farmer and trader organizations, other civil society organizations, government, regional organizations, analysts and donors) of the strengths and weaknesses of different models of providing agricultural information. The ultimate aim is to promote the design of systems that will improve private and public decision making by actors involved in agricultural trade in a way that will foster sustained, poverty-reducing agricultural growth and trade. As a result of this activity, stakeholders will better grasp how rapidly evolving communications and production technologies, market structures, civil-society organizations, and policy environments are changing the relative advantages of the different models of market information systems. The study will also provide insights into the implications of these changes for investments in market information by governments, the private sector, civil-society organizations, and donors.

The intermediate outputs will be series of reports and outreach activities (see section D for details) that synthesize the experiences with different models of provision of market information in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, analyze likely future evolution of information needs and delivery options, and

draw implications for actions and investments by major stakeholders. The report will also develop guidelines for assessing the impact of investments in such systems in this evolving policy, institutional and technological context. The consultations conducted in the processes of carrying out this work will also create a community of scholars and stakeholders engaged in MIS design and implementation upon which donors, governments, and the private sector can draw for future guidance in this area as markets and technologies continue to evolve.

#### **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 build on extensive experience of the key researchers (Dembele, Staatz, and Donovan) working on market information systems (including work supported by the Hewlett Foundation through the WAMIP project described in section G); their broad contacts among those working in the area; and contacts developed through the participation of Staatz and Dembele in the recent Gates-foundation supported World AgInfo program ([www.worldaginfo.org](http://www.worldaginfo.org)), which was aimed at examining the information needs of small farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Building on this background, the project will carry out the following activities:

- 1) An initial review and synthesis of the literature on the:
  - a) Evolving information needs of farmers, agricultural marketers, and policy makers in sub-Saharan Africa, in light of the rapidly changing nature of product demands (increased focus on product attributes), evolving commodity mix, broadening set of potential market outlets, shift in market structures towards more integrated supply chains, and rapidly evolving production and information technologies. Although the emphasis will be on Sub-Saharan Africa, lessons will be drawn from experiences throughout the world, particularly from Asia and Latin America.
  - b) Economic characteristics of market information (e.g., indivisibility, uncertainty, nonappropriability) and how they are changing due to evolving nature of information and communication technology (ICT) and business models (e.g., increasing contracting)
  - c) Complementarity of “classical” market information (focused on prices, quantities) and other strategic information for farmers and marketers, and how that complementary information is typically provided (or not);
  - d) Complementarity of current market information targeted towards private-sector actors and structural and time-series information for policy analysts in order to help design policies conducive to market-led growth;
  - e) Potential payoffs to improved information, and ways of measuring those payoffs, in light of the changes discussed in a-d.
- 2) Develop a report that will examine and synthesize the experience of current and emerging models for providing agricultural market information. This examination will be based on both review of existing documents and site visits to a few key examples that epitomize the different approaches. Each model will be analyzed with respect to:
  - a) the organization’s perceived mandate and methods: the clientele served, the information provided, data collection and quality control methods;
  - b) the frequency and modes of diffusion (including use of ICT);
  - c) feedback mechanisms from users (critical to determining whether and how the system evolves over time);
  - d) links with policy analysts; and
  - e) funding model for financial sustainability.

The types of systems to be examined (with examples of each) include:

- Government- and stakeholder-supported models of MIS, including regional networks of these organizations—e.g., the Malian MIS (lodged in a farmer organization, but with government support), the Mozambican MIS (lodged in a Ministry of Agriculture), and regional networks of MIS in West and Southern Africa
  - Farmer-organization-managed market brokering services (e.g., ZNFU system in Zambia)
  - Private-sector run systems:
    - Private-sector run information systems provided by firms involved solely in the sale of market information, but not agricultural products themselves. These could include systems that hire their own market enumerators (e.g., Reuter’s Project Market Light in India) and those that use more of a wiki-approach to data collection (e.g., Tradenet.biz in West Africa)
    - Information provided through integrated value chains and contract farming schemes.
    - Emerging electronic market exchanges (e.g., KACE—the Kenya Agricultural Commodity Exchange)
- 3) An initial synthesis report will be developed that pulls together key information gathered and analyzed in steps activities 1 and 2. The findings from the draft report will be shared for review and feedback in 2 ways:
- a) Initial findings will be presented at the 2009 West African Agricultural Outlook Conference in April, 2009, which brings together over 100 stakeholders from the public-sector, private-sector, and donor communities, including representatives of all the West African market information systems.
  - b) The draft report will be sent for review by selected participants in the 2007-08 Gates-foundation World AgInfo consultation process, which brought together a broad array of MIS, ITC, agricultural development and educational experts to examine small-farmer information needs in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
- 4) Based on the feedback received, MSU will revise the report and organize a workshop/outreach activity with a major organization involved in helping support MIS and other e-agriculture initiatives. Our preferred partner in organizing the outreach will be CTA (<http://www.agricta.org/index.htm>), an organization supported by the EU with which MSU collaborated in 2004 in organizing Africa-wide MIS forum in Maputo. This workshop would also involve the donor community and the private sector involved in supporting market information system development (e.g., Hewlett Foundation, Gates Foundation, World Bank, USAID, Reuters, Inc., telecommunications companies) to discuss implications of the findings for who needs to do what in the future to reduce the constraints to agricultural trade and growth imposed by farmers’, traders, and policy makers’ limited access to accurate market information. This workshop will be preceded by an e-forum that will involve a broader set of participants and feed into the workshop discussions.

Please see the next page for the implementation schedule.

<b>Implementation Calendar for study on Whither Market Information Systems? Analysis of Evolving Public and Private Roles in Provision of Agricultural Market Information and Implications for Public, Private, and Donor Support</b>																		
<b>Activity</b>	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
<b>1. Initial literature review and drafting of working paper</b>																		
<b>2. Review &amp; synthesis of new models, based on literature review &amp; field visits</b>																		
• West Africa field visit (Mali, Ghana)																		
• -East and S. Africa field visit																		
• Draft report preparation																		
<b>3. External review &amp; consultation process</b>																		
• Presentation of preliminary results at W. Africa Ag. Outlook Conference																		
• Electronic review through World AgInfo network																		
• Revision of report based on feedback																		
<b>4. E-forum and outreach workshop/conference with MIS leaders, donors and private sector</b>																		

## **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*<sup>1</sup>)? For general operating/program support grants, please provide a theory of change for your entire organization rather than individual programs or activities.

The theory of change described here is a theory of: (a) how market information needs change as a result of technological and institutional changes that occur as economies develop, and (b) how that evolution affects the incentives of public and private actors to provide appropriate market information to different actors in the economy (taking into account any already existing investments in market information systems). This study will carry out analysis to develop further and test this theory, so we also describe how we will believe our activities will lead to a better understanding of the process.

We start with the following observations:

- The value of market information derives from its contribution to better decision-making by those involved in agricultural markets, such as farmers, traders, processors, consumers, input providers, and policy makers.
- There are a many different types of actors in these markets, and each has her/his own information needs; thus, the question of who provides which information for whom becomes critical in information-system design.
- In addition to information needs, both individuals and agencies take actions in response to incentives. Therefore, designing effective market information systems requires designing the incentives of MIS actors so that these systems are responsive to the evolving information needs of market participants.
- The nature of the “market for information” is a function not only of the many different actors and their diverse information needs, but the characteristics of information itself. Consider two contrasting examples: (a) Some types of information are very “perishable” in that their value declines sharply if not delivered on time; thus, there are high payoffs to designing a system that has strong incentives to deliver such information quickly and accurately, and such incentives often do not exist in government bureaucracies, arguing for private market-reporting services. (b) Once certain types of information are disclosed to one person, it may be hard to exclude others from access to the information, making cost-recovery through user fees difficult and arguing for some sort of public provision. As a result of these and other characteristics of information, one typically sees a mix of public and private provision of market information.
- There is often complementarity between public and private information systems. For example, public information systems may stimulate private actors to invest effort in gathering further clarifying information, and information generated by private actors (e.g., from networks of agribusinesses regarding constraints faced by their members in carrying out regional trade) may be critical in informing debates with public policy makers on the design of market policies.
- The rapid changes in the structure of agricultural markets in developing countries, in economic policies (e.g., regional trade liberalization), and in information and communication technology are radically changing the information needs of different actors, the possible ways of delivering that information, and financing models (e.g., with cell phones it is much more feasible to charge user fees than if information is diffused via the radio). Yet these changes and the new market information

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<sup>1</sup> For additional information, see [www.theoryofchange.org](http://www.theoryofchange.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](http://www.innonet.org).

system models that are emerging in response to the changes differentially affect the different actors in the market, advantaging some and disadvantaging others.

What is unclear at this point, and what this project seeks to elucidate, is exactly how the evolving models are complementary or competitive with one another, what market niches each type of MIS serves, how sustainable they are, whether there remain critical unmet information needs of key actors that still need to be addressed, and what the implications of all this are for the roles that the public, private, civil-society, and donor communities ought to play in promoting and supporting different types of market information systems. This study will pull together the experiences of these emerging models, analyze them within a consistent framework informed by both information theory and the empirical experiences from throughout the world, and get feedback on preliminary study results from the stakeholders themselves. Through this process, the study will help clarify the “big picture” of how the various pieces fit together and of who should do what to increase agricultural trade and growth through enhanced market information.

#### **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?

The indicators for this project derive from its objective. The main objective is to provide public information about the strengths, weaknesses, and potential complementarities of different models of providing agricultural market information in low-income countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. The target audiences are the actors involved in these markets themselves (including government) as well as outside organizations, such as donors, interested in improving actors’ access to market information. Success in this project will therefore be indicated by a much more active and informed debate among donors, public, private, and civil society organizations about what sorts of investments need to be made by whom to improve market information systems in Sub-Saharan Africa (and elsewhere) in a way that promotes broad-based agricultural growth and trade. While the project itself cannot undertake such investments, it will aim to provide the information and debate needed to lead to more targeted and effective investment in these systems.

Immediate indicators of project progress will be whether the milestones for completion of project interim reports and outreach activities laid out in the project calendar are met. More substantial indicators of progress will be the feedback received by various stakeholders and reviewers of these interim reports, indicating whether the analysis has addressed key issues in a systematic and useful way, offering new insights into who should do what to improve these systems.

#### **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. 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 project covers 4 countries: Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Guinea (Conakry). Among its objectives, the project will:

- 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](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](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. The MSU team therefore has good working relations with all the major actors involved.

The main potential challenge to achieving the project's intended outcomes would be an unwillingness of the organizations involved in implementing the new models of market information provision to share openly and truthfully information about their efforts. This risk is minor, both given the personal links the principal investigators have with many of the individuals involved in developing these new systems and the self-interest of the promoters in sharing what most of them see as the important new innovations that they are developing. In addition, cross-checking of information from different users of these systems and other observers (e.g., through the external review of draft reports) will help verify the veracity of the information collected. A second risk is that CTA, our preferred partner for the final outreach activities with MIS and donors, is unable or unwilling to work with us on this outreach activity. We believe that given CTA's deep involvement in agricultural information issues in

developing countries and MSU's past history of successful collaboration with the organization, the risk is low.

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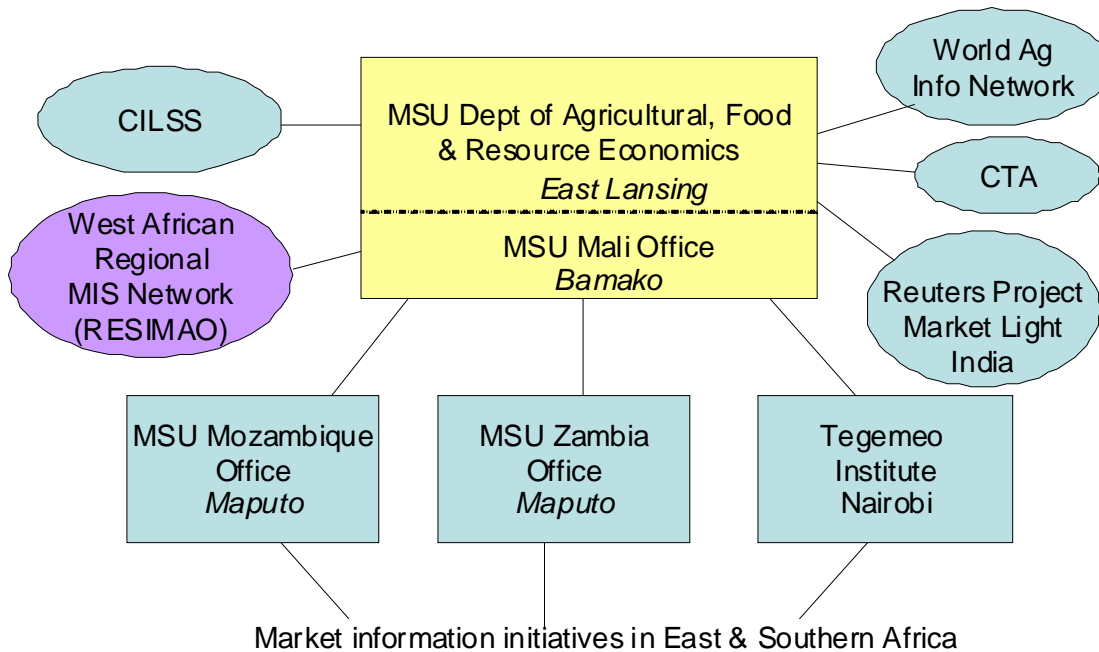
**THEORY OF CHANGE CHART**

<p align="center"><b>ACTIVITIES</b></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"><b>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES</b></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"><b>INDICATORS</b></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"><b>ULTIMATE OUTCOMES</b></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>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Literature review on evolving nature of information needs of agricultural market participants</li> <li>2. Review and synthesis of new MIS models, based on literature review &amp; field visits</li> <li>3. External Review and consultation process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• West Africa Ag. Outlook Conference</li> <li>• Electronic Review through AgInfo network</li> <li>• Revision of report based on feedback</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. E-forum and outreach workshop with donors and the private sector</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improved understanding by key stakeholders (farmer and trader organizations, other civil society organizations, government, regional organizations, analysts and donors) of the strengths and weaknesses of different models of providing agricultural information.</li> <li>2. Stakeholders understand the need for models of MIS to evolve as users; needs change</li> <li>3. Stakeholders understand that different models of MIS are complementary and investment in each model should be based on its comparative advantage.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Draft reports major conclusions are validated by stakeholder and external expert and peer review.</li> <li>2. Positive feedback from reviewers and in the outreach sessions, indicating that the research has identified the most important issues surrounding MIS development and the appropriate roles of different actors in improving such systems.</li> <li>3. The quality of debate in the feedback and outreach sessions, indicating that the research has stimulated new thinking on these issues.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More useful and timely market information available to the broad array of actors in African agricultural markets, which in turn leads to more rapid, broad-based agricultural growth and trade</li> <li>2. More targeted and efficient investments, where appropriate, by the public-sector, private-sector, civil-society and/or donors in a variety of agricultural information systems in Africa</li> <li>3. Proponents of the different models have become responsive to evolving users' needs induced by changes in markets, institutions, and technologies.</li> </ol>

## 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 partners in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. MSU has offices in East Lansing, Mali, Mozambique, and Zambia, and a close collaborative research arrangement with Tegemeo Institute in Kenya. The day-to-day implementation will take place through the Bamako office, coordinated by Dr. Niama Nango Dembélé, with strong support will come from campus-based staff (e.g., Drs. John Staatz and Cynthia Donovan). MSU will use its links in Southern and Eastern Africa to facilitate contacts with and study of selected emerging models of market information provision in those areas (e.g., the ZNFU electronic brokering system in Zambia and the Kenya Agricultural Market Exchange in Nairobi). John Staatz serves on the advisory board to Reuters' cell-phone based market information service in India (Project Market Light), which will facilitate study of this model. In addition, both Dembélé and Staatz participated in the Gates foundation's 2007 World Ag Info effort to gather information on information needs of small farmers in Africa and South Asia, and the project will draw on other participants in this effort as reviewers of draft reports of the project.

### PROJECT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



## 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.

**Cynthia Donovan** is Assistant Professor, International Development, in Michigan State University's Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics. Since 1999, she has assisted the Agricultural Market Information Systems in Mozambique and Zambia in building sustainable and dynamic systems. Her responsibilities include support for the development, implementation and use of user needs assessments, temporal and spatial analysis, and use of market information in a policy setting. She has been active in supporting training, and development of new initiatives. Recent work in Zambia and Mozambique has emphasized decentralization and private/public partnerships in information systems, with the development of revenue streams. She has additional responsibilities for household research on production technologies, the effects of HIV/AIDS on rural households, and the role of markets in response to food insecurity. In addition to Mozambique and Zambia, she has professional experience in Senegal, Rwanda, Mali and Mauritania, and speaks French, Spanish and Portuguese, as well as English.

**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, 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.