

Assessment of Local Production for School Feeding in Mali

April 26 – May 8, 2009



**USDA Foreign Agricultural Service
Office of Capacity Building and Development**

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Executive Summary

In April 2009, the United States Department of Agriculture conducted an assessment of Mali's school feeding situation and related local agricultural production and supply. Funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and with technical assistance from the United Nations World Food Programme, the assessment's purpose was to examine the feasibility of locally-produced school feeding programs to raise income levels and improve livelihoods for small holder Malian farmers, particularly women. In response to a request from the Government of Mali, the team also reviewed and provided recommendations related to the government's draft plan for school feeding. The four person team included representatives of the Foreign Agricultural Service's Office of Capacity Building and Development, the World Food Programme, and the University of Wisconsin-Extension, as well as the Government of Mali.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's underlying premise with the project (targeted to several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa) is that schools can become engines for economic development and poverty alleviation, in cases where student feeding programs utilize locally produced foods. School feeding also supports increased school enrollment, attendance, retention, and overall literacy attainment.

This assessment was the first of four that will be conducted. Mali was selected in part because of previous positive efforts and interest on the part of the Ministry of Education in promoting and implementing school feeding programs. Having participated in Global Child Nutrition Forums, and having taken the initiative to conduct their own school feeding strategy conference (January 2008), the Ministry of Education is credited with completion of a "Draft Policy" for school feeding.

Similar assessments are also being conducted in Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda, with a comprehensive report of the four countries to be presented in Washington D.C. in August 2009. The information will be shared for the benefit of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the four countries visited, and may also be shared with other governments, donors, and organizations as appropriate.

The report contains the assessment team's findings, conclusions and recommendations. These are organized in the report around the elements of a framework in a study conducted by World Food Programme which identified critical factors to consider for development of school feeding programs that rely on locally produced foods. These assessment elements are: institutional policy development, agricultural development and strategic procurement.

The report focuses on linking poor local farmers with local schools in the most food insecure areas of Mali that are characterized by low levels of agricultural productivity and food availability. Thus, the team does not examine on-going or possible school feeding purchase arrangements for schools in the relatively food surplus areas of Mali.

The assessment team concluded that the educational objective of the Government of Mali's draft local purchase for school feeding policy should be more closely linked with the Government of Mali's food security and poverty reduction objectives. While the sales of locally produced food to schools will provide an opportunity for the poorest farmers to sell to schools each year, and therefore boost household income and contribute to poverty reduction within the community, it would also promote the food security of vulnerable children attending school. Children may be more attentive and improve learning in school as the supply of the appropriate amount of safe and nutritious food is purchased locally and provided through school feeding programs. In addition, as improved learning occurs, parents may be more willing to send their children to school, particularly those who know their children will be well-fed at school. Thus, the team finds that a focus upon meeting the food needs of vulnerable children is a necessary condition for achieving the current educational policy objective of improving school attendance and retention in Mali.

In order to make the food security of school aged children an explicit objective in the Government's policy, the team proposes that the Ministry of Education coordinate its local purchase school feeding policy with the Government of Mali's Commissary for Food Security and that it work closely with the Commissary for Food Security in the implementation of a pilot school purchase program in food deficit areas. In that regard, the team identified possible ways to create and strengthen markets between local schools in food deficit areas and smallholder producers, especially women, in areas that are close to schools. When poor farm households with school-aged children are able to sell food to local schools, this additional income could make them more willing to send their children to school since they would not require the income earned by their children from selling goods in the local market. Thus, efforts to promote household income security at the local community level would reinforce the incentive that households have to send their children to school when safe and nutritious food is provided in the school feeding program. The team also identified ways that food could be sourced from surplus production areas in order to ensure that the schools in food insecure areas can obtain whatever food they require that cannot be obtained at the community level in food deficit areas.

FINDINGS:

Institutional Policy Development: Mali's draft policy for school feeding is a positive first step. It focuses on school feeding for the 703 communes and about 9,000 basic education/primary schools of the country. It has a logical organizational structure incorporating the Government of Mali's plan for decentralization, school and canteen management committees and oversight by the Ministry of Education's regional and local area representative. The Ministry of Education invited the assessment team to make suggestions that would improve their draft policy, particularly related to strengthening the sustainability of school feeding programs that purchase food from local sources. Therefore, the team believes that the draft policy could be strengthened by addressing a number of issues affecting the sustainability of school feeding programs that source their food locally from small holder farmers, particularly women. The policy suggests that primary objectives are increased enrollment and retention of primary age students in school (to address the official 20 percent who do not attend school). Given Mali's variability in food supply in many parts of the country from year to year, the team concluded that the draft policy should include objectives for food security and poverty eradication.

The Ministry of Education's goal is that school feeding programs will be "autonomous" at the school level, with minimal Ministry support. Key to this local autonomy in the Ministry's plan is that the local school communities have "income generating activities" to generate funding needed to purchase local foods for the schools. These activities would be developed individually within each community or in cooperation with donors and /or non-governmental organizations. Some organizations are currently piloting projects which support local farmer groups and school personnel, mainly through training and resource inputs to procure locally produced products for school feeding programs. However, the team identified several potential problems associated with the Ministry's approach, especially if it would lead to public support for enterprises that would compete with the local private sector.

Agricultural Development: Malian agriculture is characterized by the need for improved technology, low levels of productivity, highly variable year-to-year yields, limited crop diversification and heavy dependence on rainfall.

Access to improved inputs (including fertilizers and improved seeds) is critical to increased agriculture productivity. This access is constrained by farm credit that is especially limited within the country. While some non-governmental organizations offer limited amounts of micro-credit, interest rates are often prohibitively high. This credit situation severely limits farmers' access to improved seeds and other inputs appropriate to their level of resources and growing conditions. Increased farm productivity is constrained by hand cultivation, and thus mechanization and animal traction are the primary labor-saving technologies through which to expand production.

New farming methods and crop diversification are needed to help producers handle unfavorable weather conditions, crop failures, and shocks to commodity markets. An integrated approach which brings together the skills and resources of government ministries, non-governmental organizations, and donor partners is vital to technology transfer in Mali. Such collaboration could be used to help farmers identify new crops and farming methods, and transfer business models and technical skills among local producer groups, despite low levels of literacy. The Ministry of Agriculture's extension service could also be a key partner, especially through possible partnering with existing research and non-governmental organizations that are conducting demonstrations of new crop varieties and improved farming methods. To support outreach, the Ministry's extension service would need a trained cadre of extension agents with financial resources to support travel to visit farmers and provide routine extension services.

Strategic Procurement: The assessment team examined the feasibility of developing a purchase link between local schools and local small holder farmers, particularly women, in food insecure areas. Village markets in food deficit areas typically have small total volumes and extreme variation in volume traded both within the marketing year and across years. Periodic food markets in local towns, usually located along major trade corridors, have higher volume and more stable supplies. Because market knowledge and activity exists at all levels, it is entirely possible for new markets to be created in which schools have a market demand for food that is produced by local farmers. Along these lines, the team identified possible ways that poor farm households in food insecure communities could begin selling small amounts of food to local schools in ways that benefit both the school students and local smallholder farmers, including women farmers.

Currently, non-governmental organizations and the World Food Programme handle large commodity procurements for school feeding programs and provide central warehousing and distribution to extended delivery points. For the nation as a whole, the Government of Mali's Commissary for Food Security provides the safety-net for providing food deficit communities with the food required in times of severe production shortfalls. Therefore, its cereals storage unit has the best capacity within the Government of Mali for commodity management. The Commissary for Food Security maintains a national cereal stock of 35,000 metric tons and in a recent year it managed distribution of 60,000 metric tons. The Commissary is working to equip all 703 communes in Mali with at least 150 metric tons of cereal storage by year 2012, with 100 communes equipped to date.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the findings, and in view of Mali's decentralization plans, the following recommendations should be considered by the Government for the design of a sustainable locally produced school feeding program.

- Develop a feasible and effective “collaboration platform” which demonstrates strong government stakeholder linkages, incorporates multiple objectives including poverty eradication and food security, outlines a strategy for increased agricultural productivity, builds management capacity, and links farmers and schools in the procurement process.
- Develop a model pilot local produced school feeding program with development partners.
- Build agricultural production capacity to strengthen agricultural technology and to transfer skills at the community, school and household levels in collaboration with the Government of Mali's Ministry of Agriculture, donors, non-governmental organizations, agricultural research institutions, and the private sector.
- Collaborate with the Commissary for Food Security to manage food stocks for school feeding programs.
- Increase capacity for development of local income-generating activities in the private sector through increased access and use of credit and business development assistance.
- Explore the possibility of corporate sponsorship for all or part of the school feeding program.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
I. Introduction	9
II. Findings	11
A. Institutional and Policy Development, Including School Feeding Program and Policy	11
B. Agricultural Development	17
C. Strategic Procurement	21
III. Conclusions	25
A. Current Policy and Strategy Concerns	25
B. Policy Challenges.....	26
C. Collaboration Platform.....	27
D. Local Agricultural Supply to Schools.....	27
E. Strategic Procurement.....	28
IV. Recommendations	31
V. Appendix	34

I. Introduction

A. Description of Project

This assessment examines the feasibility of establishing school feeding programs that source their food locally thereby raising income levels and improving livelihoods for small holder farmers, particularly women.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) will assess the viability of implementing a locally produced school feeding program (LPSF) to increase small-scale farmers' agricultural productivity and marketing capacity, and thus improve incomes, in four Sub-Saharan African countries. When foods grown by local small holder farmers are procured for new and expanded markets such as school feeding, the lives of the farmers may be expected to improve in several ways. Besides raising household income for participating farmers, the nation's overall rural development is promoted. In addition, nutrition improves for students, which increases the likelihood that they will complete formal education, that they will be better prepared to provide for their families, and ultimately, and that they will be better able to contribute to the country's long-term development.

The proposed assessments are being undertaken in four countries in Sub-Saharan Africa: Ghana, Kenya, Mali and Rwanda. Government officials from the countries considered for this project requested assistance from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to help determine the feasibility of LPSF and determine if such programs could be developed and lead to improved incomes of poor farmers, including women farmers, in each country.



Lunch is ready – served from a communal bowl.

B. Mali Assessment

The Mali assessment was conducted April 26-May 8, 2009 by a team led by the USDA, with technical assistance provided by the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP). Mali was the first of four countries assessed as part of this project. Using qualitative methods, the team examined the ability of small holder farmers to produce and sell locally-produced foods to schools.

The assessment examined how food purchases by schools could expand markets for small holder farmers within the country, thus improving the lives of the farmers by raising their incomes, increasing local food availability, improving community food security, and promoting overall rural development. In addition,

the assessment team considered the possible educational impact that the purchase of locally purchased food has on students and its relationship to school attendance and retention. Improved nutrition during the course of one's formal education may better prepare students for providing for their families and contributing to their country's long-term development. Thus, the assessment considers ways that Mali's school feeding policy could best support programs which are feasible, have sustainable positive results on attendance and retention, as well as have favorable food security and poverty reduction benefits.

C. Structure of the Report

A WFP study, *Home-Grown School Feeding: A Framework for Action*, suggests three core areas for developing school feeding programs that rely on locally produced and purchased food. The report for Mali will be structured around these three areas:

1. Institutional and policy development, including school feeding program and policy
2. Agricultural development
3. Strategic procurement

II. Findings

A. Institutional and Policy Development

1. Education and school feeding

Following Mali's participation at the 2007 Global Child Nutrition Forum (held in Chicago, Illinois) and several years of attention toward home grown school feeding, the Ministry of Education (MoE) held a forum in January 2008 in Mali; participants included many government, United Nations and non-governmental organization (NGO) stakeholders. Following that forum the MoE declared that the Government of Mali (GoM) sees school feeding as a "strong policy priority" for development and created a national "draft policy" document for school feeding. Increased enrollment and retention rates are the two primary objectives of the MoE's policy, which aims for 100% enrollment by primary age school children by the year 2012.

The GoM has adopted a set of programs and policies aimed at improving living standards in the country, and references school feeding in the *Ten-Year Education Program*, a program being implemented through two year investment plans (Programme Spécial du Président de la République, or PISE). In general, public schools run by the government currently receive assistance, while religious schools do not. While public primary, secondary and tertiary education in Mali is officially tuition-free, parents must still pay some fees to send their children to school.

The school feeding program reflects GoM education policy as expressed in 2000 in the Programme for Development Cooperation (PRODEC). The PRODEC aims to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015. At the same time, the Programme de Développement Economique et Social (PDES, or Economic and Social Development Program) aims to reach this objective in 2010.

The GoM contributes to the school feeding program. MoE staff are in charge of program implementation (teachers, school directors, school feeding coordinators and focal points), and in-kind contributions are important [according to the WFP Standard Project Report (SPR) 2008]. At the national level, there is a school feeding coordinator within the MoE. At the regional level, a school feeding coordinator is located in the regional education office (Académie d'Enseignement). At district levels (Cercles), a school feeding focal point is nominated in the Centres d'Animation Pédagogique.

At the local level, community participation in the School Feeding Program is facilitated through School Management Committees (SMCs). MoE mandates that all schools in the country establish a SMC, thereby linking schools and communities and fostering greater community involvement in school management. SMCs are in charge of school buildings and repairs of school property (desks, benches, roofs of classrooms etc.) among other things.

2. Government of Mali draft school feeding policy

The MoE draft policy document is designed to use school feeding as an incentive to increase enrollment and attendance among students. Currently the MoE estimates that 20% of Malian children do not attend school. The MoE's draft policy has yet to win full approval and backing from the GoM, particularly due to concerns about sustainability. However, the draft policy was in fact developed with input from multiple GoM ministries and offices as well as NGOs and United Nations agencies.

It is difficult to calculate the number of children enrolled in Mali's primary schools. The World Bank's *Fast Track Initiative for Education* indicates the total number of Malian children enrolled in primary education was estimated at 1.4 million in 2004 and is projected to reach 2.6 million in 2015. Meanwhile the Rapport d'Etat du Système Educatif National (National Education System State Report) stated that 785,195 pupils were enrolled in 1996 and 1,505,903 were enrolled in 2005.

According to assessment team (AT) discussions with the Secretary General and Special Adviser of the MoE, the GoM has set aside 4 billion CFA (\$8 million) from the MoE budget for the implementation of a pilot Home Grown School Feeding Program targeting 166 of the most vulnerable communes within the northern and most arid part of the country, an area considered food insecure. (There are 703 communes and about 9,000 public primary schools in Mali.) The MoE considers a successful school feeding program to be one which provides one meal a day for 180 school days per year.

The MoE draft school feeding strategy proposes to rely on parents and SMCs to work together to develop income generating activities (IGAs) to earn cash for the school feeding program. In addition, the strategy asks parents to donate both staples (rice, millet, sorghum) and condiments (peanuts, vegetables, seasonings) for the school meal. The strategy plans for the funding to schools will be passed down to the regional level and then on to the schools, thereby reflecting the GoM's new emphasis on decentralization. The MoE's goal is for the school feeding programs to be "autonomous" at the school level, with minimal MoE support from the regional level.

MoE officials stated that the policy has "strong support" at the highest levels of GoM but that they need help convincing top officials of the sustainability of the plan. The MoE maintains that the program should be located within the MoE and acknowledges that cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture is also important. However, the MoE draft plan lacks a specific role for the GoM's food security agency (Commissary for Food Security, or CSA) other than to help in identifying food insecure areas of the country.

The MoE acknowledges that it will need substantial administrative and technical assistance to support program delivery. For example, in the Mopti region, MoE attempted a large scale school feeding program (1,500 schools) in the last year. GoM payments that were apparently promised to commodity suppliers were delayed. In the end MoE sought support from WFP and scaled-down the program to a pilot project.

The World Bank, in its 2009 document, "Rethinking School Feeding: Social Safety Nets, Child Development, and the Education Sector" (Conference Edition), classifies Mali in the second of five

possible stages in transitioning from a school feeding program that relies mostly on external funding and implementation to one that relies on government funding and implementation. However, it rates the government institutional capacity in Mali as “limited” or Stage 1.

3. Current status of school feeding

WFP is the largest partner for school feeding in Mali, and is involved in local purchases of food in surplus areas south of the 14th parallel. Additionally, several NGOs are involved in school feeding, including Catholic Relief Services (CRS), The Aga Khan Foundation, Malian Initiative for Childhood Aid in the Sahel (Oeuvre Malienne d’Aide à l’Enfance du Sahel, OMAES), CARITAS, and others that primarily rely upon food aid from external sources such as USDA’s McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program. Common to each group is widespread interest in expanding local purchases of food for school feeding. Funding for school feeding is provided by several donor countries such as Belgium, Canada, and Luxembourg, as well as by the GoM which provides in-kind support and cash contributions for commodity purchases (500 metric tons in 2008 (WFP Special Project Report 2008)).

a) WFP School Feeding Activities

WFP provides its support through component number 1, “Support for Basic Education,” of the Malian WFP Country Program (CP), January 2008-December 2012. The CP’s School Feeding activity seeks to help increase enrollment and attendance in food-insecure areas, to assist vulnerable children in schools, and to close the gap between boys and girls.

The GoM provided 500 MT of sorghum and millet and cash contributions in 2008 (WFP Special Project Report 2008) for WFP school feeding programs. Additionally, other donors including Belgium, Canada, and Luxembourg provided funding to WFP to support school feeding programs in Mali.

During the 2007-08 school year, the WFP Program targeted 120,000 school children for 180 school days, including 8,986 girls who were to receive take home family rations. Actual results indicated that 109,752 students were served – 56,633 boys and 53,119 girls, with 10,911 girls receiving take home rations which are distributed to girls who attend the final two years of primary school and attend at least 80% of all school days each month.

The WFP-supported school feeding program is located in the regions of Gao, Kayes, Kidal, Koulikoro, Mopti, and Timbuktu. These regions are all north of the 14th parallel, and were identified as the most food insecure in the country through an in-depth WFP evaluation of food security and vulnerability.

Participating schools must (i) have fewer than 300 pupils, (ii) have at least three teachers, and (iii) be able to count on the active involvement of surrounding communities. Once a school is selected all enrolled pupils are entitled to benefit from the program.

b) CRS and other NGO programs

Several NGOs receive assistance under USDA’s McGovern-Dole program, including Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and The Aga Khan Foundation. Assistance is not always limited to a meal or snack

provided in school. Take home rations for vulnerable students, especially girls, can also be very important. However it is distributed, food is meant to provide an immediate inducement for enrolment and attendance that overcomes the gain derived from having children stay home to help with household chores or work for income outside the home. This policy is especially targeted and effective for school attendance by girls. During the first year of its McGovern-Dole program in Mali, CRS's program study noted an 8% increase in school enrollment across all children and an 11% increase in the number of girls as a result of school feeding activities.

c) Food basket and preparation

The food basket in WFP-supported school feeding programs considers the food preferences of the population as well as the nutritional needs of primary school-age children. In addition, cost-effectiveness is a priority. The daily per-child ration includes 150g of cereals (millet/sorghum), 30g of pulses, and 10g of fortified vegetable oil, for a total of about 729kcal. The individual ration provides 15% of the daily requirement of protein, 19% of fat, 141% of iron, and 8% of calcium. Take home ratios for girls (discussed above) include 4 liters of Vitamin A-enriched oil per month.

In addition to supporting the physical structure of their schools, SMC members also serve on local Canteen Management Committees (CMCs), which function as a sub-committee of the SMCs. Besides supporting the day-to-day functions of the canteen, CMC members – usually including one to two women as recommended by WFP in order to promote gender equality – supply wood to be used as fuel for cooking the food, manage the daily quantity of food to be cooked, supervise food preparation and distribution, and oversee the provision of additional food (mainly condiments) necessary for cooking and consumption. In addition, CMC members or cooks are also responsible for water collection.

Food preparation varies to match daily school attendance. In WFP-assisted schools cooks are volunteers and receive a daily ration of five children's meals as incentive to compensate for their time spent in the school. In some schools, parents make a small contribution of basic foods or condiments to the school feeding program.

Most schools with feeding programs have a kitchen, a food storage facility, and separate latrines for boys and girls in compliance with the WFP and UNICEF defined Essential Learning Package. At the beginning of a school feeding program, cooking (and sometimes eating) utensils are provided to each participating school. In many schools in Mali, the children eat from a communal pot, in keeping with the traditional community custom.

4. Specific school feeding program sites

CRS projects in Mali most pertinent to locally produced school feeding will start in October 2009. Twelve schools will be selected to test a model of self-sufficiency in school feeding by purchasing food locally. The four-year objective is for 90% of the food (except oil) to be purchased locally. (Currently the schools assisted by CRS also receive food purchased by WFP.) Sixty percent of the funding for purchases will come from CRS and 40% from the local community or commune. The twelve pilot schools will be in the arid northern regions and will be compared to 18 other schools in the Douentza area, a food insecure

area. At the same time, USAID's Title II programs will focus on agricultural production. CRS staff in the Douentza area expressed a need for assistance in developing specific measures of market feasibility. Lessons learned from this CRS pilot of local purchase may provide potential models for LPSF programs to the MoE.

At Diabolo, where a school feeding program has been supported by CRS and WFP since 2002, the SMC reported that about 36 women donate time and effort to the school, taking turns pounding millet and preparing the school lunch; they receive food incentives from WFP to perform these tasks. Other women in the village take turns caring for the children of these cooks during their cooking rotation, about nine half-day shifts. The mothers of the ethnic Peul children do not take turns cooking but instead contribute fish. Income from activities such as fishing and brick-making has been used to buy dried and fresh fish, salt, green pepper, bouillon and baobab leaves for the school canteen. The staples of the school feeding menu include millet, beans (cowpeas) and oil supplied by WFP. The school reported that the herders contribute meat, the fishing cultures contribute fish, the farmers contribute cereal or condiments, and the cooks bring fire wood for cooking. Unfortunately, a teachers strike was taking place, so school was not in session when the AT visited and the assessors could not verify exactly what was in the school feeding meal. School officials stated that they benefitted from a common farm where 10% of the rice harvest was contributed to the school. It was not possible to examine whether this approach was effective, and if so, whether it could be sustained or serve as a model for local contributions to the school feeding program. Also, it is unclear how efficiently the program would function without the support of CRS.

At Nantaka, the school took in students from several villages. They received 30,000 CFA (\$60)/school/quarter for the canteen from an allocation that is part of a regular contribution for social causes in the four villages. This allocation was made possible in part because of decisions made by the village chiefs. The village also hires people through food-for-work to cultivate a garden of cabbage, greens, gumbo, onions, and tomatoes. Only lettuce was being cultivated during the assessment visit due to the season. The school buys fish, baobab leaves, wood, and seasoning in the market, and compensates the three school cooks the equivalent of five children's rations each. The school also has a farm where they grow rice in their aims to alternate the school food basket one day/week. The school opened in 1962 and their school feeding program began in 1977. Nantaka also has access to large grain storage facilities nearby, but they were nearly empty and were reportedly only full once in the mid-60s when they were built. These facilities could hold up to 150 metric tons and could serve as a depot for storage of commodities, perhaps to be used to supplement school feeding.



Farmers prefer to store grain at home in silos like these rather than at a community warehouse so that it is accessible for consumption and ready cash.

The AT also visited a school in Tiby which is part of the Millennium Village Project. This school also had the ambitious goal of having food donated by parents. The plan is for parents to donate 42kg of cereal or 24 kg of rice per child every four months. Subsequently, some of the cereal is to be sold by the school to provide funds for purchasing condiments. However, during the school's first year the school canteen was able to function for only one month. This year they served meals just two total days, and parents who could not contribute cereal were asked to contribute 5,000 CFA (\$10) per term. This level of donation did not appear feasible, given the poverty level in the village and the limited ability of poor farm households to generate cash.

5. Food procurement capacity of schools

Purchasing by schools is done by the SMCs and the CMCs. To date, these purchases are small scale condiment purchases which supplement commodities provided by WFP and NGOs involved in school feeding. The MoE, WFP, and some NGOs (including World Education) believe the SMCs and CMCs could develop the capacity to procure larger quantities of commodities throughout the school year. Farmer groups and women's groups in the communities visited by the AT demonstrated a clear understanding of market dynamics and therefore are familiar with principles involved in buying food. Business management skills will be required to build upon these skills for transparent and accountable local food procurement for the schools. For example, the AT observed a women's savings and credit cooperative that was developing such skills through training funded under USDA's McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program. Another NGO, World Education (WE), is focusing on financial management and literacy with application to keeping financial and attendance records on the school feeding programs. WE has also established IGAs that help replenish school food stocks.

6. Food processing, storage and handling

Many CMC's currently lack the capacity to make key food processing, handling, and storage decisions related to operate and sustain school feeding programs. Such decisions will entail choosing between purchasing higher priced flour or whole grain, as well as purchasing milling services from local vendors or having the school mill the grain themselves. Moreover, product and processing decisions affect decisions about storage and handling and the degree to which those services can be provided or purchased locally. If CMCs have adequate funding to locally purchase the processing, storage, and handling services they require, these purchases can have a significant positive economic impact upon women's cooperatives and other micro-enterprises in the target communities.

The CMCs will require training in business development and management in order to make sound economic and financial decisions related to processing, storage, and handling. Some programs currently underway demonstrate ways in which this business development is being addressed. For example, Afrique Verte is establishing women's milling groups which could provide income for the women while providing a service essential to the school feeding program. These small enterprises are usually village based, processing foods for sale in the local market.

B. Agricultural Development

1. Production levels

About 10% of Mali's population is nomadic and approximately 80% of the labor force is engaged in farming and fishing. Most industrial activity involves the processing of farm commodities.

Agricultural production for major crops is as follows: (2007-2008 hectares area harvested, Source: USDA/FAS): millet 2,677,000, corn 410,000, rice 377,000, cotton 284,000, and peanuts 250,000. Vegetables and fruit (especially mangos) are also grown, plus cattle, sheep, and goats, mainly in free-ranging herds in the dry northern regions of the country. The climate in Mali's southern regions enables a surplus production of the two major food staples, millet and sorghum, as well as a variety of vegetables. Rice is currently being exported and is an important part of the GoM's efforts to manage food security in the country. While not a traditional staple, rice takes less labor to prepare than many other food crops. Therefore it is increasingly popular with some consumers, especially in urban areas, even though it costs more than millet and sorghum. The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) has a goal to expand rice production by 40% (from 600-700 MT to 1,000 MT by 2013), and to expand production of total cereals to 10,000 MT (currently 6,000 MT). Their planned approach is a combination of the expansion of technical assistance and extension service development, as well as the provision of support to school gardens. The MoA is also supporting a mechanization development program with which farmers can acquire tractors with a 50% subsidy. An assembly plant near Bamako is able to produce twelve tractors per day. To date, 450 farmers are recipients.

Traditionally, Malians are subsistence farmers. There are also pastoralists (primarily in the north), and fishers (along the Niger River). The assessment focused on the Mopti and Djénne regions; both along the Niger River, and both less productive than regions in the southern part of the country. Main crops in these regions are millet, sorghum, and rice. In addition, some tribes have cattle, and some are fishers. The area is considered less food secure than other parts of the country and farmers need cash to purchase food in addition to what they produce themselves.

Farmers in Mali have challenges typical to farmers in other developing countries, including difficulty accessing the inputs necessary for good crop production: credit, high quality and drought-resistant seed, fertilizers, pesticides, and simple farm implements. Agriculture in the target regions of Mali is characterized by limited technological improvements, low levels of productivity, highly variable year-to-year yields, limited crop diversification, and dependence on rainfall. Access and use of modern technology is constrained by several factors.

2. Use and availability of credit

Access to farm credit is especially limited, and when loans are available interest rates are often prohibitive due to the high loan-servicing costs charged by micro-creditors. For example, a World Vision program has secured loans to 25,000 rural borrowers, using \$2 million in revolving assets, for an average of only \$80 per loan. Consequently, the interest rate on such loans usually ranges around 20% annual

percentage rate. Nevertheless, credit is a critical component of any attempt to improve the adoption of appropriate technologies by smallholder producers in Mali.

It is extremely difficult to access credit for longer term improvements, given the financial hardship across the area that is consistent year-to-year. The progression from hand-cultivation (primary means for most Malian smallholders) to animal-powered cultivation is constrained by low incomes and thus access to credit is especially important. While already present in many areas, draft animal use is hindered significantly because the \$25 (approx. USD) cost for an animal-drawn plow represents about one month's income per capita in Mali (source: World Bank). As labor is reportedly in limited supply during crucial periods, increased access to animal traction will improve agricultural productivity as well as free up labor for other activities such as value-added processing.

AT visits with many farmers revealed that some farmers in Mali are organized into groups and associations. For example, the Faso Jigi association involves more than 5,000 farmers throughout the country. Besides working to increase market opportunities and improve prices for their respective commodities, membership also facilitates access to credit for purchase of supplies and equipment, because Faso Jigi serves as a link between the farmer and the micro-credit institution. In order for most farmers to get a loan they must go through Faso Jigi. Loan amounts range from 500,000-600,000 CFA (\$1,000-\$1,200) for wealthier farmers to 50,000 CFA to 200,000 CFA (\$100-\$400) for poorer farmers. Loans are paid back at harvest time, often in cereal rather than cash.

Another rural credit example visited, albeit smaller in scope, was a women's savings and lending group in Bankassi. Except for some initial start-up technical advice from CRS, the group was entirely self-supporting. For the required monthly installments, members are able to borrow from the bank (a steel box with a strong lid and three padlocks) for two month loans and a commitment to repay back the loan plus 10% (an effective annual percentage rate of 60%), at the end of the 60 days. Within the first 44 week savings period in 2008-2009 the group reportedly saved over \$600 which was divided among members. With knowledge of the first year success, several other women were requesting membership. This model demonstrates how Malians can work together to save and lend money with each other, and how by doing so they can build accounts for personal investments as well as for important needs of their community, such as critical health needs, weddings, funerals, etc.

3. Use and availability of inputs

The high costs of farm inputs are another constraint. Access to improved seed, agricultural chemicals and fertilizers is very limited among poor farmers. Consequently, water is the single most important factor determining yield.

Faso Jigi members contribute rice or millet to a common stock fund. The AT visited with the member group in Niatia, where the 22 farmers (including five women) in the group have a high rate of participation in the association business. They grow millet and sorghum, along with some beans and sesame. These Faso Jigi members reiterated the need for credit and production assistance, and occasionally receive technical support and education from extension agents or from educators contracted

through PASAM (Program Support to the Agricultural Sector in Mali). The frequency and extent of this help was not stated.



The AT learned of a Japanese NGO fertilizer program for cereal producers and currently the group receives technical assistance from a marketing coordinator who is paid by a Canadian NGO, and a Japanese aid organization funds fertilizer loans. The latter program provides pre-harvest fertilizer in exchange for 1,000-1,500 kilograms of cereals at harvest. Considering the low levels of production, the cereals payment effectively represents a substantial fee of about 20% or more of the entire harvest.

The dry, hot climate is a factor in food insecurity in the northern region.

4. Increasing smallholder productivity

Malian crop yields are among some of the lowest in the world, often running at about 1/10 to 1/5 of global averages for major crops like maize, millet, rice, and sorghum. Low productivity is a major constraint to the local purchase of food in drought-prone areas. Smallholder farmers depend entirely on moisture as the sole variable of success, yet rainfall is not reliable and farmers reported it to be inadequate during two of the past three years. The area's soil fertility is often depleted after generations of intensive use. Current production is very labor intensive with little use of animal traction. During planting and harvest time the entire family, including women and students, must contribute labor. In addition to lack of inputs, low literacy and educational attainment among farmers provides a challenge to spreading knowledge about new appropriate technologies and practices.

The AT believes it is important for the MoA to prioritize support for low input and conservation intensive agricultural approaches that are suitable and feasible for poor farmers who are producing in fragile ecosystems. A Regional Director of the MoA stated a need for technologies that can help retain water, along with seed varieties appropriate for relatively short growing seasons (2-3 months to maturity).

5. Diversification

The farm sector is also characterized by near monoculture crop production with almost no production diversification. This makes the entire local farm sector particularly vulnerable to risks of unfavorable weather conditions, shocks to commodity markets, pests, diseases, etc. Farmers have little left to fall back on when their crops fail.

Purdue University and World Vision in Mali are working together to research cowpeas, a crop which could be added to the mix of products supplied to LPSF programs. This research involves examining the local context, including identifying local growers who could be early adaptors of this opportunity.

6. Agricultural extension, research, and knowledge transfer

Although the MoA estimates a ratio of one extension agent to eight communes, access to knowledgeable, trained agricultural extension agents is rare, especially in the country's expansive and sparsely populated northern regions. The MoA supports a cadre of farm extension agents who have large territories to cover and who are tasked with other duties (e.g. collecting agricultural statistics). The agents have little means of accessing remote farming areas and thus are highly constrained in their ability to provide training and appropriate technology opportunities to smallholders.

To aid knowledge transfer to farmers, agricultural researchers and extension agents conduct localized research in "community clusters." This allows for field demonstrations among peers and for effective training-of-trainer type initiatives.

The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) is conducting research for several advanced technological innovations that are important to Malian agriculture. ICRISAT conducts cluster research and demonstration projects with local farmers. The group relies on existing farmer associations in Mali to spread knowledge and methods in ways that are socially acceptable.

The MoA is involved in a number of agricultural production initiatives, including land tenure issues, commodity storage, and food processing. The MoA also supports an initiative to increase cereals production from six million to ten million tons by 2015. Another MoA initiative incorporates a subsidy mechanization program to provide a 50% subsidy for tractors. The MoA considers mechanization essential to increased productivity north of the 14th parallel.

The communities and farmers visited by the AT showed a willingness to work toward common social and economic goals. With support from the donor and NGO communities, they have made progress in organizing in many ways to deal more effectively with the various challenges they face.

For example, CRS has planned a project to increase rice cultivation in the Douentza area that will bring new land under cultivation, using crop production-intensification approaches that are deemed environmentally and ecologically appropriate. This pilot approach seemingly requires no purchased inputs that are beyond the means of the area's poor farmers.



Farmers may take grain or cereals to a central market for sale to a "middleman" who may grind the product before selling it in the market to consumers.

Local organizations are often developed to market their grain, share equipment resources, pool cash for future onward lending and savings, and share in the work for school meals preparation when the food is available. Custom requires that farmers give seed for crops essential to survival to community members who have none, with these basic seeds being repaid with part of the harvest. This local seed is considered community property, providing life and sustenance to the community.

C. Strategic Procurement

1. Government market interventions

Two out of every three years Mali experiences shortages of food due to inadequate rainfall. The CSA serves as an early warning institution and collaboration platform entity to facilitate responses to these crisis situations. Both during and after each growing season, CSA monitors moisture and precipitation levels and examines food shortfalls in deficit areas. Further, the CSA works with development partners and in coordination with senior government officials to provide follow-up recommendations within a national plan that addresses the country food deficit that will not be met through commercial imports. The CSA then works with regional and local officials in crisis-affected areas to implement the food security actions that have been agreed to by the Office of the Prime Minister.

CSA currently maintains a national stock of 35,000 MT. This supply of food is used to mitigate food insecurity and high prices and is used as an intervention stock during times of major crises, such as the plague of locusts and drought that destroyed crops in 2004-05. In that period CSA was able to procure and distribute 60,000 MT.

Further, at the national level, CSA helps keep prices stable for consumers through their Office of the Agricultural Products of Mali (OPAM). The OPM operates and maintains cereal warehouses around the country, thereby managing the supply of staples and controlling prices in times of food insecurity. OPAM stores food stocks and transports the food to local communes when it is needed. Many of these warehouses are in local communities and are monitored by community members.

2. Purchasing supply chain

For the ongoing WFP-supported school feeding programs, there is no local-level school feeding committee charged with procuring local food. Cereals are purchased in the productive regions of the country and transported to the areas where the food is being programmed. Oil and pulses are purchased from other countries. Foodstuffs are



Children sell baked goods, snacks and fruit in the market to help earn income for their household.

stored at extended delivery points (EDPs) in the main town for each program region. Private transporters are contracted from each region to deliver foodstuffs from the EDPs to each school. Finally, foodstuffs are stored in the school and/or village stores.

3. Storage facilities and use

Storage space for the potential storage of large scale local purchases of food for school feeding programs is adequate at the national and regional level, although storage is controlled by OPAM and not the MoE. However, the level of smaller-scale storage capacity and quality required for small local school feeding programs is limited in the areas visited. This raises the question whether the necessary improvements in storage should be public investments made at the schools themselves or private investments made within the farming or trader communities involved in selling food to the schools. Some NGO and GoM programs have attempted to improve storage capacity at the community level. CSA anticipated that each of the 703 communes nation-wide will have 150 MT of storage by 2012. As of 2008, 100 communes have such storage facilities. It is likely that village schools will be able to use these storage facilities to store larger purchases.

4. Procurement challenges

Most poor farmers in the food deficit areas visited by the AT do not produce all of their food requirements and therefore require cash to purchase some food. A typical pattern for the poorest farmers is to sell cereal at harvest time at low prices for cash to purchase household and other food needs. Thus, it is common for the same poor households to run short of food later in the year (the soudure) and therefore have to buy back cereal when seasonal prices are the highest.

5. Market surveys and information availability

CSA observes and provides information about the access to and supply of commodities. Many farmers learn of food prices through radio broadcasts from CSA and some farmers use mobile phones to follow the market. In a survey conducted by CRS in the Douentza area, 30% of the farmers reported having cell phones.

6. Reliance upon markets

Mali has a long history of trade with neighboring countries, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal. Within Mali, the weekly or regular community market serves many purposes. It is there that the householder both buys and sells food and other supplies. These markets represent the majority of commerce in the regions, providing numerous social and economic opportunities. Men and women are buyers and sellers in the local market, and children help their parents. When market opportunities exist, farm-household children are sent by their parents to customarily sell items such as soft drinks, peanuts, baked goods, and fruits and vegetables. Basic services are available in the markets, including machine milling of cereals.

Farmer associations also play an important role in cooperative marketing. At regional levels, farmer organizations, such as Faso Jigi, hold annual or periodic cereal fairs where member farmers are collectively able to sell their products more competitively than if sold individually. The International Center for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development is developing agri-business clusters to help put farmers in contact with markets.

7. Direct procurement from farmers for school feeding

As mentioned above, the GoM draft school feeding policy includes a central assumption that parents and local community members will donate food to the local school feeding program. Besides including cereal staples such as sorghum and millet, eligible donations can fall within a broad “condiment” category which includes ground nuts, seasoning, and vegetables (customarily used only in sauces that accompany most meals). The current state of agricultural production within the region suggests that while community support is strong, there remain serious challenges to relying entirely on community donations to sustain a LPSF program throughout the school year.

Conversations with members of farmer groups and school committees found that many, if not most poor households, are unable to meet their own income or food consumption needs. Consequently these individuals are likely unable to contribute adequate foodstuffs for sustaining a local school feeding program in their community. With such limited production in the vulnerable geographic areas, it is unlikely these farmers would have adequate surplus food to sell or donate to schools.

Traditional culture in Mali is one of mutual support and assistance at the village and community level. By mandate all of the MoE schools have a SMC to make decisions about the school, to encourage student attendance, and to oversee a CMC, when one exists. While the assessment team visited only a few schools in selected regions, it can be assumed that initiative and capacity vary considerably from one committee to the next. Two of the schools benefited substantially from technical assistance from NGOs and private benefactors – including CRS and OMAES.

III. Conclusions

Based on comprehensive review of the draft school feeding policy, future plans and resources, as well as conditions in food insecure areas, the AT believes that the policy, institutional support structure and strategic plan for school feeding could be strengthened.

A. Current national policy and strategy concerns

The MoE is to be commended for providing the leadership and guidance for on-going school feeding programs for vulnerable children, as well as for initiating the policy discussion about the development of a sustainable approach for local purchase for school feeding. As previously mentioned, there is evidence to indicate that the provision of meals at school does improve school attendance. However, in deciding whether to send their children to school, parents might consider the free lunch at the school offsets the value of the labor the child if they didn't go to school. This would come either from performing household or agricultural work or from selling goods or services in the market. Thus, having one's child fed at school may not provide sufficient incentive for the household to send the child to school unless the potential lost income from that child's sales is more than offset by income from another source. Therefore, the Team is concerned that the need for children to work in income-producing activities could deter parents from sending their children to school even when a free lunch is provided at school. In that regard, the sale of *some* food to the community school by poor farmers would be one source of income that might make certain poor households more willing to send their children to school and to keep them in school. In addition to the school lunch incentive, parents are also more likely to have their children in school when they are in some way involved in the school feeding program, either as a farm product supplier, as canteen help, etc.

Another concern of the AT related to the draft policy is the assumption that local schools will be able to generate sufficient funds to buy food locally. The team does not believe that this is a viable option for at least three reasons. First, the low incomes within poor communities will be unlikely to create a strong enough demand for the services being sold by the schools. Second, the sales of these services would likely compete with the private sector and consequently be detrimental to the community. Third, if the services are provided by volunteer rather than paid labor, it would be unlikely to sustain the provision of continuous services that members of the community would want to buy. Furthermore, labor is already in short supply during critical times of the year and many of these activities would likely involve women who already have multiple demands on their time.

The AT is also concerned that parents will be unable to donate food to the schools in a sustainable, consistent manner. However, if a combination of external and government funds become available to support local purchases by schools, it is clear that many smallholder farmers in the community could sell some food to the school at harvest and during times of surplus production if presented with the opportunity to do so.

The draft policy assumes only a small quantity of food, such as condiments, will be purchased locally, as is currently the situation in many areas. While these types of purchases are encouraged, they will only

generate a marginal increase in the income of local farmers since condiments such as groundnuts, vegetables, leaves and other ingredients for the sauce have a relatively low market value and are used in small quantities.

B. Policy challenges

Mali's community tradition of working together to make decisions and solve problems is an important asset to a sustainable school feeding program. The importance of this tradition was especially evident in the significant involvement by the women in the school feeding program, as they grew vegetables for the school, prepared the school meals, and cared for children of school cooks.

The cultural responsibility and decision-making process (the traditional method of village elders) has been and can continue to be a successful and important component of managing school feeding programs. Nevertheless, greater assistance from the GoM and assistance from NGOs will be required to build capacity and community involvement in some communities. Schools will be unable to sustain a school feeding program without an adequate amount of external and GoM funding for both local purchases and training for the foreseeable future.

A robust and sustainable school feeding program has at least four essential dimensions. First, the policy guidance must clearly address the critical factors that are essential for improving child nutrition, learning,



as well as school attendance and retention. Second, purchase structures must be identified that are operationally feasible in the field. Third, adequate capacity must be built on the ground to purchase, store, handle and process the food required in school feeding programs. Fourth, adequate funding must be available for the purchase of food and food-related services and for providing the management and technical training required for decision-making and implementing these purchase decisions effectively.

Schools are a focal point in the community. Here farmers gather in a classroom to discuss their concerns with the assessment team.

The AT believes that the GoM, donor and NGO community will continue to work together to address these four areas. It is particularly important that the GoM work closely with the NGO community to support those specific skill-building activities in target communities that are necessary prerequisites for sustainability. These relate to increasing production, improving administration and management, and developing marketing skills. As the administrative capacity of government grows, as community farmers associations and saving and credit institutions contribute more value to the school feeding program, the need for external assistance will decrease over time.

C. Collaboration platform

Effective collaboration is essential for the GoM school feeding policy to be successful. The MoE acknowledges that a “collaboration platform” is necessary and the AT believes that the MoE and the CSA should share responsibility for developing the collaboration. This collaboration is required internally within government, as well as externally with donors, NGOs, WFP, and other potential partners for carrying out the LPSF program.

Given the low level of agricultural production and productivity that exists in the most food insecure areas of Mali in most years, the AT concluded that the educational objective of the draft policy should be more closely linked to food security and poverty reduction. The AT recommends that the MoE closely coordinate its local purchase school feeding policy with the CSA. CSA can play a supportive role in helping schools meet as much as possible of the food needs of vulnerable children who attend school in food insecure areas.

While the proposed school feeding program may be implemented at the same time that decentralization is occurring, this will pose challenges in carrying out school feeding as outlined in the draft MoE policy. A long-term GoM strategy to decentralize the administration of programs has important implications for education as a whole, as well as for school feeding programs specifically. The U.S. Agency for International Development and other donors are preparing to help with the Education Decentralization Program. This will include helping the MoE improve its capacity, including building the competencies of school management committees for: resource allocation management, commodity procurement, school feeding operations, and staff development. Issues of MoE staff shortages will need to be addressed as well. For example, the Mopti Region MoE office is currently operating with only 50 of 73 staff positions. In addition, MoE office staff turnover represents a real risk for the oversight of school feeding programs, including locally produced school feeding, in a sustainable manner.

D. Local agricultural supply to schools

1. Local agriculture in food insecure areas

In food-insecure parts of the country, chronically low and highly variable levels of agricultural production make it unrealistic to rely on community and parent donations for the entire amount of food required in local school feeding programs. Much of Mali depends on rainfall to support agricultural production. Rainfall is adequate in only one of three years and area farmers often lack the other inputs and resources necessary to improve their production. In most years, households are unable to feed their families satisfactorily and adequate food security within their communities does not exist. Nevertheless, cash-strapped poor farmers often sell their products in the local markets whether or not there is a “surplus” to sell.

To maintain a consistent and adequate supply of food to the local schools, community-based farmer associations might serve as the best sources of product to the schools. This would require some advance agreements between the farmer and the association but can be a relatively straightforward way to promote surplus production and procurement at the local level. The local farmer association would contract to sell

some locally produced food to a purchasing agent for the school, thus increasing the household stake in the venture.

It is likely that the farmer association could negotiate a better commodity price with local schools, and provide better assurances for meeting delivery terms desired by the school. This would help to offset the usual price disadvantage of individual farmers selling at harvest. Most importantly, these associations would be able to act on behalf of their members to increase (or decrease) their level of sales when the level of production increases (or decreases) from one year to the next.

2. Agriculture in surplus areas

The surplus areas of the country can supply the food that cannot be procured directly from the local food insecure area. The AT considered how OPAM might play a constructive role in support of the school feeding policy under the assumption that it already has a well established system for purchasing food in agricultural surplus areas. The “new” role for OPAM would simply be to “sell” food to local schools which the local schools determine is necessary. Thus, local schools would first determine their total food requirement and the amount they could purchase from local farmers. Any food deficits could then be made up through purchases from OPAM.

E. Strategic Procurement

Any strategy should involve incentives to create income opportunities for farm-households in target areas. Selling locally produced agricultural products to schools is the central premise of a LPSF program. But having food in the amount needed, at the time it is needed, at acceptable quality standards and at a good value is a challenge for producers and marketers alike.

The AT identified possible ways in which poor farm households in food insecure communities with school-aged children could begin selling small amounts of food to local schools, especially in years of normal and surplus production. These could be through direct purchases made by agents of local schools. Purchases after harvest would take into account the inter-annual fluctuation in food availability at the community level. The additional income that poor farm households would earn would make it easier for them to send their children to school since they would not require the income their children earned from selling goods in the local market or other income generating activities. Thus, efforts to promote household income security at the local community level would reinforce the food incentive that households have to send their children to school when safe, adequate and nutritious food is provided in the school feeding program.

Since local purchases for community schools will be variable and normally inadequate for meeting the entire food needs of the school feeding programs in food deficit areas, it will normally be necessary to supplement with purchases from food surplus areas. This additional source of food will help to ensure that the schools in food insecure areas have access to adequate food, especially during the periods before harvest. Thus, the AT recommends that OPAM could use its expertise in purchasing of food from surplus areas in support of local school feeding. OPAM could receive assistance from WFP and other NGOs with

substantial expertise in this area. Furthermore, commodity purchases from food-surplus areas would be phased out if and when local production in food deficit areas increased.

Therefore, the harvest sale of food by community-based farmer associations would be a logical way to begin local purchases for school feeding programs. The sales by farmer associations would also help ensure that any food sold by the community's farmers did not jeopardize the food security of the community, such as by selling too much food.

In order to make this approach actually work at the community level, both local farmer associations and community schools will require support from a facilitator (e.g. WFP, NGO, GoM)) to help create or strengthen local markets. It can be expected that those local schools that are unable to purchase their entire school feeding program requirements from local sources will require support from a facilitator to purchase, transport, and store the residual food requirements of their programs sourced from surplus areas. Since the OPAM unit of CSA already has operational expertise with bulk commodity procurement, storage and transport, it can assist the local community schools that are unable to purchase all of the food required for their school feeding programs by acting as their agent to buy commodities in bulk for them. Given the complexity of what is required to make the approach operationally feasible, this approach should be 'pilot tested' before any attempt is made to scale it up.

IV. Recommendations

Based on the findings, observations and above discussion – and in view of Mali’s decentralization plans, the following areas should be considered for the design of a sustainable LPSF program.

A. Policy Development

The AT believes that the GoM’s educationally-focused school feeding strategy also has a critically important food security dimension with institutional implications. The food security of vulnerable school-aged children depends upon the food they receive to eat both at school and at home. Thus, it is essential that schools have continuous and adequate supplies of foods to feed children attending school and it that the income and food insecurity of households with school-aged children improves so that their basic food and income needs for survival does not outweigh their willingness and/or ability to send their children to school. Thus, the AT recommends that the MoE draft school feeding policy be modified to:

1. Extend beyond the MoE to include active roles for the CSA and the MOA. The CSA has a critical role to play since the draft policy focuses on feeding vulnerable children in vulnerable areas in order to increase school enrollment and attendance. Consequently, the AT believes that the CSA should play a central role in four ways:
 - a. In developing and implementing the food security dimensions of what is now exclusively an educational policy that has a narrow a focus.
 - b. In working closely with the MoA to ensure that longer term food supply concerns are addressed that will increase the supply of food, and therefore food security, particularly in the highly food insecure areas north of the 14th parallel.
 - c. In providing OPAM with the authority to support an implementation strategy for the purchase, storage and distribution of food to local schools that are unable to purchase adequate amounts of nutritious food from local producers due to low production.
 - d. In insuring the food security of vulnerable children attending school in areas experiencing natural disasters or food crises by providing food during those periods without cost to local schools.
2. Since the CSA operates in the Office of the Prime Minister, CSA is well positioned to coordinate the roles and responsibilities of the MoE, OPAM and MoA to ensure the successful implementation of the GoM’s school feeding policy in ways that would not only increase incomes for local smallholder farmers, including women farmers, but would also increase the likelihood of improving child nutrition, learning, as well as school attendance and retention.

B. Institutional Arrangements

In order to strengthen the institutions necessary to support LPSF programs, the team recommends the following:

1. Develop a feasible and effective “collaboration platform.” This critical element should:
 - a. Demonstrate strong government stakeholder linkages (MoA, MoE CSA and others) with the donor community and NGOs.
 - b. Focus on reaching multiple objectives. In addition to enhanced school enrollment, it should include poverty eradication and food security objectives.
 - c. Outline a strategy that involves the MoA, farmer associations, and local markets for progressive increases in agricultural productivity and improved access to food.
 - d. Focus on building the needed management capacities (personnel, finance, procurement, headquarters, field resources, etc.) in local schools and farmer associations.
 - e. Develop a strategic procurement process to link farmers and farmer associations with schools for the purpose of procuring locally produced foods and improving incomes of smallholder farmers, to the maximum extent possible.

2. Develop a model pilot LPSF project that can be scaled-up. Working closely with development partners, the project would have the following characteristics:
 - a. Focuses on poverty eradication, food security, and school enrollment.
 - b. Is administered at the national level by the CSA or a similar entity.
 - c. Promotes increased food production by, and increased incomes for, poor local farmers.
 - d. Procurement focuses on supplies from poor local farmers during good harvest years balanced by purchases from more distant areas of surplus production when local production fails to meet local needs.
 - e. Supports, and does not hurt, the development of local community markets.
 - f. Is a sustainable procurement system, from season to season and year to year.
 - g. Has strong community support from school officials, farmer associations, local leaders, and others.

3. Build agricultural production capacity. Collaborate with donors, NGOs, agricultural research institutions, the private sector, and other entities to strengthen agricultural technology and to transfer skills at the community, school, and farm level. This effort to build agricultural production capacity should include the following considerations:
 - a. Re-invigorate the MoA’s extension system or realign extension resources to focus on target areas.
 - b. Foster local farmer organizations (such as Faso Jigi) with special emphasis on rural credit access and use, production technology assistance, and marketing.
 - c. Develop skills tailored to meet the food needs of local schools, skills which encompass the operation and management of school feeding programs from locally produced commodities.

4. Collaborate with CSA/OPAM to manage food stocks for school feeding.
 - a. The MoE should explore commodity management options with CSA/OPAM for strategic procurement of school feeding commodities.
 - b. Explore needs and available types of storage facilities for use in LPSF.
 - c. Consider development of a warehouse receipts system for accountability and expansion of rural credit (stored commodities can be leveraged for rural credit).

5. Increase capacity for local IGAs in the private sector. The following should be considered:
 - a. Expanded efforts with donors, NGOs, women's saving groups, etc. to increase access and use of micro-finance and business development assistance.
 - b. The primary engine for increasing IGAs must be private sector-led, not a government financed and controlled program.
 - c. Replication of proven IGA business models should be expanded to additional localities/regions.
 - d. IGAs must meet socio-economic impact assessment standards to ensure that they truly enhance local economic development and do not adversely compete with existing or emerging local businesses.

6. Explore the possibility of corporate sponsorship for all or part of the school feeding program. In some countries school feeding programs are supported in part through sponsorship/donations from private entities. Rather than relying on private individuals (parents) to donate food to the school feeding program, the GoM might investigate underwriting from a corporate sponsor.

V. Appendix

1. Map of Sites Visited
2. Acronyms
3. Methodology
4. Assessment Contacts and Schedule
5. Assessment Debriefing

Mali

In-country Assessment
April 26-May 8, 2009

Sites Visited



2. Acronyms

Acronyms used in this report. Also spelled-out on first use within document.	
AT	Assessment team
CAP	Centres d' Animation Pedagogique
CMC	Canteen Management Committee
CP	Country program
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSA	Commissary for Food Security/ Food Security Commission (Commissariat a la Securite Alimentaire)
EDP	Education Decentralization Program
GoM	Government of Mali
IGA	Income-generating activities
LPSF	Local procurement school feeding
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoE	Ministry of Education
OMAES	Support for Quality Education (Euvre Malienne d'aide a l'enfance du Sahe)
OPAM	Office des Produits Agricoles du Mali (Office of the Agricultural Products of Mali)
PDES	Programme de développement economique et Social (Economic and Social Development Programme)
PISE	Medium-Term Investment in Education Program
PRMC	Cereals Market Restructuring Program
PRODEC	PRODEC –Programme décennal de développement de l'éducation (Ten Years Education Development Programme)
RESEN	Rapport d'Etat du Système Educatif National (Report on the Status of the National Education System)
SMC	School Management Committee
SPR	(WFP) Standard Project Report
SRI International	(founded by) Stanford Research Institute, SRI is a nonprofit scientific research institute
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WFP	World Food Programme

3. Methodology

The AT visited Mali April 26-May 8, 2009. The short timeline for this assessment required that the AT begin in-country efforts by observing school feeding and related programs that are already in place in Mali.

In-country interviews were held with members of these organizations or groups:

- GoM Ministry of Agriculture; GoM Ministry of Education
- Mali Commissary for Food Security (CSA)
- Mali OPAM (CSA's cereal storage banks)
- Mali Permanent Assembly of Chambers of Agriculture in Mali (APCAM)
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-Mali
- World Food Programme – Mali
- NGOs:
 - Afrique Verte
 - Aga Khan Foundation
 - Catholic Relief Services
 - International Center for Soil Fertility & Agricultural Development (IFDC)
 - International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)
 - Millennium Village Project
 - World Education
 - World Vegetable Center
 - World Vision
- Farmer groups and associations and women's groups in Segue (Niatia), Mopti (Nantaka), Djenne (Diabolo, Bankassi, Torokoro)
- Markets – including a cereal market in Safara

Besides conducting interviews in Bamako, the assessment included field visits to the Segou, Mopti and Djenne areas where food insecurity is high. A coordinator in Mali arranged all the interviews, and a representative from WFP Mali was involved in each field visit outside Bamako. In addition to this qualitative approach, the AT reviewed documents from organizations such as WFP and the GoM to obtain additional background information.

The AT made every effort to gather information from farmer groups, men and women, and school committees—the people who benefit from school feeding and local production—as well as from program implementers and policy makers. For example, the team used local translators so farmers could speak in their first language, met with women separately from men to facilitate free discussion, walked through gardens, sat under trees, looked in the cooking pots, talked with traders in the market, and saw the micro-finance group's cash box. The AT usually travelled together to a site but split into smaller groups to hold interviews in ways that were informal, personal, and less intimidating as well as appropriate to rural Malian culture.

Assessment Team Members

Mary Crave, Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Extension, Madison

Consultant to USDA and Assessment Coordinator, Extension Education Specialist

Mark Hawthorne, USDA-Foreign Agricultural Service, Office of Capacity Building & Development, Washington, D.C.

Project Technical Manager, Agricultural Economist

William Whelan, Ph.D., USDA-Foreign Agricultural Service, Office of Capacity Building and Development, Food Assistance Division, Washington D.C.

Agricultural Economist

Alphonsine Bouya, World Food Programme, Rome

School Feeding Programme Adviser

Pierre Keita

Mali In-country Project Coordinator, management specialist and farmer

The team also acknowledges assistance from individuals at World Food Programme (WFP), especially Alice Martin-Daïhirou and Aboubacar Guindo, WFP Mali, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and University of Wisconsin-Extension. Their input helped make this assessment possible.

4. Assessment Contacts and Schedule

Assessment Schedule and Contacts for City of Bamako Interviews (page one of two)				
Names	Title	Structure	Acronyms	Contacts
Sunday, April 26				
Alice Martin-Daihirou	<i>Country Director</i>	World Food Program	WFP	alice.martin-daihirou@wfp.org
Karen Kent	<i>Country Director</i>	Catholic Relief Services	CRS	Kkent@crsmali.org 76409300
Monday, April 27				
Jean Harman	<i>Office Chief</i>	USAID-Accelerated Economic Growth Team	USAID	(223)2070-2741 ; jharman@usaid.gov
Mary Beth Leonard	<i>Deputy Chief of Mission</i>	US Embassy		
Natasha DeMarcken		Education Team	USAID	Ndemarcken@usaid.gov
Mr Diallo	<i>OPAM</i>	Malian Agricultural Products Office	OPAM	20214085 ; 66731133
WFP and CRS	<i>Bamako- Local Staff</i>	WFP + CRS	WFP+CRS	20794577 ; 20228730
Tuesday, April 28				
Bonaventure Maiga	<i>Technical Conselor Basic Education</i>	Ministry of Education	MEBALN	66937047 ; 73181401
Adama Moussa Traore	<i>Deputy Director of Basic Education</i>	Direction of Basic Education	DNEB	76061436
Makiyou	<i>Technical Conselor</i>	Ministry of Agriculture	MA	76378181
Fousseny Mariko	<i>Secretariat General</i>	Ministry of Agriculture	MA	fousseyni.marico@ma.gov.ml
Wednesday, April 29				
Eva Weltzien Rattunde	<i>Principal Research</i>	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics	ICRISAT	E.WETZIEN@ICRISATML.ORG
Bonny R Ntare	<i>Country Representative</i>	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics	ICRISAT	b.ntare@cgiar.org
Ekon Akyempong	<i>Country Coordinator</i>	World Vegetable Center	AVRDC	76057562
Souleymane Kanté	<i>Director</i>	World Education		Skante@worlded.org.ml ;
Clement Kone	<i>Director-Interim</i>	World Vision		20213820

Assessment Schedule and Contacts for City of Bamako Interviews (page two of two)				
<i>Thursday, April 30</i>				
Moussa Kienta	<i>Director</i>	Permanent Assembly of Malian Chamber of Agriculture	APCAM	76322339 ; moussa.kienta@yahoo.fr
Mamadou Haidara	<i>Operations Coordinator</i>	Green Africa	Afrique Verte	76282467
Madame Coulibaly	<i>Gestation and Transformation</i>	Green Africa	Afrique Verte	20219760
Kadiatou D Diallo	<i>Consultant</i>	G-FORCE	G-FORCE	66767951 ; kadiatoude@yahoo.fr
Willem Van CAMPEN	<i>Country Representative</i>	International Center for Soil Fertility and Agriculture Development	IFDC	65902313 ; wvancampen@ifdc.org
Michael J. Simsik	<i>Country Director</i>	Peace Corps	Peace Corps	20214479 ; msimsik@ml.peacecorps.gov
Jeremy Foltz	<i>Agricultural Economist</i>	University of Wisconsin - Madison		78632821
<i>Thursday, May 7</i>				
Yaya Tamboura	<i>Deputy Director</i>	<i>Food Security Commissary</i>	CSA	20291536
Tagalifi Maiga		<i>Food Security Commissary</i>	CSA	20291536 ; tagalifi@yahoo.fr
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Dramane Dao	<i>Human Resources</i>	<i>Food Security Commissary</i>	CSA	daodramane@yahoo.fr
Yaya Guindo	<i>DPPGCA</i>	<i>Food Security Commissary</i>	CSA	76020500
Kah Abdoulaye	<i>Consultant</i>	Promisan	Promisan	76454525
Traore Abdramane	<i>Research Assistant</i>	Promisan	Promisan	76646707
Boughton Dencan	<i>Assoc Prof MSU</i>	Promisan	Promisan	

Assessment Schedule for Interviews in the Field				
Date	Time	Sites to visit / Structures to meet	Circle/ Région	Type
Saturday, May 2nd				
2-May-09		Road Bamako -Ségou		
2-May-09		Millennium Village Project- Meeting with staff	Ségou	Education, Health, Agriculture
2-May-09		Visit Field (school of Tiby)		
		Night in Ségou (Hotel Independence)		
Sunday, May 3rd				
3-May-09		Trip Ségou – Mopti		
3-May-09		Visit Market of Somadougou	Sévaré/Mopti	
3-May-09		Briefing with both WFP and CRS local staff	Sévaré/Mopti	School Feeding Implementing team
Monday, May 4th				
4-May-09		Meeting with Regional Director, MoE	Sévaré/Mopti	Local Education
4-May-09		Meeting with Regional Director, MoA	Sévaré/Mopti	
4-May-09		Visit school canteen Nantaka	Mopti	WFP School beneficiaries
4-May-09		LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH
4-May-09		Courtesy visit to Governor	Mopti	Governorat
4-May-09		Meeting with WFP / CRS Local staff	Mopti	
4-May-09		Meeting with AGA KHAN staff	Mopti	
Tuesday, May 5th				
5-May-09		Trip to Diabolo (km)	Djenné / Mopti	School feeding programme
5-May-09		Visit school canteen in Diabolo	Djenné / Mopti	School beneficiary for both WFP and CRS assistance - School feeding, Agriculture
5-May-09		Visit sites Djenne	Djenné / Mopti	
5-May-09		Visit School Bankassi	Djenné / Mopti	
5-May-09		Visit AGA KHAN site Torokoro	Mopti	
5-May-09		Visit local market Sofara	Mopti	Local markets
Wednesday, May 6th				
6-May-09		Team 1 Trip to Douentza	Douentza / Mopti	
6-May-09		Team 2 Trip to Segou	Mopti-Segou	
6-May-09		Team1 school visit and meeting with local population	Douentza / Mopti	
6-May-09		Team 2 meeting with Faso jigi	Segou	
6-May-09		Team 1 trip to Segou (night in Segou)	Segou	
5-May-09		Team 2 trip back to Bamako	Bamako	
Thursday, May 7th				
5-May-09		Trip back to Bamako for team 1		

Assessment Contacts for Mopti Region				
Names	Title	Structure	Acronyms	Contacts
Sibi Guindo	Zone Coordinator	Project Village Millenaire	PVM	66654316
Assa Soumare	Communication	Project Village Millenaire	PVM	21323392
Daouda Sangare	CAP-Markala	Project Village Millenaire	PVM	21323392
Namory Keita	Education Coordinator	Project Village Millenaire	PVM	21323392
Kadiatou Diallo	Development Coordinator	Project Village Millenaire	PVM	21323392
Mamadou Bore	Capacity Building	Catholic Relief Services	CRS	CRS-MOPTI
Enoch Tessougue	Supervisor	Caritas	Caritas	Caritas-Mali
Chery Traore	Agro enterprise	Catholic Relief Services	CRS	76061436
Hamadi Diallo	Office Manager	World Food Program	WFP	
Salif Kampo	Program Assistant	World Food Program	WFP	76449877
Jennifer Holst	Coordinator FFE	Catholic Relief Services	CRS	76409303
Amadoun Dicko	Director	Centers for Pedagogical Animation	CAP-Mopti	
Adama Haidara	Cantines Coordinator	Centers for Pedagogical Animation-Mopti	CAP-Mopti	
Souibou Karambe	Division Chief	Regional Direction of Agriculture	Mopti	
Daouda Tamboura	Statistician	Regional Direction of Agriculture	Mopti	
Abdoulaye Mamadou Diarra	Governor	Mali-Government		21430511
Balla Bamba	Economic Technical Counselor	Mali-Government		21430511
Zana Kone	Devel. Program Coordinator	Aga Khan	Aga Khan	21431406
Dantouma Sangare	Manager	Aga Khan	Aga Khan	66858220
Ashak Sheriff	Coordinator	Aga Khan	Aga Khan	21431406
Souleymane Traore	CAP-Djenne	School Diabolo	school Diabolo	
Nouhoum Yana	School Director	Diabolo	Diabolo School	
Dinka Traore	Village Counselor	Diabolo	Diabolo School	
Safiatou Traore	Women's gardening group	Torokoro Village	Torokoro	
Oumar Sankare	School Director	School Douentza	Douentza	
Ba Dembele	Women's Association	School Douentza	Douentza	
Fatoumata Bori	School Mgt. Cmte.	School Douentza	Douentza	
Mamoud Cisse	Farmer	Village Nantaka	Nantaka	
Youssouf Maiga	School Director	School Nantaka	Nantaka	
Hamadoun Kelly	School Mgt. Cmte.	School Nantaka	Nantaka	
Lassana Sentra	Coordination	Passem-Faso Jigi	Fambougou-Segou	66768026
Notes: Names are in chronological order. The list does not include all the names of men and women farmers with whom the AT met at the schools or gardens. In addition, many of the school management committee members are also farmers, though listed by their role on the SMC. Cooks are not listed by name.				

5. Assessment Debriefing Presentation

Purpose of Trip:

Assess feasibility of linking local production and purchase with school feeding.

Methods:

Qualitative data

Started where School Feeding program are already in place

Data Gathered From:

Government of Mali Ministries of Education and Agriculture

CSA – Commissary for Food Security

USAID

World Food Program (partner in assessment)

NGOs (CRS, Afrique Verte, ICRISAT, IFDC, OPAM, World Vegetable Center, World Education, World Vision, APECAM, Millennium Village Project, Aga Khan

Farmer organizations, women's groups in Segou (Niatia) Mopti (Nantaka) Djenne (Diabolo, Bankassi, Torokoro)

Markets – Safara

Ongoing Programs and Activities.

National School Feeding Policy

The national school feeding policy is oriented to 166 vulnerable areas.

Draft stage.

Purpose is to improve student enrollment and retention in these geographic areas.

Current Local Purchase:

Moving products from surplus to deficit areas

Varying use of “local purchase”

Near school

Surplus area

Within Mali

Production:

Agricultural productivity constraints

Low level of capacity

High cost of inputs – credit, fertilizer, seeds, appropriate technology

Labor

Markets:

Input markets – fertilizer

Food market levels

Community

Regional in Mali

Regional trade impacts local purchases opportunities

Income Generation:

Some children from low-income households are engaged in income-earning activities related to agriculture which impacts school attendance
Looked at cereals and condiments produced and purchased locally

Implementers are Communicating:

NGOs and WFP are heavily involved in implementing and planning at all levels in regard to:
Agriculture
Markets
School feeding
Some are making promising links between and building on these various initiatives

Farmers' Associations:

There are many farmers associations – different types, purposes and levels
Very early stages of organizing – have improved marketing capacity, provide social safety net, access to credit
Have been and can be an easy access to capacity-building, including better marketing and trade
Interested in selling to school feeding programs

Community Contributions:

Difficult to donate food to schools
School canteens are overseen by local committees
Communities willing but often unable to contribute materially
Significant involvement in women in time and food preparation – strong support from the community

Conclusions:

Mali could possibly implement a school feeding program that uses locally produced and purchased foods but does not have the mechanisms to do so at this time.
A mechanism involving parents, local communities, implementing partners, and the private sector (farmers, processors, private traders) should be explored as a possible approach to raise incomes and feed school children at the same time.

Participants

Assessment Debriefing Participants		
Names	Titles/Structures	Contacts
Aboubacar Guindo	Program Manager, WFP	aboubacar.guindo@wfp.org
Baou, Diane	USAID/Agriculture, Economic Growth	74751539
Da, Eugene	USAID	eda@usaid.gov
Djoukou, Coulibaly	World Education	djoukou@worlded.org
Halima, Ouattara A	USAID/Agriculture, Economic Growth	76199165
Hoffer, Kristine	Associate Director United States Peace Corps	66759923
Maiga, Bonaventure	Technical Counselor /MoE	66937047
Mamadou Doumbia	National Coordinator of Cantines	76081543;66938996
Mohamed, Sokona	World Education	66761032
Moore, Lindsay	Catholic Relief Services	lmoore@ml.waro.crs.org
Samake, Amadou	Agent/National Direction of Basic Education	76415880
Sangare, Moussa B.	Catholic Relief Services	mbsangare@ml.waro.crs.org