



RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Reducing Poverty and Food Insecurity

The fight against poverty and food insecurity is an enormous challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa. Poverty affects more than 40% of Mali's 18 million people, of which most live in rural areas. According to the Malian National Institute of Statistics, more than a quarter of the Malian population has to contend with food insecurity.

The New Rice for Africa (NERICA) and the Fadougou Market Garden projects are two rural development initiatives developed by B2Gold and implemented over the last three years in collaboration with small farmers and a women's association from Fadougou. The projects are in their third year and their impacts are beginning to be significant.

The objectives of these projects are to build the capacity of farmers and market gardeners by introducing new techniques and varieties of products, as well as strengthening their organizational capacity. The participants received training and technical assistance from the Local Agricultural Technical Services from Kéniéba and the AFECK project. (Read more about AFECK on page 43).

RICE PRODUCTION YIELDS EXCEED EXPECTATIONS

The NERICA project brought an adapted rice production activity to the region. The rice variety and agricultural techniques were developed by the Africa Rice Center and introduces an improved variety of African-Asian hybrid rice – better suited to the arid environment of the region. The project started in 2016 with six farmers and a modest initial investment by B2Gold. In 2017, 48 farmers joined and a further 57 joined in 2018, the project's third year. The annual rice production of the project started at 20,483 tonnes in 2016, increased to 71,873 tonnes in 2017, and 50,376 tonnes in 2018. The NERICA yield threshold is 2.5 t/ha and 18 farmers exceeded this threshold.

Although land availability is an issue in the region, all participating farmers used their own land. By the third year of implementation, farmers were largely independent and bought seed and consumables themselves with B2Gold providing fertilizer. A training program for certified seed growers is planned for 2019 to make seeds available at a local level.