

# Irrigation and Property Rights for Farmers in Mali



Farmers face many challenges as they try to grow and sell enough crops to support their families. Uncertain rainfall, potential crop failure due to natural disasters or disease, unpredictable crop prices, and shaky land tenure all contribute to the difficulties and risks inherent in farming. Improvements in the production processes and productivity of farmland could help many poor families achieve a better life. The Alatona zone is one of the most disadvantaged zones in Mali. The main livelihood sources of the population in the zone are rain-fed agriculture, pastoralism, and wage labor in the Office du Niger.

The Alatona Irrigation Project is a component of the MCC Compact in Mali, and like the larger mission of MCC, the AIP seeks to reduce poverty through economic growth. The AIP is focused on increasing production and productivity, increasing farmer's income, improving land tenure security, modernizing irrigated production systems and mitigating the uncertainty from subsistence rain-fed agriculture. AIP seeks to develop roughly 14,000 hectares of net irrigated land in the Alatona perimeter, representing an almost 20% increase of "drought-proof" cropland and a 7% increase of the country's total stock of fully or partially irrigated land. The AIP will introduce innovative agricultural, land tenure, and water management practices, as well as policy and organizational reforms aimed at realizing the Office du Niger's potential to serve as an engine of rural growth for Mali.

The AIP project will create an additional 14,000 hectares of irrigated land in the Office du Niger (ON) zone. Project affected people currently residing or tending land in the project zone will be given 5 hectare plots and new settlers wishing to move to the area will be required to purchase plots of 5 hectare or greater. Women will have access to 500 m<sup>2</sup> market gardens. Institutions and management processes will be improved relative to comparable institutions in existing ON areas. One such example is land titles: all farmers in the Alatona will be given full land titles for their land, including rights to sell the land. This feature of the intervention will increase property rights and security for AIP farmers in contrast to the short or longer-run lease system currently used by the ON. Farmer organizations will also be encouraged and supported to maximize local capacities.

Additionally, water management and the collection of water fees will be administered through local farmer associations; whereas in existing ON areas, the ON is directly responsible for the collection of water fees. Financial services including starter kits (fertilizer, seeds) for the PAP concessions and agricultural credit will also be developed in the area. Finally, since AIP land is sold to beneficiaries, the land revenues may provide opportunities during and most likely after the Compact period for subsequent development of the zone.

**Policy Issue**  
**Evaluation Context**  
**Details of the Intervention**  
**Results and Policy Lessons**



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**COUNTRY**

Mali

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**PROGRAM AREA**

Agriculture

**TOPIC**

Environment

**TIMELINE**

Not available

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