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SENEGAL

SUCCESS STORY

Harvesters Protect Land, Reap Profits

A community enforces rules to protect and tap natural resources



Photo: USAID/Djiby Ka

Souleymane Bayo, center, instructs harvester Cheikh Omar Keita on how best to harvest the *madd* fruit.

“The situation has changed since the local convention was applied to allow better management and increased profits from our products,” Souleymane Bayo, a fruit harvester in Badou, Senegal.

Telling Our Story
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Nestled along Senegal’s lush Niokolo Koba National Park, the rural community of Tomboronkoto is home to 7,000 people and countless species of plants, trees, and fruit, including a popular, tart fruit called *madd*. Until recently, poor harvesting techniques and brushfires threatened the survival of *madd* vines and the livelihoods of fruit harvesters. To make matters worse, since harvesters were poorly organized, they sold goods at unfairly low prices to middlemen. Harvester families could barely get by.

“I have harvested *madd* for 10 years,” said Souleymane Bayo, a harvester from the village of Badou. “Production used to be low and prices highly variable. People cut the vines or completely chopped down the supporting trees in order to harvest the fruit. So production was falling from one year to the next.”

At the community’s request, USAID stepped in to tackle these challenges in 2004. Bringing together all relevant parties, USAID helped draft a convention with rules on harvesting calendars, acceptable harvesting techniques, and preventive measures against brushfires and livestock damage. For instance, anyone caught cutting vines will face a fine of \$10 per vine or tree — a big portion of a farmer’s monthly earnings.

With the convention in place, USAID worked with harvesters to better market the produce and fetch higher prices. Harvesters organized networks that demanded fair prices from middlemen and began selling their produce to large cities, such as Dakar.

“The situation has changed since the local convention was applied to allow better management and increased profits from our products,” said Bayo. In 2005, he harvested and sold nearly three times as many sacks of *madd* as in 2003. He also sold them at double the price. In total, he earned \$615 – compared to \$115 in 2003. He spent a third of this to buy mattresses, malaria medicine, and insecticide-treated mosquito nets. “The rest has served to provide food for my family.”

Harvesters in Tomboronkoto increased their combined revenue from \$1,400 to \$4,000 in one year. Nearby villages saw similar results, signaling that both the land and the people will benefit from the new order of things in Tomboronkoto and beyond.