



ASSAR

Adaptation at Scale in Semi-Arid Regions

MULTISCALE GOVERNANCE: THE PARADOX OF TOP-DOWN POLICY DESIGN

01

Designing rules and policies without connecting to stakeholders' diverse concerns can lead to maladaptation.

02

It is necessary to have mechanisms for collecting feedback from those impacted by policies, and to respond flexibly.

03

Proactivity is a key aspect of sustainably addressing current and future adaptation needs.

04

Continuous consultation is required with different social groups, from local to national levels.

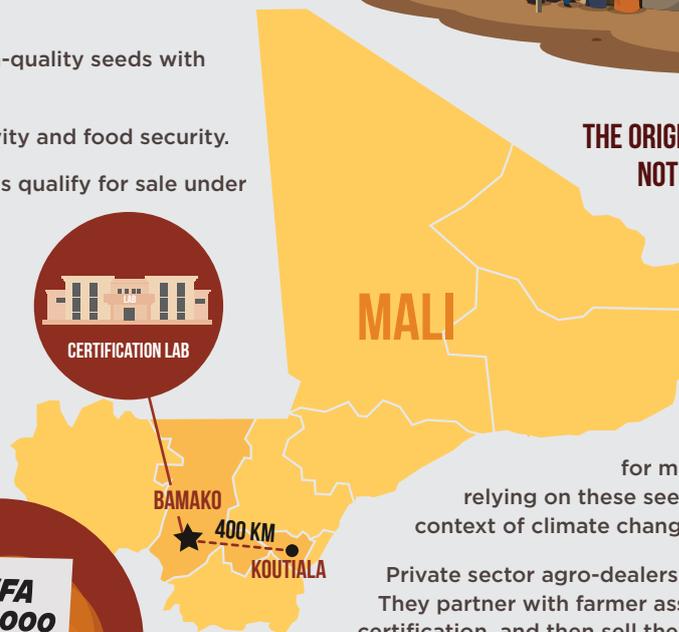
CASE STUDY 01 MALI'S SEED LAW

THE NEW AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR MALI - LOI D'ORIENTATION AGRICOLE (2006) - WAS ENACTED TO:

Promote farmer access to high-quality seeds with reduced risk of crop failure.

Increase agricultural productivity and food security.

Ensure that only certified seeds qualify for sale under the Seed Law.



THE ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF THE SEED LAW HAS NOT MATERIALISED, AND HAS BROUGHT UNINTENDED NEGATIVE IMPACTS ON FOOD PRODUCTION AND SECURITY:

Because of expensive and onerous certification processes, most farmers still obtain seeds through traditional seed systems.

Use of traditional seeds is important for maintaining agricultural biodiversity, but relying on these seeds alone is risky for food security in the context of climate change and uncertainty.

Private sector agro-dealers can take advantage of the system. They partner with farmer associations (seed producers), pay for certification, and then sell the certified seeds to farmers (seed users). Farmers have no control over prices and, as a result, agro-dealers sell the seeds at inflated prices that are burdensome for many buyers.

Farmers lose the opportunity to develop skills and knowledge on seed marketing, resulting in disempowerment.

LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Early-maturing, high-yield varieties are needed to maintain options for secure food sources. But for the seed system to work, the certification process needs to be affordable and accessible.

The Ministry of Agriculture needs to create enabling conditions to support smallholder farmers to certify seeds themselves, for example, by developing smaller and closer certification labs.

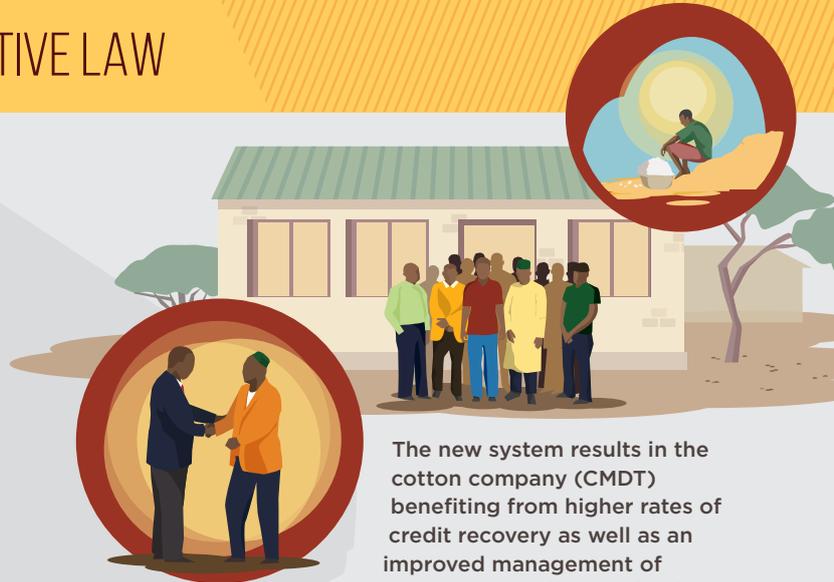
Policies need longer-term perspectives to consider potential unintended consequences, who may win or lose as a result of their implementation, and what this means for long-term adaptation to climate change.

Mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that user perspectives are incorporated into policies from early planning stages, and that user feedback on implemented policies is recognised and responded to in a timely way.

CASE STUDY 02 MALI'S COOPERATIVE LAW

Under the new agricultural development framework (OHADA), a new Cooperative Law was endorsed by Mali's government in 2010 that aims to increase cotton production, and restructure the cotton system.

All farmer associations are required to harmonise their bylaws with the OHADA. As a result, cotton cooperatives are created, with membership based on the ability to produce cotton and reimburse credit.



The new system results in the cotton company (CMDT) benefiting from higher rates of credit recovery as well as an improved management of cooperatives' collective funds.

The relationship between cotton companies and farmer associations also improves.

However, this new system contrasts the previous village-based cooperative membership, which invested a portion of its funds on community needs. This means that there is now far less mutual support among community members. For instance, better-off farmers no longer support more vulnerable members in times of stress.

LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Top-down regulations, such as the Cooperative Law, which ignore local realities and existing social structures, can result in undesirable effects, such as a breakdown of traditional social networks.

Flexible policies with regular stakeholder input from diverse social groups can lead to more sustainable outcomes.



As new policies are enacted, systems are required to monitor stakeholder feedback and ensure timely and appropriate response.



Extension services, together with farmer organisations, need to design social support structures for those who lose out as a result of the new Cooperative Law.

CONCLUSION

- When policies are designed from only one perspective, they can result in unintended outcomes, such as erosion of social cohesion, disempowerment of farmers, or disproportionate benefits for the better-off.
- Systems are needed for monitoring, anticipating, and flexibly responding to emerging challenges that result from implementation of policies.
- Communication and learning across different levels (from local to national) is critical.
- Making rules and regulations should be a transparent, flexible and iterative process that continuously evaluates the impacts on the most vulnerable, and addresses these in an inclusive and participatory way.

Based on:

Sidibé, A., Totin, E., Thompson-Hall, M., Traoré, O.T., Traoré, P.C.S., Olabisi, L.S. 2018. Multi-scale governance in agriculture systems: interplay between national and local institutions around the production dimension of food security in Mali. *NJAS - Wageningen Journal of Life Sciences* (84), 94-102. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.njas.2017.09.001>.

