

## MULTI-SCALE GOVERNANCE IN AGRICULTURE SYSTEMS: INTERPLAY BETWEEN NATIONAL AND LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AROUND THE PRODUCTION DIMENSION OF FOOD SECURITY IN MALI

Institutions are not isolated from the actions and agency of stakeholders, and cannot succeed on a single scale of governance. It is vital for institutions to be able to maintain flexibility and foster change, in order for institutions to facilitate effective governance across scales.

### WHAT WAS DONE, AND WHAT WAS NOVEL?

The study documents the institutional logic of three case-study institutions. Two of these were characterised by state-driven, top-down governance structures. The third consisted of stakeholder-driven management of natural resources, whereby local people had the power to determine their own rules concerning the collective use of forest resources.

Most studies tend to diagnose institutions by emphasising how organisational processes and structures are shaped by institutional forces. These studies frequently ignore the context and agencies of institutional actors.

Here we work to understand the kind of institutional logic that can create and sustain an institutional environment that enables food production, and subsequent food security.

### KEY FINDINGS

Enforcement of rules and laws designed at the national level is still one of the dominant institutional mechanisms for effective multiscale governance in most countries. We found that whether the regulation was designed at national or local level, neither were fully accepted by users. The controversies around these institutional arrangements show that these approaches failed to consider either agency of local players or the national guiding principles.

Overall, the institutional diagnostic is likely incomplete when it considers one scale in isolation, rather than the social embeddedness that exists across scales. Our research also shows that a single institutional diagnostic cannot capture all reality with one sequence. We highlight the need for integrated top-down and bottom-up planning approaches to support effective institutions that work across scales.

### KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Institutions cannot be effective when they are proposed by high-level policy actors who assume to know enough about local community needs and conditions to be able to design rules for them. Likewise, bottom-up approaches designed from within a particular local context are unlikely to achieve management goals for a much larger scale without broader organisational structure.

The diagnostic should therefore be an ongoing and iterative process which may require long-term investigation with multiple sources to cross check and provide a deep understanding of the historical, political, and social contexts that play a role in institutional mechanisms.

