

# Farms of the future: a climate twinning project in Mali

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Using a new online weather prediction tool, the RIC4REC project has been identifying communities in Mali that are currently experiencing weather and climate scenarios similar to those that other communities could face in 30 years' time. The "Farms of the Future" approach, developed by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) research programme on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), aims to improve the capacity of communities to adapt to climate change by connecting farmers who are currently confronting a range of climate risks with those who may be dealing with them down the line. The exchanges, in which community members visit their "future village", allow farmers to learn about new opportunities to tackle climate stresses.

"It was important to find a community that has similar coping strategies – similar cultures and farming techniques," says Bouba Traore, a scientist at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, who implemented the approach. He explains that the climate analogue tool makes it possible to spot similar climatic zones around the world. The visit was organised between the communities of Banamba (situated in the south, 70km from Bamako, capital of Mali) and the communities of Koro and Bankass, 600km away, towards the centre of the country.

The visitors – men and women of all ages – were shown how to document their visit on camera, to share with the rest of their community on their return.

*RIC4REC aims to benefit 264,000 people in Mali, targeting those most vulnerable to the risks of climate disasters.*

*The project is built around four pillars: social cohesion, governance, natural resource management and better access to livelihoods.*

**Seeing first-hand the types of scenarios communities could face in some years' time sparked feelings of concern in the community members who visited the "future villages", and a desire to act.**

They could see that they still had time to adapt their farming techniques to suit the changing climate, but that they needed to make changes now.

They took home new ways of working, such as the use of mobile-phone weather alerts to help farmers make informed decisions about their crops. Intercropping was another new and relatively simple technique that the farmers learned about: planting crops in sections of two or three rows of one crop at a time, as opposed to mixed cropping. Intercropping eliminates the loss of leaves, which can instead be used as animal feed. The exchange visitors also learned about soil fertility and water management technologies such as collecting run-off water and organic matter in small pits (zaï) or semi-circular basins (half-moons).

The “future village” had a committee to safeguard against deforestation and protect the local environment. The community intends to set up similar committees in their own villages with local authority support, to implement new policies to prevent the degradation of their natural resources.

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**The plan is that that each community member's family – a total of 200 households – will implement natural assisted regeneration techniques on at least one hectare of their land.**

The visit to the “future village” has allowed farmers to immerse themselves in the reality of climate change. It has raised their awareness of resource degradation and their understanding of the social and cultural barriers that might make it harder to adopt a technological option or to implement an adaptation practice. The experience has strengthened their resolve to take both individual and community actions to protect common resources.

