

# Malian women lead by example in climate-resilient farming

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RIC4REC

In Mali, the heritage system attributes land to man; it is rare for a woman to own land, and land loaned to women is generally small and marginal. Malado Cissé from the village of Touba Sylla was given by her husband a bare, rocky piece of land, located far from the village. After attending RIC4REC's training on the implementation of climate-resilient agriculture for sustainable farming production, Cissé is putting her knowledge to use, and in doing so is transforming her life.

The training updates traditional farming techniques and incorporates new technologies to tackle the strain placed on natural resources in Mali by weather stresses, as well as human and animal population growth. By supporting a network of technical experts such as state extension workers and farmers' organisations, capacity is being built through new knowledge and skills that support rural producers.

Cissé has acquired new skills such as using zaï and half-moon, West African practices to collect run-off water and organic matter in small pits or semi-circular basins. These techniques lead to improved soil fertility and soil moisture. On top of that Cissé uses the "Sandji" mobile-phone weather forecasting service, which provides her with a local daily rainfall forecast.

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**Now men and women are learning from Cissé's success in growing food on poor soils and are adopting climate-resilient agricultural practices.**

*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.*

Even farmers who initially withdrew from the training programme have asked about these new methods of cultivation and have come back to learn more, convinced by Cissé's success.

With the extra income, Cissé no longer needs to leave her community to work in the capital three times a month. Instead she can take care of her small business and better support her children. She can also afford to invest in additional resources like sheep, chickens and goats to further increase production.

Cissé is also part of a women's association, where she provides training and advice to others on climate-resilient farming practices; acting as a model farmer in her community. The women's association also provides savings and loans, meaning she has a safe place to save her money.

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**With their new knowledge, women are able to change their status in the household, equipped with the skills to enable their families to prepare for climate extremes and safeguard their livelihoods.**

Incorporating women into agricultural training, and ultimately land ownership rights, is a necessary part of any long-term strategy for climate resilience. Cisse's experience has shown that this is possible, and that by including women in planning for a more uncertain climate, families and communities benefit.

