

**Global Food Security Strategy
(GFSS)
Mali Country Plan**

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Introduction

The Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) Country Plan for Mali was co-written by all United States Government (USG) agencies involved in food security, nutrition and resilience work after extensive consultation with stakeholders from government ministries, private companies, universities, research institutions, international and local Non-Governmental Organizations ((NGOs), donors and international organizations and was given extensive review and commentary by USG interagency partners in Washington, DC. As a living document, it is intended to be updated as needed in consultation with those parties over time.

The Mali Country Plan is informed by analysis of the first phase of Feed the Future; and socio-economic factors impacting poverty, nutrition, and resilience; and stakeholder consultations. Key changes to the approach include: greater emphasis on private sector investment and market facilitation; and selection of new value chains to increase resiliency and income.

The GFSS Country Plan serves as an overarching framework for integrated food security, nutrition and resilience programming. The plan is intended to describe the key drivers of food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty. These key drivers stem from a complex set of underlying conditions that exist at the individual, household, community and system level. At the design and procurement stages, the targeting, results framework and program components will require further refinement to operationalize integrated and holistic approaches. Interventions at all levels will need to complement each other to sustainably tackle food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty. In particular, the most vulnerable and poor populations do not have sufficient assets, skills, and capabilities to participate in market activities. These populations will need to be supported to develop capacity over time to participate in value chains so they become a viable livelihood option. As GFSS programming is refined through the design, procurement and implementation processes, selected value chains will explicitly prioritize inclusive growth. Interventions will include support to the most vulnerable and poor populations to enable them to graduate into selected value chains and benefit from the GFSS-supported livelihoods and market development.

Budget assumptions for interagency contributions to this plan reflect the FY 2017 Estimate and FY 2018 President's Budget, based on information publicly available at the time this document was prepared. Out year budget assumptions reflect a straight-line to the FY 2018 President's Budget. Any funding beyond FY 2017 is subject to the availability of funds, as determined by the President's Budget and a Congressional appropriation. Budget assumptions may require revision in the future, based on future appropriations.

1. Food Security and Nutrition Context

The overriding goal in the Government of Mali's (GOM) National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP) 2015-2025 is to strengthen the agriculture sector so that it is the main engine for economic growth to address hunger, malnutrition, and poverty. This is the GOM's second NAIP and it incorporates the goals of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) process initiated in 2003 by the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Under the NAIP, Mali has achieved notable progress by meeting the CAADP goal of 6 percent annual growth in agricultural productivity by 2015. Mali further surpassed the recommended 10% investment level in the agriculture sector by contributing about 15% of its annual national budget to agriculture in 2017, pushing the country even closer to its goal of 20% by 2022. The Country Plan mainly supports two program areas under the NAIP for agriculture: production and productivity. It also supports food security, nutrition, climate

change adaptation, and resilience. Cross-cutting objectives include improving the economic and nutritional status of vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and children.

Mali's NAIP contributes to the 2016 – 2020 Regional Agriculture and Food and Nutrition Security Investment Plan (RAIP-FNS) adopted in Abuja, Nigeria by the 15-member countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in December 2016. The NAIP is bolstered by other pertinent national poverty reduction, food security and sector strategy documents, including the ten-year National Nutrition Policy (2013-2023) and the Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan (MNAP/*Plan d'Action Multisectoriel de la Nutrition*) 2014-2018, and its Priority Country Resilience Strategy, 2018 – 2025.¹

The MNAP (2014-2018) aims to ensure the right to adequate food for the Malian population in order to satisfy their well-being and ensure sustainable national development. The implementation of the MNAP in 2014 began shortly after the launch of USAID's Feed the Future nutrition programming. Under the guidance of the MNAP, USAID and other donor programs supported the implementation of a package of interventions under the 1,000-day approach (i.e. the thousand days between pregnancy and a child's 2nd birthday)² across many areas of the country. This package included an intensified focus on community-level behavior change activities among women, husbands, mothers-in-law, and community leaders, along with the integration of other interventions such as malaria prevention and treatment activities (net distribution, seasonal malaria chemoprevention, the intermittent treatment of malaria in pregnancy), homestead food production, improved drinking water and sanitation, and micronutrient supplementation.

The GOM's Mali National Resilience Priorities/Priorités Résilience Pays (NRP/PRP-AGIR)³ retraces the gaps and weaknesses in the existing policies, strategies and programs to meet the specific needs of the most vulnerable populations and to strengthen their resilience to Food and nutrition insecurity. The overall objective of the NRP is: "Structurally, sustainable, and definitive reduction of food and nutrition vulnerability in Mali by 2030" ("Réduire structurellement, de manière durable et définitive la vulnérabilité alimentaire et nutritionnelle au Mali d'ici 2030").

The National Resilience Priorities are articulated around the following four pillars: Pillar 1 - restore, enhance and secure livelihoods and improve social protection of communities and vulnerable households; Pillar 2 - Enhance the nutrition of vulnerable households; Pillar 3 - strengthening sustainable agricultural and food productivity, and incomes of the most vulnerable and their access to food; and Pillar 4 - strengthen food security governance and nutrition.

1.1 Drivers of Poverty, Hunger, and Malnutrition

1.2 The importance of empowering women

A high population growth rate of over 3% per year and the persistent subordinate status of women in Malian society makes it increasingly difficult for Mali to properly nourish, educate and provide economic opportunities to its people to reduce poverty, especially for those living in rural areas. Of Mali's total estimated 2017 population of 18.7 million, approximately 19%, or about 3.5 million, are under the age of five.

While Malian women are heavily engaged in food production, and process and prepare more food than men, traditional customs prevent them from engaging fully in decisions affecting the family's farming

¹ The Multisectoral Nutrition Action Plan was done in association with the Global Alliance for Resiliency in the Sahel and West Africa - AGIR).

² <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/global-health/nutrition/1000-day-window-opportunity>

³ National Resilience Priorities/Priorités résilience pays, Mali <https://www.oecd.org/site/rpca/agir/nrp-agir.htm>

enterprise. The best land is usually reserved for men while women are provided inferior land, if any, to cultivate.

Any efforts to increase the consumption of diversified diets and improve infant and child feeding guidelines imply changes in the current child-caring and culinary practices of women. Women are therefore the main ‘gateway’ to household resiliency and the well-being of all its members. Endeavors to strengthen household resiliency and improve nutritional levels for 1,000-day beneficiaries must become a priority for all members of the household.

It is crucially important to bring about changes in attitudes, behaviors, roles, and responsibilities at home, in the workplace, and in the community. Working with community leaders, men, women, boys, and girls to raise the economic and health status of women and empower their active participation in decision-making is important to making sustainable progress in the areas of health, nutrition, and economic resiliency. Reducing the time and energy burdens on Malian women wherever possible will also allow them more leeway to engage in educational courses, income-generating activities, and local political processes.

1.3 Malnutrition

On average, women of reproductive age (15 to 45 years) have six children⁴. In rural areas, adolescent marriages and pregnancies are common, which contributes to compromised pregnancies and adverse birth outcomes, such as premature births and low-birth weight babies. The risk of stunting is 33 percent higher among first born children of adolescent mothers under 18 years in Sub-Saharan Africa⁵. Overall, the low birth weight rate in Mali is reported to be near 20% and the infant mortality rate is 56 per 1000 live births⁶.

The nutrition crisis in Mali follows an intergenerational, structural cycle, of which poor maternal health and nutrition, high birth rates and young maternal age are key drivers. Nationally, stunting is 30 percent among children under the age of five, but higher in the regions of Mopti (46.5%), Segou (40.5%) and Sikasso (39.9%)⁷. Stunting is more common among children living in rural areas, those living in households in middle to poor wealth quintiles, and among children whose mothers lack any education. The national prevalence of wasting is 13% among children under five. Prevalence rates have remained steady for many years, but the population of children under five has nearly tripled in the same timeframe. Nationally, twelve percent of all Malian women are underweight and eighteen percent are overweight.

Adequate intake of micronutrients, particularly iron, vitamin A, iodine and zinc during the first 1,000 days is critical for child growth and mental development. Micronutrient deficiencies are highly prevalent in Mali: 82% of children 6-59 months and 50.8% girls 15-19 years are anemic⁸. Poor child feeding practices, a lack of consistent iron-folic acid supplementation for pregnant women, a high malaria burden, and high prevalence of diarrheal disease and parasitic infection (15% among children under 5)⁹ all contribute to the high anemia prevalence. In Mali, wheat is fortified with micronutrients (iron) and cooking oil with vitamin A.

⁴ Enquête Démographique et de Santé (DHS), Mali, 2012-2013.

⁵ Global Learning and Evidence Exchange, East and Southern Africa Regional Meeting, Fanta III Presentation, March 2016.

⁶ Enquête Démographique et de Santé (DHS), Mali, 2012-2013.

⁷ Enquête Nutritionnelle Anthropométrique et de Mortalité (SMART) 2016, Mali, GOM, July 2016.

⁸ Enquête Démographique et de Santé (DHS), Mali, 2012-2013.

⁹ Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), Mali, 2015.

Poor sanitation and hygiene as well as the lack of access to safe drinking water increase the high disease burden, complicating Mali's nutrition profile. Mali has made the most progress of all Sahelian countries toward eliminating open defecation via demand-driven sanitation approaches and has largely been lauded as a success. In spite of this, the country has made negligible progress on improving key hygiene behaviors and has globally low access to handwashing (less than 2% access to basic hand washing services). Additionally, there is a significant burden of diarrheal disease in flood-prone areas (e.g. endemic cholera in the inundated wetland zone of Mopti). These key WASH characteristics are likely constraining significant progress on key nutrition, health, and economic outcomes. In 2015, UNICEF reported that 33% of Mali population had access to improved or shared sanitation facilities and according to the 2015 MICS, only about 64% of the rural population was reported to have access to improved drinking water sources.

Infant and young child feeding practices are poor; two-thirds of children under 6 months of age are not exclusively breastfed, as breastmilk is not believed to be nutritious enough; other liquids are therefore provided. Dietary diversity is low, and is constrained by both purchasing power, availability of nutritious food, and cultural eating habits. Minimum acceptable diet among children aged 6 to 35 months in 2017 was estimated at 13.5%¹⁰.

Much of malnutrition in Mali is behavior-related, with stunting rates also high in places such as Sikasso, which has historically enjoyed higher economic status and is often considered the breadbasket for the country. Poor feeding practices, lack of active feeding, inappropriate foods, consumption taboos, restrictive gender roles, the ongoing desire for large families, poor use of water and sanitation systems, poor hygiene, and the reliance on traditional remedies rather than health centers to treat illness all contribute to malnutrition. Social and cultural norms around these behaviors are very strong and often undermine optimal practices. Mothers-in-law, husbands and community leaders can have strong influences on family decisions around the nutrition of mothers and children, family planning and child care.

Access to and use of healthcare is a primary determinant of the nutritional status of women and children. Health services can be inaccessible and of poor quality. The deficit of qualified health professionals, lack of qualified nutrition specialists (including health professionals trained in nutrition), and poorly equipped health centers are also cited as severe constraints to providing preventive care and malnutrition treatment for women and children in the GOM's MNAP.

1.4 Food and Agriculture Market System: Status and Constraints

Mali produces sufficient major food staples (maize, millet, rice and sorghum) in a good rainfall year to feed its population. Mali's progress in food crop agriculture is demonstrated by significant productivity (yield gains) in rice, maize and sorghum. Together with area expansion this has provided enough growth to meet the food needs of its fast-growing population in most years, although such sustained population growth will severely hinder Mali's ability to meet the country's needs in the future.¹¹ The GOM's annual investment (\$50 million in 2017) in subsidizing fertilizer has helped boost crop production levels.¹²

Even in the best rainfall years, there are always food-deficit pockets, particularly in the more arid northern areas of Mali. Moreover, the distribution of food from surplus to deficit areas is uneven. Also, the poorest segments of society have less access to food because of their low purchasing power. The GOM has

¹⁰ Enquête Nutritionnelle Anthropométrique et de Mortalité rétrospective suivant la méthodologie SMART, GOM, August 2017 (UNICEF, WFP, WHO and FAO provided support).

¹¹ Mali Agricultural Sector Assessment, Michigan State University, April 2011.

¹² Cadre Stratégique pour la Relance Économique et le Développement Durable du Mali (CREDD) 2016-2018, Gouvernement of Mali, April 2016.

designated 166 (out of 703) communes as being the most vulnerable because they frequently suffer from food shortages. The GOM strives to maintain a strategic stock of 20,000 metric tons of cereals to respond rapidly to any food deficits in these communes and, as needed, anywhere in Mali where poor harvests have occurred.¹³

Mali has access to water for crop irrigation along the Niger and Senegal riverine areas, especially in the well-watered Niger inner delta. Its riverine water resources also provide for extensive fishing and support West Africa's largest livestock herds with water and highly desirable fodder. The GOM estimates that only 34% of Mali's irrigation potential has been realized.¹⁴ The full development of the Niger Delta and other important watershed areas in Mali is, however, currently limited by civil strife, farmer-herder conflicts, and disputes over land and water rights. Development of the Niger inland delta by USAID projects must also take in consideration environmental concerns in designated Ramsar sites.

The assessment, conducted by the African and Latin American Resilience to Climate Change (ARCC) in 2014, indicated that for areas near the large river systems, including nine of the ten largest cities, water availability is affected more by development than by climatic changes. Furthermore, the water management authorities have prioritized increasing productive use over water management. Conversely, away from the major river systems, the assessment indicated rainfed areas are significantly vulnerable to fluctuations in rainfall.

As its agriculture is predominantly rainfed, Mali, like many countries in the Sahel, is vulnerable to climate change and variability. In fact, Mali is subjected to frequent droughts and experiences a significant amount of annual variability in rainfall. According to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network, or FEWSNET (a leading provider of early warning and objective, evidence-based analysis on acute food insecurity), temperatures have increased by more than 0.8° Celsius (°C) across most of Mali since 1975. Since the early 1900's, precipitation records show clear declines in annual precipitation for Mali, especially in the period from the late 1950s to the early 1980s. Rainfall has partially recovered from the deficits experienced during the 1970's and 80's but still remains approximately 12% below the 1920 – 1969 average. For West Africa, including Mali, it is predicted that temperature will increase on the order of 2.5 to 3.5°C by the end of the twenty-first century. There is, however, a wide uncertainty on trends in precipitation. This makes firm predictions about rainfall impossible at this stage. Other characteristics of precipitation, such as the onset and length of the rainy season, as well as the distribution of dry spells within the season—both of which are critical for climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture—are even more difficult to predict. However, climate change models and current trends do suggest an increase in the variability of rainfall and the magnitude of extreme weather events, meaning the range of weather experienced in Mali will broaden in scope. With the majority of the Malian population dependent on rainfed agriculture, many Malians are extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. For example, as patterns of rain and temperature shift, the productivity of certain crops and livelihoods practiced in the different agro-ecological zones of Mali may change. Furthermore, as rainfall becomes more unpredictable and variable, traditional agricultural cropping calendars and indicators may no longer be effective or appropriate. Shifts in temperature and rainfall are also expected to affect both human and animal diseases and may contribute to increased potential for conflict over natural resources. It is, therefore, necessary to develop robust interventions that build resilience in the face of a wide range of current and future climate scenarios to ensure the development that Mali has experienced over the last few decades is not undone

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Plan National d'Investissement dans le Secteur Agricole (PNISA-NAIP) 2015-2025, Ministère du Développement Rural, Gouvernement of Mali.

Results from internal climate change vulnerability assessments indicated that, in general, vulnerability to climate change in Mali increases as one moves north. A significant exception to this trend is that larger cities appear to be relatively less vulnerable than their surrounding areas.

Periodic droughts, crop pests and plant diseases can set back agriculture production in Mali. Post-harvest losses of agricultural commodities are also high at nearly 20-25 percent.¹⁵ Mali's last major drought was in 2011. It is likely that a drought will occur in the coming years.¹⁶ In recent years, there have been widespread flooding and crop pest attacks,¹⁷ as well as the growing impacts of climate change and variability.¹⁸ Therefore, there is an urgent need to effectively address the impacts of increased climate variability and change. Also of concern is the seasonal level of the Niger River and its effects on riverine agricultural fields and pasture lands. In addition, the management of Mali's internationally-recognized wetland areas is a high priority. Improving the ability of farmlands to retain moisture and actions to prevent soil erosion and degradation are of increasing importance.¹⁹

However, climate change adaptation remains a relatively new arena of development. As such, the capacity to effectively implement targeted interventions is lacking within many developing countries including Mali.

Most farm families practice subsistence agriculture. These farm families represent 70% of Mali's population and are primarily located in the southern third of Mali. A main driver of poverty is the low agricultural productivity of most of these rural farms. On average, a family of six to nine people cultivates six to seven hectares with hand tools.²⁰ Available family labor is often insufficient to do all the fieldwork in a timely manner during the relatively short growing season (June to September).²¹ This labor constraint poses a serious bottleneck to increasing crop production. The widespread practice of animal traction helps but is not enough to address fully critical labor constraints. And, if crop productivity is raised substantially, a shortage of labor poses challenges for the handling, processing and marketing of crop surpluses.

With the increased demographic pressure, it is difficult for farmers to keep land in fallow for as long periods of time as was done in the past.²² They find themselves obliged to practice intensive cultivation on the same land, resulting in the accelerated degradation of farm land and a fall in soil fertility. The generally low fertility of Malian soils constrains the realization of potential crop production levels. The use of chemical fertilizers and improved seeds raises crop yields, but their application on nutrient-depleted soils does not result in the higher yields that can be achieved on enriched soils.²³ Improving Mali's soils requires that farmers undertake additional work for many years. It is difficult to build a rising

¹⁵ Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), "Les Pertes post-récolte représenter jusqu'à 70% des denrées produites en Afrique, November 12, 2014. (<https://www.agenceecofin.com/gestion-publique>)

¹⁶ CREDD, op. cit.

¹⁷ The last major pest outbreak was a massive invasion of locusts in 2004.

¹⁸ Climate Change in Mali, Expected Impacts on Pests and Diseases Affecting Selected Crops, USAID, August 2014.

¹⁹ Managing Mali's Wetland Wealth for People and Nature, Wetlands International, <https://www.wetlands.org/publications/managing-malis-wetland-wealth-for-people-and-nature/>

²⁰ CREDD, op.cit.

²¹ Geography of Poverty in Mali, World Bank, April 23, 2015.

²² Mali, Africa's Soil Fertility and Food Security Crisis, Roland Bunch, Groundswell International, April 2011.

²³ Mali Agricultural Pilot, Soil Baseline and Background Research, Daouda Sidibé, Oxfam, February 2013.

standard of living on a falling level of soil fertility, particularly in a predominantly agrarian country. Many farmers, though, are reluctant to undertake this extra labor because they do not have secure rights over the land they use. Less than 5% of farmers in Mali have legal title to their land.²⁴

One of the main challenges the agricultural sector faces in Mali is feeding people in rapidly growing urban areas. Rapid urbanization (over 4.5% growth rate per year) results in a rising demand for the cereal crop food staples produced by Malian farmers.²⁵ Also, there is a demand for Malian cereals, fish and livestock in neighboring countries. While the increased demand for food is a challenge, it is also an opportunity for the private sector, which should play a leading role in building sustainable systems that allow Malian farmers to produce and market more. However, it will be difficult for Mali to realize its full competitive advantages in agriculture marketing as long as most of its roads are in poor condition and extra delays and costs are incurred because of illicit roadblocks and bribes.²⁶

Evidence regarding market systems constraints (and some value chain constraints, such as those in horticulture) may be missing or too out-of-date to be completely relevant. The Mission, with support from Washington and/or outside consultants, plans to undertake additional review of existing assessments. Additional analytical work will be undertaken if the findings suggest that it would be needed to inform program design. This analytical work will support the refinement of activities under Component 1: Inclusive and Sustainable Agricultural-led Economic Growth (See Section D. Program Components.)

Other constraints to increasing agricultural productivity include the low level of education of Malian farmers and the high disease burden which decreases their ability to work effectively. The average national literacy rate for men is 43.1% and for women the rate is 24.6%.²⁷ Average literacy rates in rural areas are lower than national averages. Illnesses, particularly malaria, are often cited by farmers as contributing to a reduction of labor available for field work.

1.5 Conflict and Security Concerns

Mali has experienced severe security and political turmoil in recent years. In January 2012, an armed conflict broke out in northern Mali, in which Tuareg rebels took control of a territory in the north. Mali was a model of progressive democratic stability for 20 years until the elected constitutional government was overthrown by renegade military elements in March 2012. In response to Islamist territorial gains in Northern Mali, the French military launched Opération Serval in January 2013. A month later, Malian and French forces recaptured most of the north. Presidential elections were held in July 2013 and constitutional rule was restored. However, security and government control of Northern Mali has never been fully restored. It was hoped that the peace accord brokered by Algeria and signed in Bamako by all major parties to the Mali conflict in June 2015 would lead to peace and greater stability, but a number of serious security incidents have occurred since that date and the observation of this “Algiers Accord” have not been fully respected.

It is difficult to predict the future for peace in Mali; to date armed clashes in the northern and central Mali continue and the potential for terrorist attacks in southern parts of the country remains high as militants wait for an opportunity to strike. Moreover, the number of security incidents has increased in 2017, particularly in the center of the country, which was previously relatively peaceful. Conflict in Mali is spilling over into Burkina Faso and Niger as well. Parts of Central Mali (especially northern Mopti region) are increasingly coming under the influence of violent extremist organizations (VEOs). Other

²⁴ Mali Land Tenure Assessment Report, USAID, September 2010.

²⁵ United Nations, Population Division, World Urbanization Prospects, 2014.

²⁶ VcClir: Mali, Commercial Legal and Institutional Reforms for Agricultural Value Chains in Mali, Agenda for Action, USAID/Enabling Agricultural Trade, February 2012.

²⁷ UNICEF Statistics, Mali, 2015.

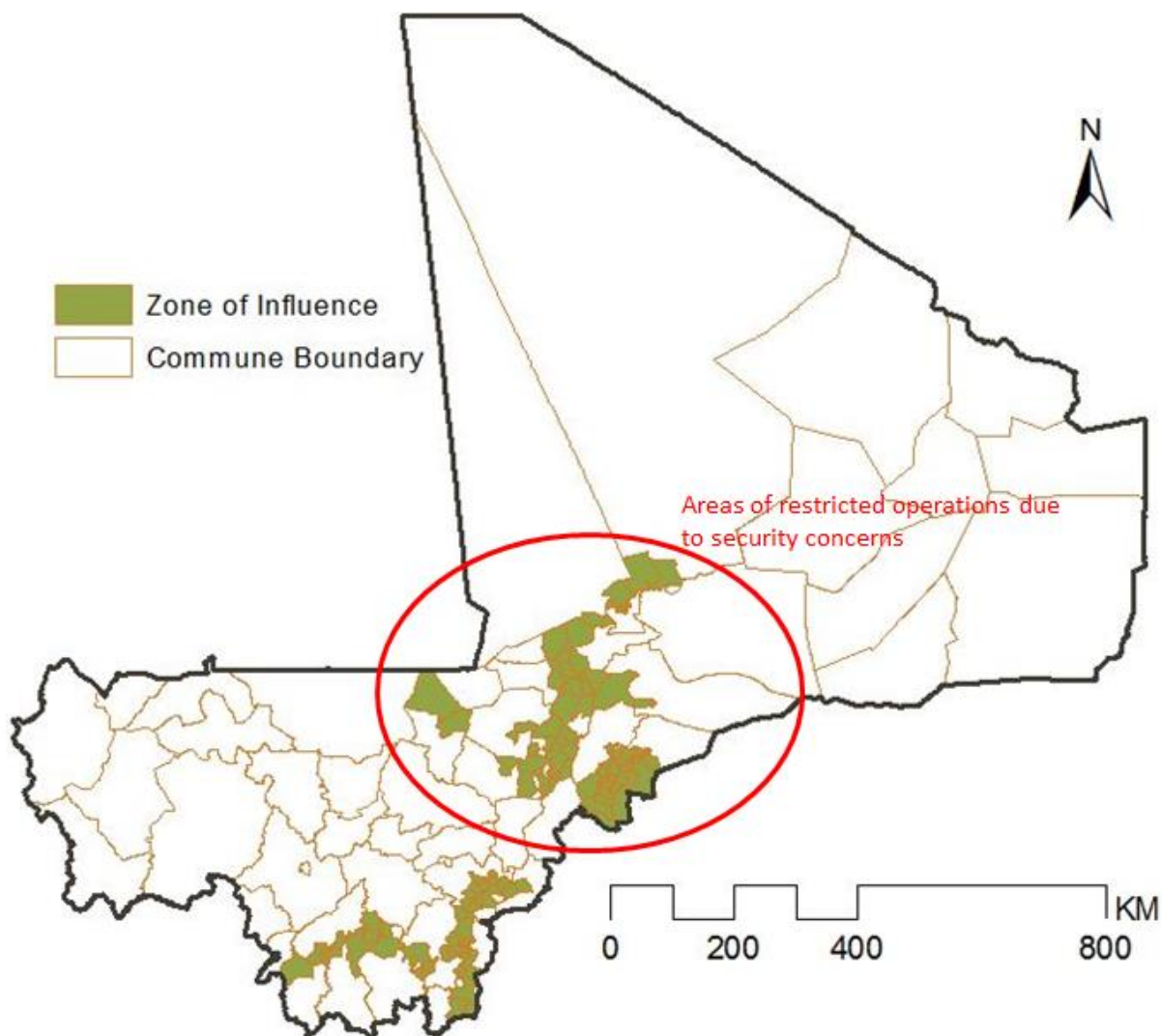
areas, including other parts of Mopti region and areas along the border with Mauritania, are increasingly threatened by VEOs, who often attack government presence (such as police outposts) in these areas. This instability, and resulting government-imposed security restrictions, severely undermines normal movements of people and goods, complicates development activities, threatens to exacerbate humanitarian crises, and requires high levels of coordination and contingency planning.

2. Targeting

2.1 Geographic Selection Criteria

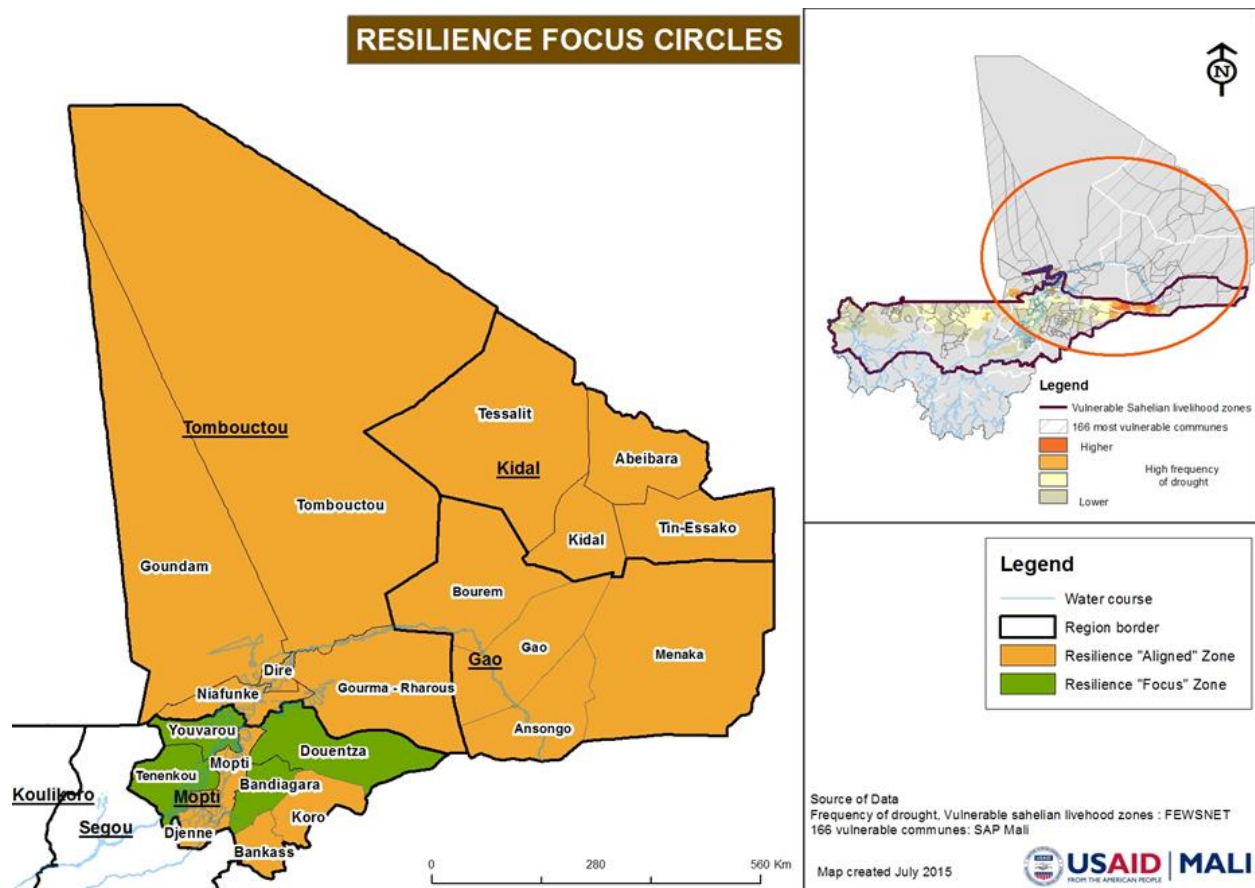
In 2011, USAID/Mali applied a set of criteria to Mali's 703 communes to determine its Feed the Future zone of influence (ZOI), which comprises areas of the Sikasso, Mopti, and Timbuktu regions. While those criteria remain valid, the worsened security situation has severely hampered the ability of USAID's implementing partners to operate in targeted communities in certain areas of the country as shown the map. USAID's ability to provide sufficient monitoring and oversight has also been constrained. For example, in Mopti, the security situation remains fluid with access to different parts of the region frequently changing (on a monthly, weekly and daily basis) based on dangerous conditions from attacks by bandits and extremists. The regional government has instituted bans on the use of pickup trucks and motorbikes, both of which are critical to USAID's implementers, on several occasions.²⁸

²⁸ At first the ban allowed exceptions for aid work but has since become complete, with no exceptions



2.2 The Resilience Focus Zone within the Feed the Future Zone Of Influence

In 2014, USAID/Mali created a resilience focus zone in the Mopti region to build resilience of vulnerable people to recurrent shocks. This zone was selected because of its vulnerability to recurrent climate shocks and stresses, exacerbated by conflict, as well due to its high levels of poverty. Additionally, it was selected due to its comparative advantage of having high levels of existing Feed the Future, Health, Education and humanitarian assistance programs (Food for Peace (FFP)) to coordinate with and build on. Sixteen communes within four circles (Youwarou, Tenenkou, Bandiagara, and Douentza) were selected for the focus zone, largely due to high levels of severe poverty in these areas. A new FFP development program was developed and launched in these circles to improve food, nutrition and income security for 270,000 vulnerable people and complement. The program also built on other USAID programming, including Feed the Future which is present in 14 of the 16 communes in the resilience focus zone. A resilience “Aligned Zone” was created in Northern Mali on the assumption that Feed the Future and other USAID programming could be expanded to these areas to address chronic vulnerability as security conditions improved.



2.3 The Need For Flexibility And Coordination

Because it is important for the USG to remain engaged in Central Mali and yet it is impossible to foresee in which communes of Mopti Region (and what type of) work will be possible due to always changing conditions, this plan proposes keeping the existing Feed the Future Mopti communes in the ZOI and adding 11 others²⁹ where Feed the Future programs can be layered with existing health, Food for Peace, climate change, and democracy and governance (DRG) programming. All of the added communes are also either included in the GOM's list of 166 most vulnerable communes or are in the poorest half of the 2008 poverty rankings. In the event that insecurity prevents working in some villages or towns in any of the target communes, USAID/Mali will have on stand-by a contingency plan for working in an environmentally friendly manner in the remaining, more secure areas within the ZOI.³⁰ This planning will be coordinated with other USAID programming investments in other sectors.

²⁹ With the addition of the 11 new communes, the ZOI now encompasses all communes where Food for Peace's Harande project is active

³⁰ The criteria used to select the Feed the Future ZOIs were percentage levels in the following: vulnerability, malnutrition, access to drinking water and poverty rates. Also considered were population density and ranking in terms of conflict and insecurity. Additional criteria are being considered for the possible re-configuration of ZOIs under a contingency plan. One additional criterion could be 'market access.' It is noted that the highest population densities in Mali are in the southern one-third of the country where 90% of Mali's population resides.

This contingency plan will mainly take into consideration Mali’s ongoing political and security situation, but will also have the flexibility to respond to natural or human-made crises that have serious impacts on the implementation of the GFSS program.³¹ USAID will take a “shock-responsive”³² approach in the design and procurement of its programs under this plan and will build in crisis modifiers in its activities that will be triggered by the onset of any of these types of events. These crisis modifiers will allow the diversion of available resources and the adjustment of indicator targets. Given the complexity of the security situation, programming in the Mopti region will have a heavy emphasis on conflict management and mitigation, especially in coordination with the USAID’s DRG investments.

In addition to the need for flexibility, there is a need for coordination across all USAID and USG programming that contribute to GFSS objectives. This coordination is especially required in Mopti region due the security concerns and the presence of the resilience focus zone, but the strategic imperative for coordination exists across the entire Feed the Future ZOI. Specifically, USAID Health Office investments in nutrition, WASH, and health system strengthening help achieve all GFSS objectives by providing complementary investments that increase the productivity, resilience, and nutrition of populations. Similarly, USAID’s investments in climate adaptation strengthen the ability of the government to provide timely and accurate climate information to reduce risks to agricultural production. USAID and interagency partners will explore opportunities to improve program synergies with Feed the Future to improve efficiency and outcomes, including possible co-location and strategic co-delivery of programming.

2.4 Sub-Zones

The proposed Mali GFSS ZOI is essentially divided into two sub-zones: the central/northern Mopti Region sub-zone (#1) and the southern Sikasso Region sub-zone (#2). The Mopti sub-zone is dominated by a Sahelian climate that receives 250-500mm of rain per year, while most of the Sikasso sub-zone is in the Sudanian climate zone that receives 900-1100mm per year during a rainy season between June and October. The two sub-zones currently have very different security situations, as has been already discussed. A majority of communes in the Mopti sub-zone are included in the GOM’s 166 most vulnerable communes, while none in the Sikasso sub-zone are. Sikasso, though, has higher rates of stunting compared to national averages, making it vulnerable from a nutrition point of view.

Because of the differences in climate, crops grown, security, and vulnerability to shocks found in the two sub-zones, different types of programming will be deployed in them. For example, as maize is largely grown in the South, almost all work specific to that value chain would occur in sub-zone 2. Pastoralists are mostly located in the Center and North, so livestock-specific activities and farmer-pastoralist conflict mitigation interventions will be concentrated there. With the lower rainfall, climate shocks are also much more likely in the Center, making climate resilience extremely important there. Additionally, as the internationally-recognized inland Niger Delta and Sourou Plain protected wetlands are both located in the Mopti sub-zone, a natural resource management component to programming is vital there.

Both sub-zones have rates of stunting above the national average and will be targeted equally with nutrition sensitive and specific interventions. Nutrition, health, and WASH activities will continue to operate in the entire ZOI, building on their successful programming but broadening their scope to fully target all 1,000-day households in the ZOI.

³¹ Crises can include widespread drought, serious flooding and/or major outbreaks of plant diseases or pests, such as the desert locust or the Fall Armyworm.

³² <https://www.usaid.gov/resilience/resources>

2.5 Population

A significant part of Mali's population is not well positioned to engage in market-oriented agriculture or even subsistence agriculture due to a lack of land, labor and inputs. Mali's rural communities are divided between traditional landholders who are connected to the traditional power structures and those who are not. Only the upper economic tier of the population has access to the resources necessary to engage in modern and market-oriented agriculture. The break down by wealth categories shows that the lowest wealth contingents (approximately 40%) lack land, labor and the capital necessary to engage in agriculture at any significant scale and make their livelihoods in other ways. The GFSS in Mali will promote multiple pathways out of poverty and a diversified set of livelihood options, based on the needs and opportunities available to target beneficiaries. Activities will seek to overlap in order to ensure that a household stepping approach can be utilized. The GFSS thus will target different types of populations in the targeted subzones with different interventions.

Categories of Households	Possible strategies	Illustrative intervention strategies
Subsistence farmers and livestock producers with resources (land, labor, and/or capital)	<p>Intensify production (of nutrient-rich commodities) to move into higher value and commercialized value chains</p> <p>Diversify into higher-value/return commodities, including livestock, and into non-farm activities to reduce risks, especially to climate shocks</p>	<p>Increase access to conservation technologies (soil, water, ...)</p> <p>Diversify into cost-saving technologies and more productive/higher-yield crops</p> <p>Expand adoption of improved technologies and practices</p> <p>Link into competitive market systems</p> <p>Strengthen Market Information Systems and response to early warning systems</p> <p>Support Risk management instruments</p> <p>Engage in interventions on nutrition, health and WASH</p>
Asset Poor Households	<p>Engage in viable non-farm livelihoods</p> <p>Ensure food security through safety nets</p>	<p>Increase access to productive safety nets</p> <p>Increase access to financial services</p> <p>Increase resilience capacities</p> <p>Increase functional literacy and numeracy</p> <p>Explore opportunities to increase safety and profitability of migration</p> <p>Explore linking interventions to remittances</p> <p>Diversify into non-farm activities</p> <p>Increase access to workforce development/job skills</p> <p>Promote accumulation and diversification of assets</p> <p>Strengthen social capital</p> <p>Engage in interventions on nutrition, health and WASH</p>
1,000-day households and adolescent girls	<p>Combine household-level interventions with other health systems strengthening and quality improvement programming funded through separate mechanisms under the health portfolio</p>	<p>Social behavior change approach to encourage better nutrition practices and the adoption of better health seeking behaviors</p>

Commercial farmers and livestock producers	<p>Intensify production and sell into urban end markets and dedicated supply chains</p> <p>Diversify: meet market demands for diversified types of food</p>	<p>Link to competitive market systems, including dedicated supply chains and urban markets</p> <p>Strengthen Market Information Systems and response to early warning systems</p> <p>Support Production Risk management instruments, like crop insurance, irrigation expansion</p> <p>Increase access to financial services, especially credit</p>
Owners of micro/small/medium enterprises	Implement market systems strengthening activities	<p>Private-sector investment facilitation</p> <p>Financial and business services</p>

2.6 Targeted Value Chains

A majority of donors with whom USAID/Mali met listed corruption as a, or the, major impediment to increased investment and economic growth in Mali. The second most commonly reported constraint to private investment—and thus economic growth and poverty alleviation—is always reported to be access to finance. Given these barriers, the GFSS in Mali will be less prescriptive on selected value chains. Programming will seek to affect market conditions across value chains.

Feed the Future to the Global Food Security Strategy

USAID/Mali's previous Feed the Future program targeted the following value chains: millet/sorghum, rice and livestock. Under this GFSS Country Plan, horticulture will be added due to the high demand for these products and the potential for women's empowerment through increased access to income and farming assets. Horticulture also adds a targeted value chain under this plan can increase incomes and produce select high-nutrient vegetables.

Horticulture

In spite of the vegetable sector remaining underdeveloped in Mali, the demand for vegetables is growing both locally and regionally. According to Mali's Agency for the Promotion of Investment (API MALI), imports of vegetables have increased by 35%. The import of fruits and vegetables is estimated at \$17

million annually. Seasonal vegetable prices fluctuate at a glaring rate of 300% between June and December.³³ The primary market in Mali is Bamako's main urban centers and areas of industrial activities. The demand for vegetables in Bamako is increasing due to rapid population growth (7% annually), a growing middle class, and the surge of foreign workers, such as the UN peacekeeping mission. There is also a strong demand for vegetables in the rural areas where there are industrial activities, such as cement factories and mining companies. This demand, however, is largely met by imports from Morocco and the European Union. According to Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Union, the export in vegetables from the EU to Mali has increased from €2 million in 2011 to €10 million in 2015. Among the most important Malian value chains for domestic and regional markets (whose size dwarfs current overseas exports from Mali) are onions/shallots, potatoes, tomatoes and greens. Many types of horticultural production (particularly those producing for the local, national and sub-regional markets) share some of the characteristics of the small ruminants value chain: strong demand growth prospects as incomes increase, labor-intensive production and marketing systems that employ many women.³⁴ The addition of horticulture is supported by the success of current Feed the Future programming that supports community gardening by women's groups. USAID will continue this type of programming and will include interventions that promote access to water, taking into consideration the lesson learned that the key constraint for success is the availability of a water point.

Other value chains

This plan calls out a number of other value chains where investments may occur as well as opening the door to identifying a wide range of products which at localized levels play potentially important roles in nutrition and household income.

Rice: The rice value chain work will be focused largely on lowland rice, which offers more opportunities to empower women, in some cases allows for vegetable gardening, and leads to less potential environmental complications. Maintaining millet/sorghum, rice and livestock value chains will also be prioritized to, which were originally chosen for Feed the Future after careful deliberation, allows future programming to build on and scale the most sustainable interventions taken by prior and existing Feed the Future activities.

Livestock: Programming in the livestock value chain will prioritize women's raising of small ruminants as a way to increase resilience and also diversify diets by including more protein. Activities will also continue current Feed the Future programming to improve livestock forage and animal feed production and supply. Additional emphasis will be placed on sustaining natural product value chains as well.

Maize: Maize production has been steadily increasing in Mali over the past decade without subsidies. It is a main source of feed for chickens and plays a role in helping families supplement their diets with protein from eggs or poultry. Furthermore, maize farmers have come face to face with a new threat in the form of the American (Fall) Armyworm starting in 2018. The USG is well-placed to help Mali's agricultural sector respond to this emerging threat through pest management. Work with farmers of maize will directly intersect with efforts to impact agricultural input policy, particularly as it concerns pesticides.

Poultry: Raising poultry is likely to play a part in nutrition programming in order to introduce more protein in beneficiaries' diets in the form of eggs and meat. Investments may be made in the area of introducing breeds that lay more eggs as well as disease prevention.³⁵

³³ <http://apimali.gov.ml/node/164>

³⁴ 2011 MSU Agricultural Assessment

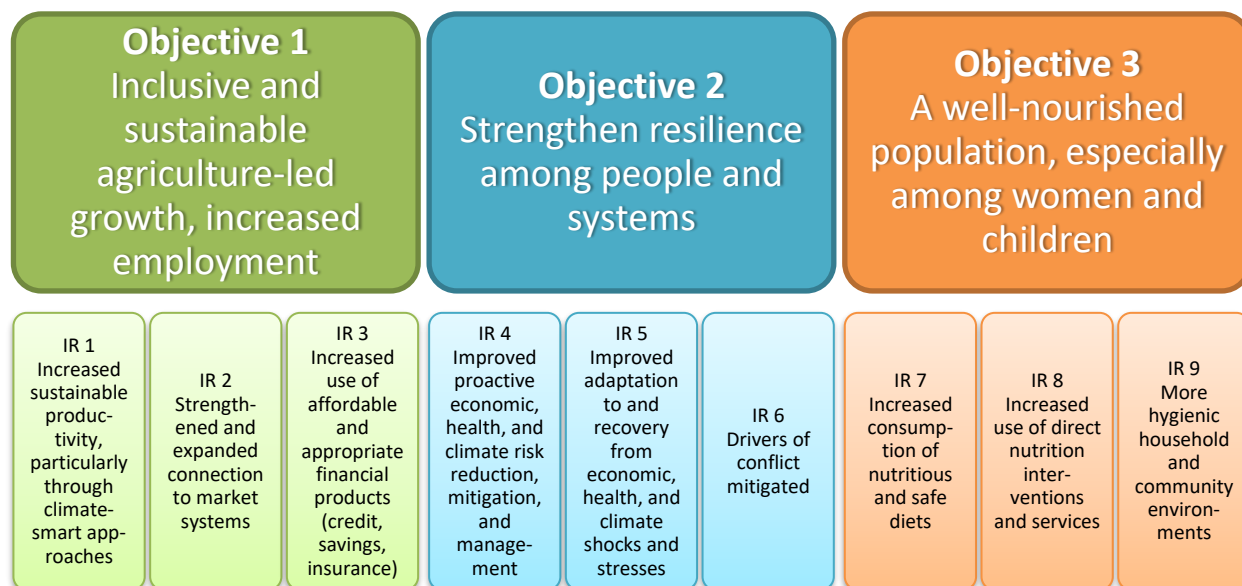
³⁵ At the time of the writing of this plan Mali is experiencing an outbreak of Newcastle disease in chickens

Oilseeds: Oilseeds have potential for private sector investment in processing and to provide income for women's groups. USAID/Mali funds existing public-private partnerships of this nature and a USAID project is currently helping an existing firm find financing for a shea butter processing plant. Peanuts are a crop where food safety work by USDA could lead to increased exports. And oilcake created from cotton byproducts is used in Mali as livestock feed during the lean season.

3. Results Framework

Mali GFSS Country Plan, FYs 2018-2022

Goal: Sustainably Reduce Global Hunger, Malnutrition and Poverty



Cross-cutting Intermediate Results	
CC IR – Improved management of natural resources	CC IR – More effective governance, policy, and institutions
CC IR – Increased gender equality and female empowerment	CC IR – Increased food safety

Complementary Results

Long-term food security efforts benefit from and contribute to complementary work streams that promote:

Economic and household income growth	Healthy ecosystems and Biodiversity	Stable, democratic Malian society that respects human rights and the rule of law	A reduced burden of disease and more well-educated Malians
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3.1 Theory of Change

The following overall theory of change (TOC) and the three subsequent objective-related TOCs describe the causal pathways included in the results framework. The overall TOC for this plan is as follows:

Assuming continued degradation of the security situation, if the USG and partners are able to continue operating in a given location, and if conflict management and mitigation interventions increase social cohesion and the ability of households and communities to resolve conflict, and if market systems are strengthened, and if agricultural firms and farms grow and increase employment opportunities, and if targeted households and communities are able to better manage risk, including conflict-driven shocks, and if 1,000-day households employ improved nutrition practices and adopt better health seeking behaviors, then food security in target localities will be maintained or increased.

3.2 Inclusive And Sustainable Agriculture-Led Growth

If USG interventions increase the use of improved technologies and business practices, increase access to appropriate financial services, climate-smart & sustainable agricultural practices, improve food safety, and increase the integration of farmers and herders into local market systems, then the targeted agricultural firms and farms will experience increased growth and provide more employment opportunities. - *based on USAID/Mali's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS), 2015-2020*

3.3 Strengthen Resilience Among People And Systems

If USG interventions enable targeted beneficiaries and systems to: proactively reduce the risk of experiencing, or reduce the magnitude of, shocks and stresses; better cope with and recover from shocks; and better avoid or resolve conflicts, then the number of people who cannot sustainably escape poverty because of shocks will be reduced and humanitarian caseloads will decrease.

3.4 A Well-Nourished Population, Especially Among Women And Children

If USG targeted nutrition-sensitive agriculture interventions and value chains support improved nutrition outcomes through multiple conceptual pathways including: increased availability, affordability, and consumption of diverse and nutritious food for 1,000 day households and adolescent girls; increased access to water resources for consumption; increased income for expenditure on food and non-food items; and increased women's empowerment (which affects income, caring capacity and practices, and female energy expenditure), then poverty, hunger and malnutrition will be reduced.

To translate these nutrition-sensitive activities into concrete nutritional gains, programming will be complemented by a comprehensive package of nutrition-specific interventions. A comprehensive social behavior change approach across nutrition specific and sensitive programming - targeting communities and households - will encourage better nutrition practices and the adoption of better health seeking behaviors by 1,000-day households. These activities will in turn be supported by other health systems strengthening and quality improvement programming funded through separate mechanisms under the health portfolio. By making it possible for targeted beneficiaries to better afford, access and consume a nutritious, safe diet, to better access effective health services, safe water, and to live in hygienic environments, then their nutrition and health status will improve.

4. Program Components

4.1 Introduction

The proposed program components will support the main goal of GOM's NAIP, MNSP, and PRP as well as those under USAID/Mali's CDCS, 2015-2020 and the U.S. Government's Integrated Country Strategy

2017. The Country Plan also builds on key lessons learned under the previous five years of Feed the Future, nutrition and Global Climate Change programming.³⁶

4.2 Implementation Approaches / Guiding Principles

Geographic convergence: GFSS activities/projects, in close coordination with other mission activities and projects, will strive to work in the same communities to achieve interconnected goals. Programs will identify opportunities to layer, sequence and integrate interventions and will engage in a greater level of coordination and collaboration to avoid duplication of efforts and to save scarce resources.

Flexible Approaches to Changing Conditions: There have been important changes in the seven years since the 2011 Feed the Future Strategy for Mali was released. The security situation in Mali has gotten worse; the Mission has done a programmatic environmental assessment (PEA) for wetland areas in Mopti region; USAID/Mali's budget—the largest contributor to funding of programs under this plan—has decreased; and the population has increased. The last two of the above-mentioned changes have simply resulted in a reduced amount of USAID funding available per capita in each ZOI commune, as well as less intensive contact with 1,000-day households in certain areas of the country, all else held equal. This requires USAID/Mali to pursue more facilitative approaches to create the systemic changes needed for results. Programming in high-threat security environments in parts of Mali is also costlier than it otherwise would be. Therefore, it will be necessary to direct funding to the programs that will have the most impact and combine programs to produce more impact, as well as pursue more facilitative approaches to create the systemic changes needed for results.

“Shock-responsive” program design techniques will also be employed while creating new programs and potentially adapting existing Feed the Future programs so that they can react to changes on the ground, especially ever-changing security conditions. Development programming implemented by various USG agencies and offices within USAID will be coordinated³⁷ and targeted at the same beneficiaries in order to mutually reinforce their positive effects. Strategic planning, ongoing monitoring, and reliable connections with humanitarian agencies and offices, especially FFP and OFDA, will be built in so that when a shock does occur that requires a humanitarian response, it can be triggered quickly to support and reinforce development investments.

Inclusiveness: USG programming will be inclusive of all social and political groups, including women and girls, youth, vulnerable and poor people as well as other disabled and marginalized groups.

Designing programs to increase resilience: Mali's GFSS approach seeks to strengthen the resilience of people and systems to increasingly frequent shocks. This means a focus on proactive risk reduction and management, improved recovery from shocks, and, especially in the context of central and northern Mali, an emphasis on conflict management and mitigation. Recent research has shown that improving access to information for making better livelihood decisions (market information, climate information, etc.), increasing asset ownership, education (including training and literacy), access to financial services and remittances increases beneficiaries' ability to weather and rebound from shocks. This includes promotion of cross-cutting issues, working across components and sectors and promotion of lessons learned about factors that enhance resilience. As an example, diversifying livelihoods into non-climate sensitive strategies is essential for building the resilience of vulnerable populations. While the USG's GFSS programming in Mali will build many of these resilience capacities through its programming, investments from other USAID offices, other donors, and GOM will be important for success.³⁸ All GFSS programs will have conflict-sensitivity built in; conflict-specific programs will be led by the USAID governance

³⁶ Feed the Future, Mali, FY 2011-2015 Multi-Year Strategy, April 28, 2011.

³⁷ Noting lessons learned about coordination in the USAID Sahel RISE program

office. Recognition of and support to the integrated nature of rural livelihoods and multiple pathways out of poverty. Rural households use a variety of strategies to obtain food, generate income, manage risk, and respond to shocks, especially since farming and livestock production are inherently risky. Shocks, especially droughts and floods, are an endemic feature of life in the ZOI and will likely only get worse with increasing climate variability. While many rural households will remain primarily dependent on agricultural production, and USAID/Mali will support efforts to reduce production risk (such as through access to improved seeds, financial instruments, and soil and water conservation), off-farm and non-farm livelihoods options are increasingly important to rural populations and need to be supported as part of a comprehensive approach for improving resilience, reducing poverty, and improving nutrition. Remittances, migration, and livestock raising and other income generating activities are already essential to the survival of many households especially after shocks. For those with limited access to land and labor, access to off-farm and non-farm livelihood options are essential for survival and USAID/Mali will support them through efforts to increase agriculture-led economic growth complementary investments in education, governance, and health.

Facilitation of Private Sector-led Reforms and Economic Growth: GFSS Feed the Future activities will facilitate partnerships with the private sector and promote sustainable practices and behaviors that will lead to long term results for Mali. Feed the Future activities will also work to address systemic barriers that hold back private sector expansion and growth through targeted policy and market interventions. For private sector expansion, USAID/Mali will promote actors to abide by regulations. To the extent possible, USAID/Mali will incorporate implementation research into its programs in order to gather evidence and make mid-course corrections as needed. The overall aim will be to achieve positive changes that endure after external assistance is no longer available.

Alignment with Other Donor and USG Priorities: The proposed set of interventions and approaches complement with what other donors and assistance agencies are currently doing, or are planning to do, in Mali. This conclusion is derived from a survey of the partnership landscape and the results of the Stakeholder Workshop held in Bamako, October 17 – 19, 2017³⁹. The survey involved separate meetings with 16 different donor representatives. The WSR workshop involved over 80 participants from a diverse set of food security, nutrition and resiliency stakeholders. The participants offered a number of recommendations for programming. Maintaining the dialogue and relationships started by this workshop with other donors and actors will be essential to success.

The GFSS Country Plan is also aligned with USAID/Mali's CDCS's development objective 3, "PROSPERITY: Socioeconomic Well-being Advanced." Programming falls under the intermediate result IR 3.2, "Poverty and Malnutrition Reduced." Components 1 and 3 described here—Inclusive Ag-led Growth and Layering Health, Nutrition and WASH Interventions—contribute directly to the two objectives contained in CDCS IR 3.2. Additionally, USAID/Mali's CDCS includes as its second development objective "RESILIENCE: Adaptive Capacity of Vulnerable Communities & Households Increased." USAID programs will seek to increase climate and economic resilience (IRs 2.1 and 2.3 respectively) in order to reduce humanitarian caseloads and reduce chronic food insecurity in the Central Mali sub-zone. These efforts will contribute to those CDCS goals and to GFSS Objective 2, "Strengthened resilience among people and systems."

While pursuing these major implementation principles, the GFSS team will also strive to support the USG principles, goals and priorities under the current Integrated Country Strategy for the period of 2014-2018.

4.3 Component 1: Inclusive And Sustainable Agricultural-Led Economic Growth

Intermediate Result (IR) 1: Increased sustainable productivity, particularly through climate-smart approaches

Targeted beneficiaries: Smallholder farmers, especially youth, prioritizing women; herders

Under its NAIP, the GOM seeks to achieve increased absolute production and to increase the average yields of four major cereal crops over the 2015-2025 period as follows (kg/ha): Millet: 626 to 929 (32.6%); Sorghum: 1,218 to 1,666 (36.8%); Rice: 2,952 to 3,378 (14.4%); and, Maize: 2,733 to 4,175 (52.8%).

The main ways the GOM plans to achieve these yield increases are by assuring the reliable, affordable, timely, and correct use of quality fertilizers and improved seeds. The GOM believes achieving productivity increases is fundamental to making agriculture the main engine of Mali's economic growth (the stated NAIP goal). It believes that achieving this goal will raise incomes, eliminate hunger, reduce poverty and improve nutritional status.

USAID and USADF programs will support the GOM's goal of increasing yields through the promotion of private sector delivery of, and sustainable use of, fertilizers, improved seeds, veterinary services, and other inputs. Programs will also have an overriding objective to promote sustainable, nature-based, climate-smart, and nutritious food production systems that ensure land and water resources are well-managed and that can support the crop diversity needed to increase incomes, reduce risks and provide nutritious diets. Programs will help different categories of beneficiaries increase the yield of their crops, choose value chains that are nutritious, and increase the quality of the animals raised by increasing knowledge of improved technology and techniques and eliminating market failures that stop farmers from achieving increases.

Programs will integrate lessons learned during USAID/Mali's preceding successful Feed the Future interventions such as using micro-dosing for the more efficient application of fertilizer; farmer managed natural regeneration; integrated soil fertility practices; agroforestry techniques; and, improved water management methods. They will support the Malian private sector in efforts to produce more advanced tools domestically instead of importing them. A special emphasis will be placed on actions rural populations can take to improve soil fertility, vegetative cover, and water retention. Such practices can reduce climate risks and/or help populations adapt to risks and overall improve resilience of producers and landscapes. Without these concurrent investments in the natural resource base, especially in soil organic matter, increased use of chemical fertilizers will not have the desired impact in both productivity and economic returns.

Given the importance of water in agriculture and livestock production and the increasing number of conflicts around water between users, programs will support natural resources and water management. Encouraging multiple uses of water and integrated landscape management is particularly important in areas that are susceptible to drought. These approaches take into consideration the needs of herders, farmers, domestic users and needs of the ecosystem to promote sustainable use of water and land.

The implementation of this component will involve expanding sustainable delivery systems that provide producers with the improved inputs and actionable information—including climate and weather services—increase the productivity of agriculture, reduce risk, and diversify livelihoods. USAID programs will facilitate the adoption of the best climate-smart agricultural, land and water management practices, taking into account environmental concerns and impacts. Links between agriculture and nutrition will be emphasized, with a focus on increasing production of high-value nutritious vegetables and greens.

Programs will also incorporate previous successes, such as improved animal fattening techniques, and explore other potential animal-based value chains opportunities. A special emphasis will be placed on

involving women in these activities for income generation and adding protein to the family diets. Programs will facilitate adoption of the latest technologies and best practices in livestock rearing, including adapting to changes in animal disease pattern due to climate change.⁴⁰

Agriculture and livestock interventions along any of the conceptual pathways to nutrition will purposefully plan towards and include monitoring of progress towards attaining nutrition outcomes. Key nutrition-sensitive agriculture and livestock results will include improved availability, affordability, and desirability of diverse, nutrient-rich foods in local markets, improved environmental management and food safety, and increased time and energy savings for women. Activities will support the agricultural competitiveness and economic growth objective as well as the nutrition objective.

It is important to acknowledge and address the importance of gender, youth and other social roles in agricultural production. In many areas, men, women, and youth have socially expected roles within production systems. For example, men are often in charge of primary agricultural production while women and youth are expected to provide labor before working in their own fields, which are often of lower quality and smaller size. In addition, women's access to land is often mediated by male relatives and both women and youth often access land through groups or cooperatives. All of this can make it more difficult for women and youth to make decisions and to profit from agricultural production. However, women and youth also often grow off-season gardens, which are less climate sensitive and provide opportunities to improve nutrition and generate income. Any activity will need to take into account the different roles, responsibilities, and opportunities available to men, women, and youth and work to increase opportunities and lessen burdens. Areas that bear particular scrutiny include the availability of household labor, the potential returns to labor, ensuring that the labor burden on women is not increased by the introduction of new technologies and techniques, and that men, women, and youth can benefit from opportunities. The workload of women and men, as well as other gender trends, will be monitored using the abbreviated Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (A-WEAI) or other methodology.

IR 2: Strengthened and expanded connection to market systems

Targeted beneficiaries: Agricultural and livestock producers, owners of micro/small/medium enterprises, and producer organizations

USAID, USADF and USDA programs will contribute to this IR. Foci include helping producer organizations and individual farmers increase their capacity to correctly harvest and handle their agricultural production and preferably market it when higher price conditions prevail. Programs will promote development of sufficient good storage infrastructure by the private sector; the use of the hermetic storage system; and the avoidance of fumigants. They will promote the spread of technologies that reduce post-harvest losses and improve storage and processing of agricultural commodities so that they are pathogen-free, contaminant-free, and high-quality, and therefore able to attract premium prices on local, national and regional markets⁴¹. To address on-farm labor constraints, programs will support private-sector provision of land-preparation and harvesting services. Where possible, programs will improve post-harvest, downstream links to selected value chains and take steps to ensure food safety.

These improved handling and marketing activities can create new off-farm jobs, particularly for qualified youth⁴². Programs will support profit-making ventures at the community level or in market centers to supply appropriate farm implements or processing machinery to, for example, clean and improve the quality of food grains for sale on the market. One aim is to see much-needed off-farm employment created by the private sector that contributes to farm productivity and profitability. Support for the

establishment and growth of youth- and women-operated rural enterprises will be an important performance indicator.

IR 3: Increased use of affordable and appropriate financial products (credit, savings, insurance)

Targeted beneficiaries: Smallholder farmers, herders and beneficiary households in the targeted zones, prioritizing women and youth, and landless poor

The Mali GFSS stakeholder workshop produced ten points of common ground, of which one was the need for “increased access to markets and availability of financing.” USAID beneficiaries in all sectors nearly always indicate that access to finance is a major constraint to private investment. Often, existing financial institutions are hesitant to lend to agricultural businesses or farmers; when they do, the available financing is not structured correctly to be useful to those in the agricultural sector. In this component USAID/Mali programs will partner with the private sector to expand access to suitable means of finance and financial products. Programs will seek to expand the offering and uptake of relevant and accessible financial services and products to women and youth. And they will make use of successful approaches and lessons learned in existing Feed the Future projects. For example, the lack of formal knowledge of business practices has been found to be a barrier to entrepreneurs receiving credit. When possible, those seeking financing will receive the needed capacity building in areas such as accounting, financial management, risk management, etc.

4.4 Component 2: Resilience Among People And Systems

Targeted beneficiaries: Asset-poor households, smallholder farmers, herders, 1,000-day households, Agricultural and livestock producers, agricultural enterprises

Building resilience to recurrent shocks and stresses is essential in order to achieve and sustain GFSS goals. Malians, particularly those with few resources, are susceptible to multiple types of shocks that can quickly push them (further) into poverty. These shocks can come in the form of covariate shocks, such as droughts, floods or pest outbreaks, that impact many people at the same time or in the form of idiosyncratic shocks that affect a single household, such as health shocks (an injury, an illness, or death in the family). Additionally, factors such as population growth, environmental degradation, urbanization, and lack of government service also stress households, communities, and systems and can exacerbate shocks when they do occur. In the specific context of Northern Mali, conflict shocks are common, which can directly affect households, depriving them of property, money or shelter, as well as affect communities and systems. For example, when insecurity leads to travel restrictions and closures of government services, markets systems, education systems, and health systems are all negatively affected.

Recent research⁴³ that surveyed households in the resilience focus zone found that many households were recovering from a shock experienced in the last year. Drought was the most commonly cited shock, followed by animal disease, flood, a spike in food prices, and pests. Primary household strategies for coping with shocks and stresses include offtake of livestock (practiced by nearly two-thirds of households), changing food consumption patterns and taking loans. Key investments for increasing resilience include increasing the access to and utilization of information that can lead to better livelihood decisions (market information, climate information), increasing asset ownership, improving education (including vocational training and literacy), increasing access to financial services, linking to remittances, strengthening formal safety nets, and finally, and most importantly, diversifying livelihoods into non-climate sensitive strategies, such as off-farm and non-farm employment.

Activities will help targeted families reduce exposure to shocks, mitigate the severity of potential shocks and better withstand and recover from the shocks they do experience. While programming under this objective will focus on the households and communities most vulnerable to shocks and stresses, better off households, businesses, and market systems are often also vulnerable to shocks and stresses, such as changes in market conditions and conflict, and programming needs to better understand, reduce, and mitigate risk for these actors. The GFSS will consider all these actors and systems.

Under this GFSS Plan, programming in components 1 and 3 will also contribute to the resilience of households, communities, and systems by reducing production risk, connecting producers to markets and financial services products so that they have expanded opportunities and risks can be mitigated, enabling the amassing of assets, and improving health and nutrition outcomes. Specifically, new Feed the Future programming will complement and build on existing FFP development programming in the resilience focus zone and enable households who have benefited from FFP assistance to pursue economic opportunities in market systems. At a higher level one funding stream or one type of programming alone is often insufficient to build long term resilience. USAID, USDA and other USG investment will be complementary in order to achieve results. Additionally, FFP development and Feed the Future programming will be linked to promote multiple pathways out of poverty. Lessons learned from existing USAID resilience programming will be incorporated into additional new resilience-focused programs going forward. During program design, USAID will ensure that designed interventions address beneficiaries' vulnerabilities, and reflect their needs, abilities, and priorities as well as those of the communities in which they live.

IR 4: Improved proactive risk reduction, mitigation, and management (Building Absorptive Capacity)

Rural livelihoods in Mali are inherently risky, necessitating investments to reduce, mitigate, and manage risk so that households, communities, and systems can better absorb shocks. GFSS investments may include:

- Early Warning, Early Action, and Preparedness: Investments in early warning systems and disaster risk reduction have been proven to save money and reduce humanitarian spending in the long run. Current and past USAID investments have promoted access to improved weather and climate information and have connected communities to these early warning and response systems.
- Asset Accumulation, Protection, and Management: The ability to accumulate and draw on assets, such as livestock, is important for managing shocks. For example, offtake of livestock is practiced by nearly two-thirds of households in the resilience focus zone to cope with shock. Investments in livestock can also help with nutrition and access to animal protein as noted in Component 3.
- Financial Services and Financial Inclusion: Increasing access to and inclusion in financial services can help individuals and communities accumulate savings that they can draw on in times of a shock. Participation in village savings and loans (VSLA) groups and other types of savings groups have proven to be important for improving resilience. There is an enormous scope to scale up financial services to those who lack access, especially through new technologies, such as mobile money, and banking that help populations far from physical institutions.
- Social capital: Social capital is the ability to lean on others during times of need. The existence and robustness of community institutions, such as savings groups, and networks of relatives, friends, and contacts in neighboring communities and beyond can make an enormous difference in the ability of a households or community to absorb shocks.

IR 5: Improved adaptation to and recovery from shocks and stresses (Building Adaptive Capacity)

While investments in agricultural and livestock productivity are essential for food security, economic growth and nutrition, for many households these investments alone will not be sufficient for them to

sustainably escape poverty. In many parts of Mali, traditional farming and pastoralist livelihoods are becoming less viable. To adapt to changing conditions, GFSS investments will not just reduce the sensitivity of these livelihoods to risk, through adoption of climate smart technologies and practices as described under DO1, but also will encourage and enable the creation of new livelihood options that will be less impacted by climate change, including new or improved off-farm and non-farm employment. A key finding of recent resilience research in Mopti region is that diversifying livelihoods into non-climate sensitive strategies is essential for building resilience to shocks. Investments in this area may include:

- Education, training, and improvement of basic literacy and numeracy, as well as improvement in soft skills that can help vulnerable populations, especially youth, to improve their employability and successful engagement in markets. Access to loans and grants may also be necessary to support entrepreneurship. Programs may also link education and livelihood approaches to support youth empowerment and employment, including urban and peri-urban employment opportunities for rural labor pools.
- Improving access to information to reduce risks and make better decisions. For example, USAID's ongoing climate adaptation programming will continue to promote and enable improved decision-making using climate, weather, and hydrological information and watershed approaches which bring various user groups together to agree on land and water improvements and the use rights of improved areas. Similarly, access to timely market information increases household ability to make proactive economic decisions.
- Supporting safe and profitable migration as a livelihood option. Rural out migration to Malian cities, mining sites, and other countries in West Africa, especially during the dry season, is a livelihood strategy for many households and can provide significant benefits. However, there are risks associated with migration, especially to work in mines. Better understanding migration patterns and options can help mitigate risk and improve remittances, which many rural households depend on.
- Access to and strengthening of formal and informal safety nets. Formal safety nets can be important for ensuring basic levels of household consumption, especially for very poor and vulnerable households. FFP is currently providing safety net assistance for vulnerable households in emergency situations, including food and cash. However, transformational change requires a system for the reliable transfers to vulnerable households. FFP is working with other humanitarian donors and the GOM to better understand livelihoods, and to improve databases for tracking vulnerable people and households, with the goal of improving safety net targeting and programming. FFP will continue to work with the broader donor community, including GoM (i.e. the AGIR program) and World Bank, to push for a widespread and reliable social safety net system to ensure basic consumption needs for vulnerable households.

IR 6: Drivers of conflict mitigated

Growing insecurity and outright conflict in northern and central Mali threatens not only development gains but has the potential to exacerbate or create humanitarian crises. While the causes of and solutions to this situation are inherently complex and require interventions by actors far beyond the scope of the GFSS, USG programming under this plan has an important role to play. Programs will work with conflict mitigation programming, led by the Mission's Peace, Democracy and Governance program, and employ conflict-sensitive approaches that seek to reduce the incidence and severity of conflict between groups. Efforts to reduce conflicts between farming and herding groups over land and water, and particularly over corridors through which pastoralists need to move their animals will be pursued. There will also be a particular focus on improving livelihood options for youth as an alternative to joining violent extremist organizations due to a lack of economic opportunities.

4.5 Component 3: Promoting A More Integrated Approach To Health, Nutrition And Wash Interventions

Targeted Beneficiaries: All 1,000-day households and adolescent girls

While increased production and productivity can increase the availability of food for local consumption, increase incomes, and decrease the prices consumers pay, these alone do not automatically translate to nutritional gains. Pathways and principles linking agriculture to nutrition will be used to systematically consider opportunities and threats to nutrition across all GFSS program components, prioritizing preventative approaches that have the potential to impact both wasting and stunting, while still addressing needs associated with the management of acute malnutrition. Integrating a comprehensive, demand-side approach remains critical to fully achieving the goals under the GFSS.

To accelerate and achieve more impactful nutrition results, GFSS will build on current programming to increase the intensity and reach of comprehensive nutrition, food and water safety, and hygiene interventions. Homestead food production will remain a component of this comprehensive approach, with social behavior change and communication (SBCC) and gender programming integrated throughout our activities. Stronger integration between nutrition sensitive and specific interventions will be established, especially in the areas of increased availability of animal sourced protein, increased incomes for better health and nutrition investments, household food production, improved access to basic and safely managed water and sanitation services and improved post-harvest household storage to improve food safety and reduce annual losses. More robust and responsive monitoring systems will be incorporated into future activities to improve the quality, targeting and reach of programming to better measure whether nutrition sensitive and specific interventions are resulting in the adoption of the necessary improved behaviors and achieving results. A particular focus will also be at the household level where cultural norms and practices, gender inequality and the influence of mothers-in-law (MILs) and husbands can have a strong impact on poor health outcomes, sub-optimal maternal and child nutrition, family size, and the slow adoption of better health and nutrition practices. Specifically, future programming will be modified in the following key ways:

- 1) *Expansion into households to complement current community-based programming:* Our robust social behavior change and communication (SBCC) program will be expanded with the goal of increasing and maximizing interpersonal contact and activities with women, children and their families—including husbands and MILs—in the critical first 1,000 days, the period between pregnancy and age two that determines a child’s life-long physical and intellectual growth. A new emphasis will be placed on reaching families in the home with frequent interventions that strengthen community and home-based social mobilization, and interpersonal counseling and frequent contacts to inform, motivate and support families to practice improved nutrition-related behaviors and increased demand for nutrition and health services. Interventions will cover areas such as, but not limited to: the importance of exclusive breastfeeding (including lactation management); complementary and interactive feeding; diversified food consumption) including animal-based protein sources); intra-household resource allocation and food preparation; maternal and adolescent nutrition; handwashing at the five critical times; proper food storage; and environmental cleanliness (including the use of improved latrines). Through the use of current and new formative research, SBCC programming will be further tailored to better address the geographical and cultural differences that influence decisions in the household related to food consumption and health seeking behavior.
- 2) *Integration of health and family planning:* Because access to and use of high quality health and family planning services are inherently intertwined with maternal, adolescent and child nutrition outcomes, all future SBCC interventions under the GFSS will integrate health and family planning programming into community and household level activities. Areas of focus will include but are not limited to: the healthy spacing and timing of pregnancy; the use of antenatal and

postpartum health services; birth preparedness; skilled birth attendance; the feeding and care of small and sick newborns; malaria prevention and treatment; immunizations; and improved health and nutrition service delivery. Household and community programming will be complemented by other health systems strengthening quality improvement and service delivery programming funded through separate mechanisms under the health portfolio.

- 3) *Adolescent Nutrition for Girls*: Given that Mali has the world's second highest prevalence of early childbearing (66% under 19 years and 11% under 15 years)⁴⁴ interventions under the GFSS will expand health and nutrition services that target adolescent girls and address social attitudes towards delayed marriage and pregnancy, reproductive health, anemia, hygiene, food diversity, the importance of good nutrition, and health service utilization. *Increased access to animal sourced protein*: Increasing access by 1,000-day households to animal-sourced protein will be a priority. Based on cultural practices and geographical variances, interventions will prioritize the introduction or increased consumption of fish, meat, eggs and milk products (cow, sheep and goat) into the diets of pregnant and lactating women, adolescent girls, and children between 6 to 23 months. The introduction of household chickens will be explored, along with expansion in the raising of goats, sheep (traditionally raised by women) and fish (in geographically appropriate areas) for income generation as well as diet diversity.
- 4) *Expansion of backyard gardens*: The GFSS will expand the adoption of backyard gardens for increased diet diversity among 1,000-day households, tailored to the various agro-ecological zones and community cultural practices in the ZOI. A key constraint to the adoption of backyard gardens has been the availability of water. Under the GFSS, interventions will attempt to address this through the introduction of water management practices and solutions such as, but not limited to, multiple use water points and better irrigation practices.
- 5) *Water and Sanitation*: The GFSS will continue to promote water treatment, good sanitation practices, and hygienic household and community environments. Sustainable private sector solutions to increase the demand for household investments in quality WASH products and services will be explored, along with a learning agenda that includes more formative research to better understand household practices around WASH in order to better tailor and adapt future programming.
- 6) *Multisectoral Programming*: In order to promote the GOM's coordination of nutrition programming across multiple sectors, the GFSS will strengthen technical, managerial and operational capacity, while improving the coordination on health and nutrition between the GOM and other stakeholders. This will include better support for the institutional implementation of the National Nutrition Policy through the structure identified in the MNAP. A strong focus will be placed on the operationalization of multi-sectoral platforms at all levels (*CTIN/Comité Technique Intersectoriel de Nutrition; CROCSAD/Comité Régional d'Orientation, de Coordination et de Suivi des Actions de Développement; CLOCSAD/Comité Local d'Orientation, de Coordination et de Suivi des Actions de Développement/ and CCOCSAD/Comité Communal d'Orientation, de Coordination et de Suivi des Actions de Développement*) to advocate for nutrition to be prioritized and resourced in local and regional development plans.

4.6 Learning Agenda

As programming is undertaken under this GFSS Country Plan, USG agencies will intentionally and systematically use relevant knowledge to inform decision-making and ultimately take action. Concepts

⁴⁴ Enquête Démographique et de Santé (DHS), Mali, 2012-2013.

from the USAID Learning Lab's Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) Framework will guide this approach.⁴⁵

To ensure proper incorporation of new and innovative approaches into the design, implementation and learning of food security and nutrition programming under this plan, the GFSS team in Mali will use guidance from the Global Food Security Research Strategy. The team will also use new and improved technologies and practices and will call upon expertise from USAID/Washington staff, Feed the Future Innovation Labs, the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the National Agricultural Research System (NARS), centrally-funded research programs, and other food security stakeholders including members of the GOM, civil society, and the private sector. Close collaboration between USG value chain programming and in-country Washington-funded research investments will be coordinated so as to ensure uptake of research-derived technology innovations.

USAID/Mali programs will seek to fill in knowledge gaps that exist now. Sample research topics include:

Understand gendered decision-making as it influences application of improved agricultural and post-harvest technologies and practices	Gathering data per A-WEAI or other methodology to assess changes in women's (and men's) workloads and time allocations and control over income
Understand the changing patterns of agricultural labor availability	The collection of more refined information on the gender and cultural barriers related to improved nutrition outcomes
Measure of the extent to which food safety problems negatively impact health outcomes and worker productivity, and the cost of this to the economy	Formative research to better understand how consumption and health seeking decisions are made in the household and how families can be better influenced to adopt the consumption of more nutritious foods and healthy behaviors
Comprehensive review of hydrological data (and the different uses of water) and, if necessary, develop further hydrological studies	

4.7 Policy Advocacy Agenda

While the GOM has enacted many policies intended to create the conditions needed to promote agricultural and private sector growth and eliminate market distortions, their application in practice is often absent. The USG faces constraints when trying to engage on policy at a national level such as frequent changes in cabinet ministers, and the GOM's lack of financial resources.

The Mali GFSS interagency team has identified the following three areas in which to actively pursue policy improvements.

⁴⁵ Link: <https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/collaborating%2C-learning%2C-and-adapting-cla-framework-and-maturity-matrix-overview>

4.8 Seed Policy Reform

The 2015 USAID Value Chain Commercial Legal and Institutional Reform (VcCLIR) diagnostic report⁴⁶ identified several concrete ways to improve access to better quality seeds stating, “current seed legislation recognizes only seed produced through a lengthy, certified, and expensive multiplication process. Good quality varieties and indigenous varieties exist within the country that are well suited to producers’ needs and, if multiplied up in a less costly manner, could be sold at a lower price to a wider market. In addition, the law does not allow for the certification of seed by any agency other than the Direction National pour l’Industrie (the National Directorate of Industry, or DNI), which is a lengthy and expensive process. Supporting the private sector with legal reform and technical assistance would enable it to undertake its own certification. Increased availability of royalty-free seed would also allow the private sector to play a greater role in seed multiplication.”

This plan proposes work aimed at further expanding the private sector role in the seed industry in general and at changing the rules governing l’Institut d’Economie Rurale (IER) and the private sector so that private seed companies are permitted to produce and sell foundation seed. This would expand the availability of improved seed varieties and spur private sector activity. It would also mesh well with other programmatic efforts to increase the use of improved seeds by easing access to credit and reduce risk by making crop insurance available.

4.9 Agricultural Inputs: Improved Regulation And Fighting Counterfeiting

Recent research⁴⁷ by the USAID Mali Food Security Policy Research Project implemented by Michigan State University found that the use of pesticides, particularly herbicides, has grown dramatically in Mali over the last decade and a half without being subsidized (due in part to falling prices and domestic farm labor constraints). At the same time, this plan envisions programming that supports GOM and Malian farmers in the fight the Fall Armyworm pest, which will involve a component of appropriate pesticide use. However, according to the USAID/MSU research, “regulatory capacity has not kept pace with the rapid proliferation of pesticide products, markets and traders. As a result, pesticide market growth has led to three emerging regulatory issues: 1) appearance of unregistered and counterfeit products in some markets; 2) uncertainty about pesticide product quality; and 3) health and environmental impact, which remains largely unmonitored.” USAID/Mali programming will partner with the private sector and the GOM to reduce the widespread counterfeiting, adulteration, mislabeling and other quality issues for fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and other inputs, including animal feeds and veterinary drugs, by both encouraging the development of an effective enforcement system backed up by laboratories capable of examining and certifying the quality of agricultural inputs and encouraging the adoption of anti-counterfeiting labeling systems such as the one currently being implemented in Mali by the American firm Sproxil.

Additional work in sustainable natural resource management will target technologies which enhance soil health and maintenance of the natural fertility base.

4.10 Natural Resource Governance And Management: Irrigation Water

Conflict is a major concern in Mali, and often conflict arises out of competition for natural resources. The USG can advocate for an agenda emphasizing water conservation and irrigation efficiency. A new quasi-independent agency, the Agence d’Amenagement de Terres et de Terres et de Fourniture d’Eaux d’Irrigation (AATT), was recently established to put in place new irrigation infrastructure and rationalize [irrigation] investments. It is responsible for, and has significant GOM resources for, both small scale watershed improvements and more significant irrigation works. These resources come from the fact that within the GOM’s considerable annual fiscal support for agriculture, funding for irrigation accounts for

⁴⁶ <http://eatproject.org/portfolio-vcclir.html>

⁴⁷ Policy Research Briefs Nos. 49 & 52

the largest share (even larger than fertilizer subsidies). Supporting either AATT’s capacity for rationalizing irrigation investments in light of competing water demands, or local community engagement with AATT in local investment plans and decisions is a way to ensure that these resources are spent in the most effective sustainable way. This will also engage the USG in supporting the GOM in making decisions on how best to deploy its water resources against growing and competing demands.⁴⁸

4.11 Continued Efforts to Reduce Road Harassment

One area where USAID/Mali is making progress on the ground is in the area of road harassment. Road harassment increases the cost of transporting agricultural goods within Mali and to neighboring countries. The work supported by USAID combines citizen awareness with the creation of processes for affected transporters to bring claims against the harassing officials. Such work will continue as long as it demonstrably reduces the amount of harassment along Mali’s trade routes. USAID/Mali will maintain engagement with USAID/WA (West Africa) to track GOM’s implementation of its commitments made to ECOWAS on non-tariff barriers to trade.

4.12 Development of The Next MNAP (2019-2023)

A key finding from the MNAP mid-term review was that the framework for programming was insufficiently incorporated into other sectoral development plans. As one of the largest nutrition partners in Mali, a policy focus of the GFSS will be to support the GOM in the development of its next five-year MNAP. USG will use this opportunity to engage GOM officials across multiple sectors to further articulate and define the roles and responsibilities at all levels in support of the goals under the National Nutrition Policy.

4.13 Continued Assessment of the Policy Environment

The USG will remain engaged with the GOM directly and through donor groups and will monitor progress on issues such as the reform of fertilizer subsidies and implementation of regional policies that the GOM has already adopted. Special messages on key policy actions will be elaborated for the use by USG personnel when they meet with concerned GOM officials on these policy issues.

Local practices and traditional governance systems are often as pertinent to the wellbeing of rural households as national policy. The GFSS will work to improve localized practices and foster increased adherence to unified and transparent governance, and increased confidence in decentralized governance systems in such areas as land tenure and human rights.

Program Management Arrangements

As shown in the table below, USAID/Mali’s Agriculture and Economic Growth (AEG) office will implement GFSS programming in Mali in concert with the GFSS interagency country team: the U.S. Embassy in Bamako (DOS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), U.S. African Development Foundation (USADF), USAID/Mali’s Offices of Food for Peace (FFP), Health, Education, Governance, and the Office for Disaster Assistance (OFDA), the USAID West Africa regional Mission in Accra, and USAID’s Sahel Regional Office in Dakar. AEG will collaborate closely with the activities of these entities when they take place in the GFSS zone of influence.

Intermediate Result	Office / Agency Contributing
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Productivity	AEG, USADF, USDA, DOS
Connections to markets	AEG, FFP, USADF, USDA, WA, DOS
Economic, health and climate risk reduction mitigation and management	AEG, FFP, USDA
Adaptation to and recovery from stresses and shocks	AEG, FFP, EDU, USDA
Mitigation of drivers of conflict	DG, FFP, USDA, DOS
Consumption of nutritious and safe foods	AEG, Health, FFP, USDA, WA
Use of direct nutrition interventions and services	Health, FFP, USDA
Hygienic household and community environments	Health, FFP, AEG, USDA

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The USAID/Mali Mission is committed to strengthening its existing practices of collaboration, learning and adapting (CLA) while designing, implementing, and evaluating programs under this GFSS country plan.

12. Stakeholder Engagement Platforms

A GFSS Cross Sector Advisory Committee has been established and met once prior to the stakeholders' workshop. This committee is composed of eight members from various GOM departments, the private sector and civil society. Further work is needed to formalize the official status of this committee. This advisory committee and the working group on 'Convergence for the Resilience of Mali (COREM)' will regularly be consulted during the design and implementation of the new GFSS Country Plan for Mali.

USAID/Mali currently serves as co-lead, with the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), of the donor group devoted to agricultural and rural development in Mali. This large group meets monthly for two hours or more to discuss key issues affecting Mali's agriculture sector and present programs of interest to the wider group. This group has been advised of Mali's selection as one of the 12 GFSS target countries, and of the upcoming work that remains to design and implement a GFSS program in Mali. The involvement of this group will continue to be important as the GFSS program progresses in Mali. USAID/Mali is also a member of the livestock donor group.

Mali has been a Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) country since 2011. Canada is the lead donor for SUN, with USAID serving as a key partner for both implementation and the mapping of coverage for nutrition key interventions in the country. The SUN activities in the country are led by the GOM network in

coordination with civil society organizations, private sector, the research and academia sector, and the donor and United Nations networks.

Annual reviews of GFSS progress in Mali will be the object of day-long sessions involving many of the people who participated in the initial stakeholders' workshop held in Bamako in October 2017, including advisory committee members. These reviews will allow for the reporting on, and discussing of, the status of GFSS in Mali. The conclusions of these annual reviews will be used to modify, if necessary, Mali's GFSS program. Also, the conclusions of these reviews will be the subject of regular U.S. Mission and interagency meetings.

The GFSS country plan will foster a more inclusive approach to stakeholder engagement by offering an expanded space for input from participating communities via such mechanisms as beneficiary fora and formal monitoring of the role the community is playing in developing and implementing interventions.

U.S. Government Interagency Partners

