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Changing Perceptions to Increase Crop Yields



Photo: Centre d'Appui a L'Autopromotion pour le Developpement

***Malian Gaoussou Diawara
educates farming households
on differences between
hybrid maize with open
pollination maize.***

Agriculture yields in Mali are extremely low. On average farmers produce just 3.19 tons/ha of maize per year, compared with 4.9 tons/ha in South Africa and 10.3 tons/ha in the United States. The *Centre d'Appui a L'Autopromotion pour le Developpement* (CAAD), a Malian NGO, wants that to change.

When CAAD's coordinator Gaoussou Diawara attended a change management training through the USAID-funded Africa Lead program, he resolved to think differently and find innovative solutions to support food security. He immediately convened strategy meetings with colleagues, and CAAD decided to pursue aggressive

increases in agricultural productivity – to double yields – by promoting the use of hybrid maize, even though local producers had historically resisted using it due to misperceptions of it as a genetically modified organism (GMO).

CAAD approached a hybrid seed import company and facilitated a meeting between the seed company, the local agriculture service, local political and administrative officials, and over 100 farming households in the rural area of Dougoumousso. Using demonstrations, scientific explanations and images, CAAD got the agreement of the farmers and local authorities to set up demonstration plots to be farmed by four volunteer farmers. Gaoussou expects many households to adopt the use of hybrid seeds after observing their much higher productivity. He credits Africa Lead's training with providing the impetus to "think outside the box."