PLANNING GRANT PROPOSAL FOR LONG TERM COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY OF MALI–IRP/IFRA AND MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY (MSU)
JULY TO DECEMBER 2002

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I. Introduction

This document proposes a planning grant to establish long term collaboration between the University of Mali/Rural Polytechnical Institute for Training and Applied Research (IPA/IFRA) and Michigan State University (MSU) in the area of teaching, scientific research, and development. This collaboration will deal with topics related to development in the rural sector and agriculture which is the backbone of economic development in Mali.

These two institutions, having similar teaching, applied research and rural support missions, are seeking 34,044,950 FCFA ($50,813 US dollars), to cover a period of six months in order to develop a plan for long term collaboration. A long term collaboration will not only strengthened the University of Mali’s teaching capacity in the areas of agriculture and natural resource management, but make key contributions to lasting development in Mali.

Michigan State University (MSU) and the University of Mali have been involved in a long term collaboration (20 years). A delegation of teachers-researchers from IPR/IFRA representing the University of Mali, met with representatives from MSU in Michigan in May, 2002 to clear the path for collaboration in the area of training, scientific research and extension. This document is the product of these discussions.

The IPR/IFRA, through its collaboration with MSU, intends to strengthened its research and teaching abilities, and develop exchanges and communication with MSU. The proposed project envisions six teachers from MSU visiting IPR/IFRA to give technical assistance in order to develop a plan to strengthen research, teaching and extension which will benefit the management community (producers, citizens, cooperatives, etc.). In this phase, three teachers from the IPR/IFRA will visit MSU to exchange complimentary information in order to detail a collaborative program. These exchanges will result in joint research projects, teaching and development with the perspective of reducing hunger and poverty in Mali.

2. Description of the Project
   2.1. Context

Presently, the Sahel in particular, is faced with major challenges, capable of comprising peace and stability:
- Food insecurity and malnutrition
- Disturbing impoverishment of one of the largest segments of the population
- Degradation of the environment and natural resources
- Illiteracy and a lack of basic health care for a large segment of the population
- Greater discrepancies between developed countries and developing countries

At the same time, the current globalization process implies greater complementarity between economies, closer cooperation between countries, and combining of energy and synergy to resolve serious problems.

In Mali, the majority of the poor populations lives in rural areas and farm. The rapid growth of the rural economy is capable of having the greatest and most direct impact on the poor. As a result, all strategies to substantially reduce poverty must be based on the revitalization of agriculture and the development of rural zones. But this requires specialists and technicians able to develop, and
implement jointly with the management community, rural agricultural programs integrated at the national level as well as the regional level.

During these last years, important scientific changes have taken place in the area:

- The revision of a strategic research plan
- The establishment of a regional research center for the management of natural resources and production systems.
- International agricultural research reorganized within the context of a global forum, with a view to the development of a larger base in the teaching-research-development continuum.

In the case of IPR/IFRA, despite having accumulated considerable capital for teaching agriculture in the area, and the research mission bestowed on it by the resolutions of the of the International seminars on restructuring held at Bamako from May 22-24, 1995, it appears necessary to collaborate with other institutions having similar missions.

Realizing this, having similar interests and a desire to contribute solutions to socio-economic problems, Michigan State University and IPR/IFRA at Katibougou, decided to join efforts within the framework of a long lasting collaborative project. For this reason, the President of the Republic of Mali traveled to Michigan followed by a visit of the Director of the University of Mali. In return, Michigan State University’s president and vice-president visited Mali in 2000 and 2002. These meetings paved the way for cooperation between the University of Mali and Michigan State University. In May, 2002, a delegation of teachers-researchers from IPR/IFRA met in the United States to closely analyze collaboration in the areas of research, teaching and development. In the course of this visit, the delegation had detailed discussions with more than 50 researchers/teachers and administrators from MSU regarding possible collaboration.

For the two institutions, it is a question of feeding the synergy between teaching, research and development, considered to be tools of social and economic progress. Before implementing the elements of a long lasting collaboration, a preparation phase must begin.

2.2 What is this PDF about:

It is a question of:
- implementing a flexible management structure in this phase at each institution in order to coordinate activities
- reinforce communication and exchanges between the two institutions;
- assure working visits to IPR/IFRA at Katibougou from six teachers-researchers at MSU and from three faculty-researchers at Katibougou to MSU. These visits, lasting seven days each, will enable:
  - discovery of the feasibility of deepening the dialogue already begun.
  - development of strategies to reinforce the capabilities of the two institutions in the following areas: teaching program development, development of human resources, the method of communication, and information and the equipment;
  - identification of thematic priorities of research capable of having an important impact in the fight against poverty
  - development of joint research projects in the interest of both institutions.
-identification of sources of funds for future projects to strengthen IPR/IFRA’s ability to contribute to broad based development in Mali that will reduce hunger and poverty. This contribution will effect future development by training a new generation of agro-entrepreneurs, through applied research, and strengthening extension programs.

-initiating a follow-up method and evaluation of said project

3. Objectives of the project

Global Objective

The project seeks to lay a foundation for a long-lasting collaboration between IPR/IFRA in Mali and Michigan State University in the areas of teaching, research and development that conforms to the central interests of each institution and benefits the two countries:

Specific objectives include:

- Improve communication between IPR/IFRA and MSU by implementing local coordination;
- Favor exchanges and information through visits to prepare a direct path for long-lasting collaboration.
- After six months, write a proposal for long lasting collaboration which will strengthen agricultural science and management in order to effectively fulfill the teaching function, research, and extension for the purpose of teaching professionals (for example-agribusiness) who will work in the rural areas, and create extension programs for the rural communities. The eventual areas of collaboration are identified as, among others, animal husbandry, rural and agricultural economics, seed production and the improvement of plants, management and administration of fisheries and forestry, nutrition, biotechnology, horticulture, the transformation of agricultural products, and the use of new information and communication technologies such as the internet.

4. Budget

The planning phase of the project with last for six months, costing about 34,044,950 FCFA ($50,813). This amount will finance the implementation of a small team to coordinate two short exchange visits between the two institutions to develop one or more long-term collaborative projects which will be submitted to a sponsor. This planning project will be financed thanks to a contract given to IPR/IFRA which, in turn, will sub-contract with MSU to cover the expenses incurred by the institution.

5. Conclusion

The financing of this preparatory phase will implement a solid, long-lasting cooperative base between Michigan State University and IPR/IFRA at Katibougou. This will be in the areas of development synergies between teaching, research and development and, as a result, fight hunger and poverty.