

SAFE-World Project/Initiative Summary

Country: Burkina Faso

Project/Initiative Title: Project Agro-Forestier, (PAF) Yatenga Province

Nos. farmers: 4540 Hectares: 8,000
households

Agro-Ecological Zone: II

Improvement types

1x	2x	3	4	5x	6x	7	8	9
----	----	---	---	----	----	---	---	---

D. Contact Point for Project/Initiative

c/o Rachel Hine
Senior Research Officer,
Centre for Environment and Society

<mailto:rehine@essex.ac.uk>

E. Project Narrative

The Project Agro-Forestier, Yatenga Province, Burkina Faso

The Project Agro-Forestier (PAF) was begun by Oxfam in 1979 to address environmental degradation in Yatenga Province in Burkina Faso. In the early stages, it focused on promoting micro-catchments for tree growing. PAF conducted on-farm experiments with groups of farmers who, after observing the way the micro-catchments trapped run-off water, instead planted upland rice in the basins. Sorghum was introduced by accident in the manure. Both crops grew well, and so farmers became more interested in food crops than trees. As local people have barely enough drinking water for themselves, mortality amongst tree seedlings was also massive.

PAF shifted its focus to food crops in accordance with local wishes, and began to work on improving indigenous conservation technologies. PAF's major technological contribution has been to develop a cheap water tube level that has enabled farmers precisely to trace the contour for laying out bunds. After two years of joint experimentation, locally-adapted versions of contour rock bunds (*diguettes*), combined with crop planting in *zai* holes filled with mulch, proved very effective at harvesting water and improving crop yields. The mulch encourages termite activity, which increases the water penetration when the rains come. The project also promotes the use of improved composting techniques as part of a national composting programme.

Yields have improved by some 40% on treated land. The differential is greatest in low rainfall years. More than 8000 ha have been treated, and some 4542 farmers from 406 villagers trained. The rapid rate of adoption and replication of the technologies outside the project indicates farmers' enthusiasm. Farmers cite higher yields and increased food security as the primary benefits. The internal rate of return calculated by the World Bank, using conservative assumptions, is 37%.

Attitudes to tree growing have also changed. In some villages, farmers are planting trees and providing protection against grazing animals during the dry season. Livestock are increasingly stall-fed, with

fodder cut and carried to the animals. Although the project began by working with individuals, it became clear that most of these improvements could only be achieved if there was community consensus. This is important for choice of communal sites for contour bunds, protection against grazing, collection of rocks, and ensuring that conservation measures are complementary across contiguous farms.

Despite the successes, there are concerns over the uneven distribution of benefits, as rock collection and bund construction makes heavy demands on labour, particularly on women. Rich farmers are also more likely to be able to mobilize and provide labour for the communal groups to build bunds on their land. Nonetheless, PAF has been able to develop a strong relationship with local government agencies, and farmers' groups now have a voice in local state-NGO decision-making about planning extension work.

Data for this project is in hard copy format and is not currently available electronically. If you would like further information please contact Rachel Hine