

SAFE-World Project/Initiative Summary

Country: Burkina Faso

Project/Initiative Title: Special Soil and Water Conservation and Agroforestry SWC/AGF Programme (phases I and II) in Burkina Faso

Nos. farmers: 15,000

Hectares: 30,000

Agro-Ecological Zone: II

Improvement types

1x	2	3x	4x	5	6x	7x	8	9
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A. Key Impacts

A1 – Productivity

	Before/Without	After/With	% change
Sorghum/millet (low rainfall)	600 kg/ha		30
Sorghum millet (high rainfall)	1000 kg/ha		10
With organic manures	1000-1500 kg/ha		

D. Contact Point for Project/Initiative

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E. Project Narrative

Special Soil and Water Conservation and Agroforestry SWC/AGF Programme (phases I and II) in Burkina Faso

The Special SWC/AGF Programme (phases I and II) in Burkina Faso targeted the country's central plateau, a densely populated area with a semi-arid climate (450 mm rainfall in the north, 700 mm in the south) and poor soil fertility. The programme's objectives included: (i) the organization of mobile support teams to assist farmers with SWC activities; (ii) agroforestry measures; and (iii) the production of compost and the supply of farm inputs on credit. The approach used by the SWC component (anti-erosion bunding) had been developed by various NGOs (including Oxfam) working in cooperation with the farmers and was already being widely used in the region. The project produced outstanding results, with nearly 30 000 ha developed, equivalent to 25-30% of these villages' croplands and benefiting 15 000 families. Millet and sorghum yields are reckoned to have increased by 30% in years with low rainfall, 20% in years with average rainfall and 10% in years with high rainfalls. This has made for greater stability of production and, by extension, enhanced food security. Despite farmers' interest in extending these measures to their "scrubs", they have been unable to do so on their own owing to limited means of transport. In all, 6 250 compost pits were built, but – due to poor water access and transport problems – very few of them are being used. The component to provide credit for supplies was a failure, except for the savings and credit activities subcontracted to NGOs; in any event, there was only limited demand for credit to finance agricultural inputs.

The programme in Burkina Faso, like the one in Niger, was successful in sparking farmers' interest because the technical solutions proposed had a significant and immediate impact on production, risk reduction and, consequently, household food security. The technologies to improve the use of run-off water, though, may not be sustainable in the long term unless they are accompanied by a quantitative and qualitative improvement in the use of organic matter and fertilizer. The second phase of the SWC/AGF Programme – under way since 1995 – includes the same SWC/AGF and agricultural intensification components. Programme achievements have kept up their pace and even diversified (demi-lunes, zaï, mulching, etc.). The focus has been on better coordination of actions by having the beneficiaries develop village land-use plans. A village water-supply component was included that was able to meet (finally) one of the villagers' demands that was a priority since the beginning of the first phase. The main problem today is that villagers continue to be overly dependent on the logistical support provided by extension services. Little has been done to encourage beneficiaries to undertake and oversee topographical surveys and the transport of stones, either by jointly renting trucks from private haulers or purchasing their own carts.