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“World Food System —  
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## Mali’s Vegetable Food System: Constraints and Opportunities

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### Abstract

Although vegetable production contributes to the economy of Mali, improves household income, and promotes food and nutritional security, vegetable consumption remains low. This study identified major constraints to vegetable systems in Mali and opportunities for improvement as the first step in developing a strategy to increase vegetable production and consumption for better health. Data on farmers’ production characteristics, vegetable preference, and socio-cultural factors were collected through household surveys, focus group discussions, and direct observation of the living conditions of the interviewees. Eighty households were surveyed in the target sites in rural (Guená, Kirina) and peri-urban areas around Bamako (Kati, Baco Djicoroni) during the dry season from December 2009 to January 2010. Secondary information was obtained from a review of past studies and discussions with key informants (extensionists and scientists). The main vegetable production season in Mali is from December to March. The area cultivated by men is 100 m<sup>2</sup> to 1.5 ha; by women, 10 m<sup>2</sup> to 900 m<sup>2</sup>. The profile shows full-time producers in urban areas and part-time producers in rural areas. Most production is for local markets; only a small part (5–20%) is consumed at home. Prices are variable and depend on the season: they can be as low as \$ 0.20 per kg at the peak harvest period and as high as \$15 per kg during the low production period. Revenues from vegetable gardening are used to pay for food, school fees, and family celebrations. Millet, sorghum, or maize porridge is eaten in the morning. At lunch, meals are also based on cereals, usually solidified porridge or couscous, with sauce made of tomatoes, onion, amaranth, gourd, roselle, baobab leaves, eggplant, okra, or groundnuts. Vegetable consumption is higher in towns where dietary habits are shifting due to economic status, changes in lifestyle and cultural patterns, and access to a greater diversity of foods. Major constraints to production are limited accessibility to inputs, a lack of vegetable seed, and a lack of varieties with high nutritional value. AVRDC works to address these constraints by selecting and improving vegetable lines for year-round production, and by promoting greater consumption of vegetables in Mali.

**Keywords:** Consumption patterns, food security, vegetable production