SUCCESS STORY
LOCAL AND REGIONAL FOOD AID PROCUREMENT PROJECT

LOCATION: SENEGAL | **DURATION:** 2018-2021 | **FUNDED BY:** USDA

A LOCAL COMMUNITY TAKES LEADERSHIP IN ADOPTING MUNG BEAN TO FIGHT CHILD MALNUTRITION IN SENEGAL

Despite its recent economic revival due to increased opportunities in mining, the northern region of Saint-Louis, Senegal is still prone to high food insecurity. Lack of market access and poor quality of food crops contributes to its vulnerability to shocks including climate change, farmer strikes, and volatile commodity prices. This situation, coupled with low diet diversity, has fostered high prevalence of child malnutrition in the region which not only negatively impacts students' academic performance, but also impacts the Government of Senegal's basic education reform.

To help reverse the trend, Counterpart International, in partnership with Virginia Tech University and NCBA – CLUSA, is implementing a USDA funded project called LRP/TACSS (Local and Regional Food Procurement/Transitioning to local food in school canteens) which promotes the use of local commodities to support community-led school feeding. To contribute to diet diversification and malnutrition reduction, in July 2019, Counterpart introduced the cultivation of the hybrid mung bean, a protein-rich legume, in 10 pilot communities in Podor, Pété, and Dagana. Ten schools totaling 2390 students (1363 girls and 1027 boys) will benefit from the introduction of this new crop in their school canteens.

The community of Thiewle is one of the 10 participating in the pilot and has taken the lead among all villages in adopting the mung bean.

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From July 2019 to March 2020, both during dry and rainy seasons, it has produced the highest amount of mung bean per hectare— 210 kg on 0.25 hectares of land—from the 4 kilos of seed they received from Counterpart.

Seeing the community's desire to learn and do more, Counterpart, in collaboration with Virginia Tech and ISRA (Senegalese Agricultural Research Institute), gave Thiewle a new open-pollinated mung bean line to grow side-by-side with the hybrid they have been growing. Before the introduction of mung beans, the community was previously cultivating and rotating sweet potatoes and onions. Now, they rotate onions and mung beans. According to Amadou Seydou Sow, the lead farmer in Thiewle, onion is highly fertilized; thus, the mung bean crop following onion appears to benefit from the residual nitrogen, producing an improved product. "The cultivation of mung bean has made our life easier. With this crop, we use less water, save up gasoline for irrigation, and can diversify our diet by cooking various recipes our community enjoy eating," said Mr. Sow.

Mung bean appeal includes its quick and vigorous start, high yield (720 kg/ha), short season (50-60 days from planting to harvest), its dual use for food and livestock feed, and high market value. "When the school children come to school, they know they will be fed, and that increases the student's ability to concentrate on their education," said Mr. Sow, who is also the president of School Management Committee (SMC) of Thiewle.

Furthermore, the community observed that mung bean controls hunger. The reason is the high proportion of a slowly digestible component of mung bean which remains in the stomach for a longer period of time. The Thiewle community was the first to grow, harvest, and donate mung bean (180 kg) to their local school canteen. The local SMC and the insight of local producers into the potential market value of mung bean has also played an important role in the success of this crop in Thiewle.

In less than a year, the project has achieved many positives outcomes— increasing food security, dietary diversification, nutritional adequacy, and market opportunities in Thiewle. The nine other communities are taking the cue from Thiewle's experience, and their progress toward community-led school feeding looks promising.

The Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement program is a three-year intervention financed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and implemented by Counterpart International.

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