



10 September 2010

Contact: Stephen Rudgard, FAO, Rome, Italy (stephen.rudgard@fao.org)

Research4Life's AGORA Programme Helps Researchers in Burkina Faso Address Agricultural Challenges

New video illustrates how local research institute uses scientific information to change the way people grow their crops.

As one of the poorest countries in the world, Burkina Faso regularly suffers from drought, poor soil, lack of adequate communications and other infrastructure, a low literacy rate, and a stagnant economy. With 80% of the population relying on the agricultural sector, improving the productivity and competitiveness of Burkina Faso's agricultural sector is a critical issue for the country's future.

Local researchers know that progress can be made in tackling these issues in part through innovation and the application of new technologies, many of which are available in the wealth of information and knowledge developed by the world's agricultural science community.

A new video launched today illustrates how INERA (*Institut de l'Environnement et de Recherches Agricoles*), Burkina Faso's leading institute for agricultural and environmental research, is using the Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture (AGORA) programme to access online scientific journals with information on fertilizers and dosages to support development of techniques for maximizing production. Using cutting-edge research through AGORA, a new micro dose fertilization technology, adapted to local needs, was developed jointly by farmers and INERA's researchers.

“In the beginning, we found that the work was harder than with the old method, explains Agnes Compaore, a farmer from Tibin, Burkina Faso, but when we saw the results, we realized the micro dose is better as we had a much better harvest. So we used it. Now that we are familiar with it, we think that it is even easier to use than the old fertilizer.”

AGORA, launched in 2003, is part of Research4Life, a global public-private partnership which provides free or low cost access to over 1,200 high quality international journals in the poorest countries in the world. As the agricultural programme of Research4Life, sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), AGORA provides access to research on many agricultural fields including fisheries, food, nutrition, veterinary science and related biological, environmental and social sciences.

INERA, which has a staff of 500, including over 100 researchers, finds that working through AGORA is helping them play an important role in supporting the country's effort to improve the economy. Hamidon Traore, Head of Natural Resources Management, INERA, states, "Because of globalization, Africa cannot be absent from technology knowledge sharing. So to have access to AGORA is a good thing for us."

AGORA is one of three programmes in Research4Life, together with HINARI (Research in Health) and OARE (Research in Environment). Research4Life provides online access to peer-reviewed scientific journals, books, databases and research in health, agriculture and the environment for scientists, doctors, researchers, and policy makers in developing countries. Research4Life partners include the World Health Organization (WHO), FAO, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), Cornell and Yale Universities and over 40 major publishers, including Elsevier, Springer Verlag, and Wiley-Blackwell. Working together with technology partner Microsoft, the partnership's goal is to help attain six of the UN's eight Millennium Development Goals by 2015, reducing the scientific knowledge gap between industrialized countries and the developing world. Currently, the three Research4Life programmes provide access to over 7,000 journals for over 5,000 registered institutions in 107 developing countries .

Stephen Rudgard, AGORA Programme Manager at FAO, explains the success of Research4Life, "This informal partnership brings together an extremely powerful set of resources and experience," he explains, "It is designed to enhance scholarship, research, policy and practice of the many thousands of academics, scientists, students, and practitioners in the developing world, providing access to those journals where this was not possible before."

The launch of today's video, courtesy of Research4Life Partner Microsoft, shows how INERA, through AGORA, is working with farmers and residents to introduce innovative solutions to help optimize regional agricultural and environmental practice. With INERA's efforts, Burkina Faso's agricultural sector is improving livelihoods and opportunities for some of the country's most disadvantaged citizens.

Click here (<http://www.youtube.com/user/HinariAgoraOare?feature=mhum#p/a/u/0/1-zAgYtUAvE>) to view the video.

For more information on AGORA, visit www.aginternetwork.org.

For more information on Research4Life visit <http://www.research4life.org>