



Makandianfing Keita, cotton farmer
UC-CPC de Djidian
Mali

INTRODUCTION

Makandianfing Keita was born in 1961 in Dougourakoroni village in Mali, West Africa. He gained the 'baccalaureat litteraire' in 1986, which is the requirement to enter further education, but was unable to afford to continue studying and instead returned to his parents' to work on their farm. The cotton farmers of Dougourakoroni village are members of a large co-operative called UC-CPC de Djidian which has been Fairtrade certified since 2005. Makandianfing married in December 2007 and has no children.

BACKGROUND

The Kita region was traditionally the centre of peanut production until drought and disease badly hit production in Mali and other Sahel countries in the early 1980s. Production in Mali slumped to its lowest level in 1992/93, causing poverty and hardship in peanut growing communities. Cotton was introduced by a local NGO as an alternative cash crop and in January 1995 the Compagnie Malienne pour le Développement des Textiles (CMDT) began promoting cotton production in the region on behalf of the Government of Mali.

Mali's cotton production has grown from 500,000 tonnes in 1997 to a record 635,000 tonnes in 2003, making Mali the largest cotton producer on the African continent. Production fell slightly to 600,000 tonnes when prices fell in 2004 and 2005¹.

Forty percent of the rural population of Mali is now dependant on cotton production, with several hundred thousand people growing cotton on 200,000 farms. Over 150,000 square kilometres of land in the south of Mali are planted with cotton, including the whole of Sikasso region, parts of Segou and Koulikoro regions and the area around the town of Kita where UC-CPC de Djidian and its co-operatives are located.

UC-CPC DE DJIDIAN 'DANAYA TON'

The UC-CPC union brings together small, village-level co-operatives (Coopératives de Producteurs de Coton or CPC) whose members pool the cotton they grow in order to strengthen their position in the market and share expertise. They have joined a rural management centre and plan to create a central body to simplify the certification process and to make access to Fairtrade easier for other village co-operatives. The board members are themselves farmers and have been growing cotton for 13 or 14 years.

From the 2006/07 harvest, UC-CPC de Djidian sold just over 2,000 tonnes of seed cotton as Fairtrade. Cotton is the only cash crop in the area and farmers also grow millet, sorghum, maize and peanuts on a subsistence level. Cotton is grown in rotation with these crops to protect soil fertility and production relies on rainfall rather than artificial irrigation. Every year in some areas the yield will be low because there's not enough rain; overall, the farmers are seeing a reduction in the amount rainfall each year which is a cause of great concern. Cotton is a thirsty crop, but it's still worth investing in it since other crops don't sell for a good price.

All cotton in Mali is sold to CMDT, the national cotton board, which as recently been privatised. CMDT was founded by the Government of Mali in 1974 to co-ordinate production and commercialisation in the cotton sector. CMDT negotiates the annual farm gate cotton price with the National Union of Cotton Producers² and provides essential support to all cotton producers in Mali in the form of training and technical advice (for example in the use of pesticides and soil protection, improving quality, record keeping), transport, ginning, and local and export marketing. It also organises workshops for Fairtrade certified co-ops to ensure that all members understand how Fairtrade works.

The cotton bolls, consisting of seeds with the fibre attached, are picked by hand so each can be harvested when at its best. This seed cotton is collected from the villages by CMDT in huge orange container lorries, each

¹ UN FAO statistical database, www.fao.org

² Syndicat National des Producteurs de Coton.

carrying 10 tonnes, and taken to the factory for ginning. The ginning process separates the bolls into cotton fibre (or lint) and cotton seeds, which are returned to the farmers for planting, or used for oil or fodder.

The containers are weighed on the new weighbridge by a team of elected representatives from the villages which keeps records of the deliveries and gives receipts to the farmers against which they claim their payment. From the containers, the cotton is sucked up into the machinery where the seeds are extracted and put on one side to be given back to the farmers. The fibre is compressed into blocks and put into white sacks. Each bale is weighed, then the weight and the number of the co-operative painted on it in black. A sample is taken for testing at CMDT head office and the bales are stitched up and stacked in the yard in neat rows ready for export to Senegal and loading onto ships.

DOUGOURAKORONI COTTON PRODUCERS CO-OPERATIVE

The co-operative in the village of Dougourakoroni was one of the four original Fairtrade certified organisations in UC-CPC de Djidian, which now number 37. It was founded in 1996 with the aim of improving the living standards of its members through the production of cotton. The main problems faced by producers in the region are low incomes, lack of agricultural equipment and mills for grinding cereals, poor access to clean water, and poor infrastructure such as roads, health centres, and education.

The Dougourakoroni Co-operative elects two members to the General Assembly of UC-CPC de Djidian. Its seven-member Board comprises a President, Vice-President, Treasurer and managers for credit, training and quality. The co-op provides access to loans, technical advice and agricultural training. It supplies agricultural inputs and oversees commercial activities. Workshops are also organised where knowledge and experience are shared with non-members. The average farm is 7 hectares in size with 1.3 hectares under cotton, producing around 1,000kg of cotton a year.

FAIRTRADE CERTIFIED COTTON

When Fairtrade standards³ for seed cotton were set in 2003, Mali was one of the countries identified as a potential producer partner. UC-CPC de Djidian is one of four co-operatives which have since been certified, three of them regional groupings of smaller co-operatives in the same model, and the fourth in the south of Mali, producing organic and Fairtrade certified cotton.

These groups now export part of their production under the conditions guaranteed by international Fairtrade standards:

- The guaranteed Fairtrade minimum price paid to producers covers production and living costs
- The additional Fairtrade premium is for investment in agreed community development projects such as drilling wells and constructing or improving schools and clinics
- Sustainable agricultural production methods are employed, including environmental protection and ongoing reduction in the use of agrochemicals
- Non-discrimination and equality of opportunity for all members and workers
- Democratic and transparent management structures are in place
- Pre-finance of up to 60% of the value of the contract is available on request
- Fairtrade registered buyers make a commitment to long-term, stable relationships with producers.

In Mali, farmer members receive the guaranteed Fairtrade minimum farm gate price of FCFA⁴ 238/kg compared to the national base price of FCFA 165 for 2006/07. In addition, the co-operative receives the Fairtrade premium of FCFA 34/kg to invest in community development projects.

Harvest	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Government base price (FCFA per kg)	200	210	160	165
Fairtrade minimum price (FCFA per kg)	238	238	238	238
Fairtrade premium (FCFA per kg)	34	34	34	34

For further information, see http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/downloads/pdf/cotton_briefing.pdf

³ Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO) is responsible for setting Fairtrade standards, certifying producer organisations and auditing the flow of goods between producers and importers in the 20 markets where Fairtrade labels operate. Details at www.fairtrade.net.

⁴ Franc Communauté Financière Africaine

BENEFITS OF FAIRTRADE

Around 10% of the Fairtrade premium is used by UC-CPC, whose first project was to build a meeting room so that members could come together to make decisions and for social activities.

The remaining 90% of the Fairtrade premium is distributed to the village co-operatives according to the amount of cotton each of them has sold, where a Premium Committee of elected members decides on the projects to be funded. The priority projects in every village in the region were the construction of wells for access to clean drinking water and the building of a storage facility for grain. Without a dry, secure warehouse for the food crops, any surplus has to be sold as it is harvested when the market prices are low. Then when the millet or maize is out of season, villagers have to buy in their food at high market prices. A simple storage facility and weighing scale transform that situation and also allow the safe, dry storage of fertilisers and seeds.

In Dougourakoroni, one of the first projects was the construction in 2005 of a block of two classrooms. The following year, the Committee decided to invest in a further two classrooms and was able to use this to persuade the government to pay for four more. Education is highly regarded, but before the introduction of Fairtrade, it was difficult to afford the school fees and, when there was not enough for everyone, boys took priority over girls. Previously, class was taken outdoors under a tree which meant lessons were cancelled during bad weather. The teacher says the children can concentrate better now, although they could still do with more desks.

The Premium Committee has identified several priority projects to be funded by the Fairtrade Premium:

- Drilling wells to improve access to clean water
- Building a health centre and nursery school
- Building a soap factory to provide employment and an alternative source of income
- Provision of agricultural equipment for members
- Increasing literacy programmes and providing vocational training
- Expanding maize production to ensure self-sufficiency within the local area.

WIDER IMPACTS

Environment Each co-operative has a trained Environmental Monitoring Committee to support the implementation of FLO environmental standards. The farmers are now spreading manure and organic kitchen waste on the fields to reduce the need for chemicals, minimising the practice of burning large areas of land and planting hedges to reduce erosion. UC-CPC de Djidian is testing prototype incinerators for empty agrochemical containers so that they are safely disposed of. Trials are planned in growing organic cotton; this is a difficult transition since the initial yield is only a quarter of the yield grown with chemicals.

“It’s better to have a little less crop than to use many chemicals. They degrade the soil and they are bad for our health. Everyone uses the same fertiliser now, the one allowed by FLO.” – Sekou Keita, President of the Board of UC-CPC de Djidian

Women’s involvement Traditionally, women were not included in decision-making, but Fairtrade standards require the involvement of women at every level. The percentage of female farmer members remains low, but the slow process of adjustment is bearing fruit. Women are represented on the Board of each co-operative and, in Dougourakoroni, the statutes require that the appointed treasurer is a woman.

In Batimakana, another member co-operative of UC-CPC de Djidian, few of the women went to school, but 27 are now taking literacy classes. Women could only start to grow cotton because of the introduction of Fairtrade and previously were not invited to meetings, whereas now they speak up and their opinions are heard.

“Before, the women were not invited, not asked, not consulted. We were sad. We are pleased now we are included at the same level as the men. We know that men can’t do everything without us. Women are valued now.” – Bintou Dambile, Board member, UC-CPC de Djidian

WHERE CAN I BUY FAIRTRADE COTTON FROM UC-CPC DE DJIDIAN?

Ascension Clothing, Asda, Craghoppers, Debenhams, Fair and Square, Jules Clarysse, La Redoute, Marks & Spencer, Monsoon, Oxtan Cotton, Sainsburys, Sally Smith, Tesco, Topshop, and Wombat all make products carrying the FAIRTRADE Mark which contain Fairtrade certified cotton from UC-CPC de Djidian. Sports Relief t-shirts are also made with cotton from UC-CPC de Djidian.

Look for the FAIRTRADE Mark on products. It’s your guarantee that disadvantaged farmers and workers in the developing world are getting a better deal.

The Fairtrade Foundation, Room 204, 16 Baldwin’s Gardens, London EC1N 7RJ www.fairtrade.org.uk
Registered Charity No. 1043886, a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales No. 2733136.

MALI ECONOMY AND BACKGROUND DATA⁵

Mali's per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of \$250 (2003) places it among the world's 10 poorest nations. Its potential wealth lies in mining and the production of agricultural commodities, livestock, and fish.

Agricultural activities occupy 70% of Mali's labour force and provide 36% of the GDP. Cotton, gold, and livestock made up 80%-90% of total export earnings in Mali in 2003. Small-scale traditional farming dominates the agricultural sector, with subsistence farming - of cereals, primarily sorghum, millet, and maize - on about 90% of the 1.4 million hectares (3.4 million acres) under cultivation.

The high cost of petroleum products, the fall in the world market price for cotton and gold, and corresponding loss of customs revenues put pressure on the economy and led the government to be very restrictive on cash disbursements in recent years. In addition, the 2002-03 closure of the main import/export route to the port of Abidjan increased the pressure on the fragile Malian economy. Nonetheless, a doubling of cotton production and double-digit increases in cereal and gold production boosted real GDP growth from 3.5% in 2001 to nearly 7.4% in 2003.

Economy

GDP (2003): \$4.79bn.

Average annual growth rate (2003-04): 5.4%

Per capita income (2003): \$250

Annual skilled worker's salary: \$1,560

Average inflation rate (2003): -1.3%

Workforce (4 million) – agriculture: 70%; services:15%; industry & commerce:15%.

Agriculture, livestock, and fishery (36% of GDP) – *products*: millet, sorghum, corn, rice, livestock, sugar, cotton, groundnuts (peanuts), and tobacco.

Industry (22% of GDP) - *types*: food processing, textiles, cigarettes, fish processing, metalworking, light manufacturing, plastics, and beverage bottling.

Natural resources: gold, phosphate, kaolin, salt, and limestone currently mined; deposits of bauxite, iron ore, manganese, lithium, and uranium are known or suspected.

Trade (2003)

Exports - \$1.06bn: gold, cotton and cotton products, animals, fish, tannery products, groundnuts, and diamonds.

Major markets: France, Switzerland, Italy, Thailand, Cote d'Ivoire, and Algeria.

Imports - \$951m: food, machinery and spare parts, vehicles, petroleum products, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, textiles. *Major suppliers*: France, Cote d'Ivoire, Belgium, Luxembourg, US, Germany, and Japan.

Republic of Mali

Area: 1.24 million square kilometres

Population: 10.5 million (estimated 2002)

Capital: Bamako

Head of State: President Amadou Toumani Touré (inaugurated June 2002)

Currency: CFA Franc

Languages: French (official), Bambara (main dialect spoken by 80% of population)

Religion: 90% Muslim, 6% indigenous, 4% Christian

Primary school attendance: 64.3%

Literacy: 31%

Infant mortality rate: 121 per 1,000

Life expectancy: 47 years.

⁵ US State Department, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2828.htm>