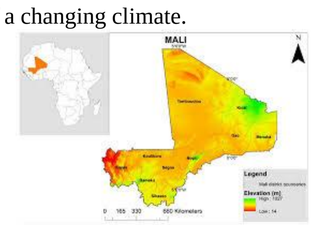
Timisoara, 25-26 May

IMPACT OF IRRIGATION IN MALI

Authors: A. COUMARE, R. PAȘCALĂU , L. ȘMULEAC, S. M. STANCIU , C. SĂLĂȘAN, L. SOUMANO, M. BAKHLI
University of Life Sciences “King Mihai I” from Timișoara
IPR/IFRA de Katibougou, Mali
University of Ain Temouchent, Algeria

Abstract: Mali, a landlocked country in West Africa, faces significant irrigation issues due to its reliance on agriculture and limited water resources. Here are some of the key issues:

Limited water resources: Mali's water resources are limited, with the majority of the country's water sources located in the southern part of the country. This has led to increased competition for water resources, particularly in the drier northern regions.
Poor irrigation infrastructure: Mali's irrigation infrastructure is underdeveloped and often poorly maintained. Many of the country's irrigation systems were constructed in the 1970s and 1980s and are now outdated and in need of repair.
Inadequate funding: The Malian government has limited financial resources to invest in irrigation infrastructure and maintenance, which has led to a lack of investment in the sector.
Climate change: Mali is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including droughts and floods, which can significantly impact the country's agriculture sector and irrigation infrastructure.
Lack of education and training: Many farmers in Mali lack the knowledge and skills to effectively manage irrigation systems, which can result in inefficient use of water resources and reduced crop yields.
Addressing these issues will require significant investment in irrigation infrastructure, increased education and training for farmers, and better management of water resources. It will also require a focus on climate change adaptation strategies to ensure that irrigation systems are resilient to the impacts of a changing climate.



• Introduction

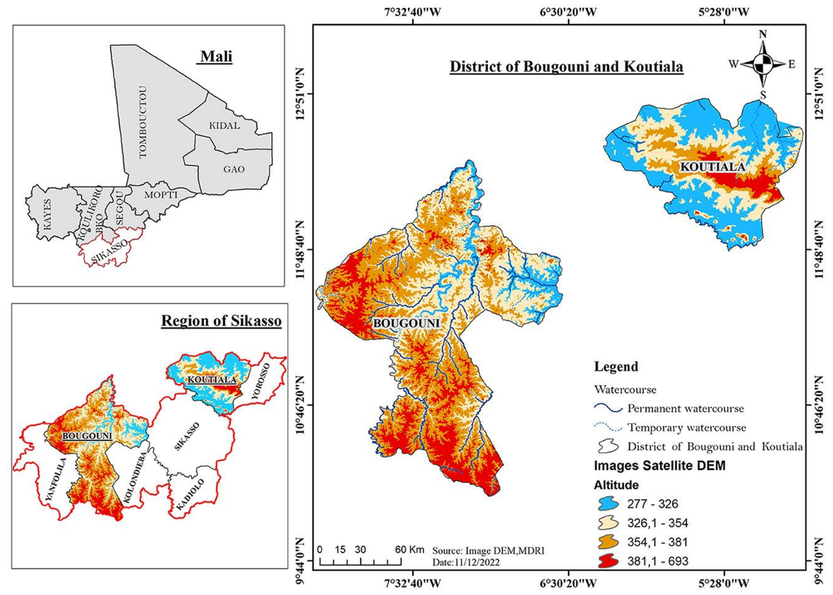
- Dependence on rainfed agriculture: Agriculture is the backbone of Mali's economy, with over 80% of the population depending on farming for their livelihoods. However, the majority of farming in Mali is rainfed, which makes it highly vulnerable to climatic variability and increases the risk of crop failure. Improving irrigation infrastructure could help reduce dependence on rainfed agriculture and increase food security.
- Conflicts over water resources: As water resources become scarcer, conflicts over access to water have become increasingly common in Mali. These conflicts can be between different user groups, such as farmers and herders, or between different regions. The lack of clear regulations and management systems exacerbates these conflicts.
- Low agricultural productivity: Despite the significant role of agriculture in the economy, agricultural productivity in Mali remains low. This is partly due to a lack of access to irrigation, which can result in low crop yields and reduced income for farmers.
- Poor water quality: The quality of water used for irrigation in Mali can be poor, with high levels of salinity and other contaminants. This can negatively impact crop growth and yield, as well as soil quality.
- Gender disparities: Women are often responsible for managing irrigation systems in Mali, but they may face cultural barriers to accessing training and resources that could improve their management skills. Addressing gender disparities in access to resources and education could help improve irrigation management and increase crop yields.

• Material and methods

- Protected Areas and Conservation Planning: Establishing protected areas is a fundamental strategy for conserving biodiversity. This involves designating specific regions While there are some environmental concerns associated with irrigation, overall, it has helped to increase agricultural productivity, improve food security, and increase incomes for farmers.
- Increased agricultural productivity: Irrigation has enabled farmers in Mali to grow crops even in areas where rainfall is unreliable or insufficient. This has helped to increase crop yields and improve agricultural productivity. In the Office du Niger scheme, for example, rice yields increased from an average of 1.5 tons per hectare before irrigation to around 5 tons per hectare after irrigation.
- Diversification of crops: Irrigation has enabled farmers to grow a wider range of crops, which has helped to improve food security and increase incomes. For example, in the Office du Niger scheme, farmers have been able to grow rice, sugar cane, and vegetables, which has diversified their income sources.
- Increased employment: Irrigation has created jobs in the agriculture sector, which employs over 80% of the labor force in Mali. In the Office du Niger scheme, for example, the number of people employed in agriculture increased from around 4,000 before irrigation to around 60,000 after irrigation.
- Improved access to markets: Irrigation has enabled farmers to produce crops throughout the year, which has increased the availability of crops in the market and reduced the need for imports. This has helped to improve food security and reduce the country's reliance on imported food.
- Environmental concerns: As I mentioned earlier, irrigation has also contributed to soil salinization and waterlogging in some areas, which can damage the environment and reduce crop yields. In addition, irrigation can also lead to the depletion of groundwater resources, which can have long-term impacts on the environment and agriculture.

• Results and discussions

- To address these issues, there is a need for increased investment in irrigation infrastructure, including the development of new systems and the rehabilitation of existing ones. There is also a need for improved management of water resources, including the implementation of clear regulations and monitoring systems. Education and training programs could help farmers improve their irrigation management skills, and efforts to address gender disparities could help improve the sustainability and productivity of irrigation systems.
- Irrigation has had a significant impact on agriculture and the economy of Mali. Mali is a landlocked country in West Africa, and agriculture is the backbone of its economy, employing over 80% of the labor force and contributing around 40% of the country's GDP.
- Irrigation has enabled farmers in Mali to grow crops even in areas where rainfall is unreliable or insufficient. Irrigated agriculture has also increased crop yields and helped farmers to diversify their crops, which has improved food security and increased incomes. In addition, irrigation has enabled farmers to produce crops throughout the year, increasing the overall productivity of the agriculture sector.
- There are several irrigation schemes in Mali, including the Office du Niger, which is the largest and most important irrigation scheme in the country. The Office du Niger covers around 100,000 hectares and produces rice, sugar, and vegetables.
- The impact of irrigation on the environment in Mali has been mixed. On the one hand, irrigation has helped to increase agricultural productivity and food security, which has reduced pressure on natural resources. On the other hand, irrigation has also contributed to soil salinization and waterlogging in some areas, which can damage the environment and reduce crop yields.



• Conclusions

- Overall, these regions are important for rice production in Mali and play a critical role in supporting the food security and livelihoods of millions of people in the country.
- The cost of irrigation in Mali can vary depending on a number of factors such as the type of irrigation system, the size of the land to be irrigated, and the availability of water resources.
- In general, there are two types of irrigation systems commonly used in Mali: gravity-fed and pump-fed systems. Gravity-fed systems rely on the natural slope of the land to distribute water to crops, while pump-fed systems require pumps to lift water from a source such as a river or groundwater well.
- The cost of irrigation in Mali will depend on the type of system used. For example, a gravity-fed system may have lower initial costs as it does not require a pump. However, pump-fed systems can be more reliable and efficient, and may be a better option for areas with limited water resources or where water needs to be distributed over longer distances.