



SUCCESS STORY

Women to Women: Organic cotton growers in Burkina Faso partner with *Victoria's Secret*

Burkinabè producers organizations signed a landmark deal to provide 600 MT of organic seed cotton to U.S.-based *Victoria's Secret*.



UNPCB President François Traoré, picking organic cotton with women producers in Tiéfora using the WACIP cotton bags.



Tiéfora women showing off their organic cotton and bags.

Photo: WACIP

In July 2007, the National Union of Burkinabe Cotton Producers (UNPCB) signed an agreement with Limited Brands on behalf of *Victoria's Secret* to purchase 600 MT of organic "fair trade" cotton, the bulk of Burkina Faso's organic cotton crop. Under the contract, UNPCB had to assure proper handling so the cotton could be certified as organic. To support this innovative deal, WACIP contributed funds to help UNPCB purchase locally-fabricated cotton sacks and wrapping materials as well as farmer trainings for 2886 producers in 2007/2008 and again 4000 in 2008/2009.

"We realized how much we were losing before the WACIP bags, in both quality and revenues," said Mrs. Korotoumou Sory, President of the Women Producer Organization of Tiéfora. "WACIP's assistance was a significant break for us as it greatly increased our revenues and taught us the importance of properly transporting and stocking cotton to maintain the quality. We are not only able to feed our families with the money generated from this activity, but we were also able to open a savings account for other income-generating activities," added Mrs. Sory.

"This assistance permitted me to buy school materials for my four children; my husband and other cotton growers who saw our organic cotton are also planning on cultivating organic cotton next year," attested Mrs. Mariam Sayon, member of the Women Producer Organization of Tiéfora.

"I'm proud of the Tiéfora women because their cotton received the fair trade certification with 30% of sales revenues reinvested into programs to help their communities," said Mr. Martin Konaté, Extension Agent in Tiéfora. This activity has become the source of income for nearly three thousand people, nearly a thousand of whom are women!"

Working with WACIP, UNPCB is using this opportunity to improve livelihoods for all organic cotton producers in Burkina Faso. Revenues from the *Victoria's Secret* deal allowed UNPCB to pay each farmer 17 FCFA additional per kilogram, as well as contribute 34 FCFA per kilogram to support local projects in each participating village. Overall, UNPCB sold 600 MT of seed cotton worth \$1.2 million to Limited Brands in 2007 and another 600 MT worth \$732,000 in 2008 .

The cotton from the first harvest was already being marketed by *Victoria's Secret* as a new line of organic cotton undergarments in time for Valentine's Day 2009 at www.victoriasssecret.com.