



**SIBWA**  
Seeing Is Believing  
Very High Resolution for Smallholders

**VHRI<sub>ex</sub><sup>2</sup> :**  
**Mindsets & Skillsets to entrust smallholders with Very High Resolution Imagery – A manifesto against top-down approaches**  
Bamako – August 5, 2009

**REMEMBER ROME?**

They conquered Greece (with their warfare), and then the Greeks conquered the Romans (with their culture).

Meaning, successful confrontation of know-how and knowledge is always a two-way street.



You trade technology for expertise. Insights for forethoughts. MOTIVES FOR CLUES.

For modern science, in its urge to prove itself, often fails to recognize highly significant clues in local knowledge – and in doing so fails to become relevant – earlier. See, look at the Bamanankan noun “*samiya*” (rainy season, or *hivernage*, in French). Etymologically derived from “*samiye*”, contraction of the verb “*ka sami*” (to have the intuition) and the adverb “*nye*” (ahead, before), it crystallizes in a single word a remarkably diverse, often implicit, yet homogeneous knowledge about the need to plant crops early to minimize climatic risk (a heresy to the modern agro-climatologist)<sup>1</sup>. Had we seriously reflected on this early on, and on another key clue – the persistence of photoperiod sensitivity in crops over immemorial cycles of natural and farmer-assisted selection, we would have gained a fantastic headstart in devising the adapted – and adoptable – crops of the future. For we would have soon recognized that, in the most continental region of the Tropics, reliable, actionable prediction of rains onset for smallholders will be an unreachable target for still many, many years to come.

This paradigm shift in knowledge management applies likewise for a successful transfer of very high resolution imagery to smallholders. SIBWA’s VHRI<sub>ex</sub>2 planning meeting, held July 28-30 packed 3 days of group learning for project staff with that goal in mind. Of course, the usual techy / geeky culprits were present: PDAs, DDFs and other blue teeth data transfers (ask our Trimble friends for acronyms!) Practical questions were raised (and solved) like... “how do you recharge a portable computer when you are 100+km from the nearest grid?” Skillsets were developed for ROLLout and OnFarm project phases, including: capacity to



explain VRHI and to trigger interest and questions from smallholder groups, understanding of site characteristics, cropping systems, agricultural potential, production constraints, and potential productivity enhancement technologies, farmer interaction and reporting protocols, etc.

But more importantly, we aligned our mindsets on the participatory nature of VHR information exchange and creation – using the LISTEN acronym (above) as a mantra. For now, VHRI may be more for “discussion support”<sup>2</sup> than for “decision support”. ICRISAT, a leader in participatory breeding, selection, and modeling, knows that there is no adoption without adaptation, and there is no adoption without demand. SIBWA seeks to trigger that demand. To show the potential. Because in the end, they know best.

**BECAUSE THEY DECIDE. BECAUSE THEY REALIZE.**

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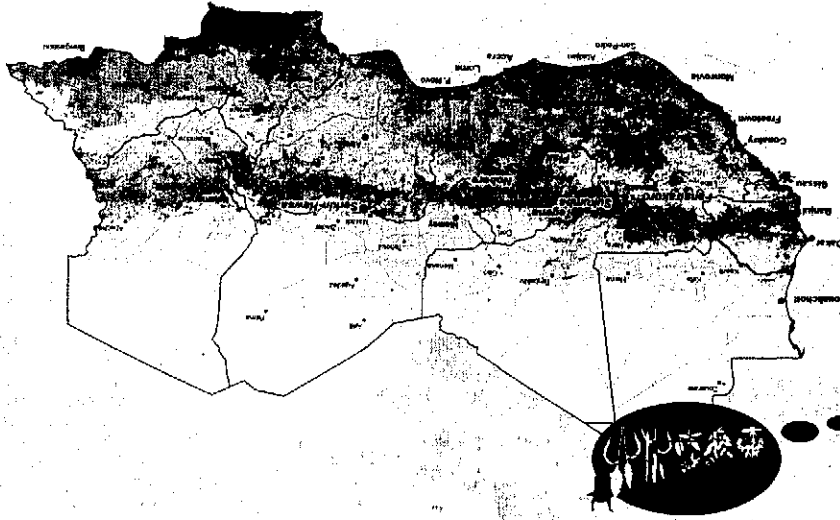


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What you see is what you believe

June 5, 2009



About ICRISAT  
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The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) is a non-profit, non-political organization that does innovative agricultural research and capacity building for sustainable development with a wide array of partners across the globe. ICRISAT's mission is to help empower 644 million poor people to overcome hunger, poverty and a degraded environment in the dry tropics through better agriculture. ICRISAT belongs to the Alliance of Centers of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

### SotubaGIS

A geospatial joint-venture initiated by ICRISAT and IER, SotubaGIS is based on *Decisive. Spatial. Analysis.* In Bamako, the fastest growing metro area of Africa. Hosted by national partner IER on the campus of the Sotuba Regional Agronomic Research Center, it flips upside down traditional partnerships to incubate collaborative modes of tomorrow: multi-stakeholder, decentralized, grass-root, trans-disciplinary and focused on regional integration.



### AGCommons

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**Mission:** Improve the incomes and lives of small farmers in sub-Saharan Africa through location-specific information.

AGCommons (Agricultural Geospatial Commons) is an Africa-based service bureau that provides geospatial information technology services to extend the reach and impact of existing agricultural initiatives, and improve the productivity and incomes of smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa. AGCommons extends geospatial information to these smallholders, and helps them communicate their rich knowledge on various aspects of farming, along with location specific data, back to the groups and organizations working on their behalf.

The services are provided through a "commons" approach, to create the greatest possible good for the largest number of people and include data development and acquisition, visualization and cartography, and sophisticated spatial modeling specific to the agriculture development sector. AGCommons is establishing working relationships with existing service providers and work within the community to build capacities that currently are in short supply locally. AGCommons promotes the use of geospatial information technologies for agricultural development, and identifies and seeks funding for high-win initiatives.

AGCommons was launched by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as part of their Geospatial Technology Program. It is led by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) in partnership with Spatial Development International.



Seeing is Believing West Africa  
Very High Resolution for Smallholders

VHRI: build site-specific VHR information containers and proto-maps. VHR: build a human interface for VHR information extraction and exchange. ROLL: roll out VHR to farmer fields. FARM: populate VHR through in-situ interactions (incubate on-farm). SILCO: explore VHR support functions (incubate in-silico). FEED: Collate information from incubators, forward updated maps to sites and collect feedback.

