

# ORGANIC CERTIFICATION TAKES ROOT

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“We used to have poor soils and problems with the growth of our crops. Today, we see that organic farming gives better results.”

“Thanks to the money I earn from producing organic vegetables, this helps with the costs of schooling my children. I also feed my family with healthy food, and don’t buy any vegetables at the market anymore,” said Clarisse Ilboudo, a farmer in the Koubri women’s organic producers group, Kadiogo province, Burkina Faso. The Koubri women’s group is supported through ‘Bio SPG’, a national organic agriculture label based on a participatory guarantee system approach, supported by the CDAIS project as one its innovation partnerships.

The Burkina Faso Bio SPG (Système Participatif de Garantie – Participatory Guarantee System) label is one of the first national organic labels in West Africa. This approach to organic production and certification is an innovative system supported by the CDAIS project. The main stakeholder in this value chain is the National Council for Biological Agriculture (CNABio), which oversees organic certification using the ‘SPG’ methodology.



*Clémence Samba, Facilitator for the SPG innovation partnership, supports Ima Abdila and Clarisse Ilboudo through regular visits in commercialising their products.*

## The participatory guarantee system approach

The participatory guarantee system approach is an innovative process for organic labelling that includes many stakeholders in the value chain. This broad base ensures that there is better ‘ownership’ and thus a greater respect for the standards, characterised by participatory and multi-stakeholder processes. Certification is coordinated by different structures at three levels.

- Local control group (GLC, Groupe Local de Contrôle) – a small group of producers, processors and consumers jointly check compliance directly with other producers and processors.
- Operator control office (BuCO, Bureau de Contrôle de l’Opérateur) – a member of the National Council for Biological Agriculture (CNABio) organises producers among different local control groups.
- CNABio Central Committee (CCC, Comité Central du CNABio) – a structure of the CNABio executive office takes decisions independently, regarding the certification process.

## BioSPG – more than just certification

When a farmer decides to adopt certification, all groups are involved, with control of practices in the field made by the GLC, and the final decision for certification given by the CCC. Because so much farming in Burkina Faso is characterised by excessive and unregulated use of agrochemicals, organic agriculture is already an innovation in itself. But the SPG process goes beyond certification by engaging local peer groups in the whole process.

## Accompanying producers on the road to certification

Clémence Samba is employed by CNABio and became a facilitator with the CDAIS project. She has supported the certification process of the Watimona association (literally “come, it is all good” in the local Mooré language). And her involvement also helped with the establishment of an active women’s group. Sitting under a mango tree, Ima Abdila, Watimona Coordinator for organic production, told the story of how they got involved in the CNABio organic-certification process, up to when they received full certification in October 2017: “Our president had heard about CNABio and certification, and she told us about it. At the beginning,



*Ima Abdila shows how organic practices are being used, such as composting and growing different crops and varieties together.*

we were not really sure because we could not see the real interest. Afterwards though, we realised that it would not change our ways of working, but it would strengthen them, and help us to be better able to sell our produce.”

## Challenges to organic production and certification

Many producers do not engage in organic certification because of strong competition from conventional producers, and they fear not being able to find avenues to sell their produce. In response, CNABio accompanies and reassures new members by confirming the opportunities

## Increasing visibility

A CDAIS workshop was held on 9 October 2017 at the Ministry for Agriculture, Ougadougou; the ministry oversees the Bio SPG certificate and guarantees the organic integrity of products from certified farms. On that day, 16 organisations (including Watimona) received their certificates. The workshop, entirely financed by the CDAIS project, aimed to give wider visibility of certified organic products to consumers. The limited involvement of national and local authorities so far has slowed the development of organic production, so this was communicated to stimulate government support. This activity was also part of the capacity strengthening within the partnership, to add to the ability of being better able to influence strategic and political process. A total of 90 people attended, representing political and traditional authorities, technical services, non-governmental organisations, research institutes, consumers and those involved in CNABio. The event benefited from wide media coverage – online and audiovisual and broadcast on the national TV news. A representative of the Burkina Faso Government, His Excellency Le Larlé Naba Tigré, gave the audience a powerful testimony: “Food is a weapon. It is the deadliest weapon ever. That is why I invite the various stakeholders in agriculture and the media to work together for the better promotion of organic agriculture of which the SPG is one of the keys.”



*His Excellency Le Larlé Naba Tigré presents his praise for the work.*



## 08 ORGANIC CERTIFICATION TAKES ROOT



Clarisse Iboulo

for selling at higher prices, and by strengthening links between producers and consumers. Clémence Samba highlighted the public webpage of the CNABio website that gathers together all the markets for organic products: “We have a lot of consumers who ask where they can buy organic fruit and vegetables. Listing all the producers and giving them more visibility is one of our missions. In this way, consumers can also come and buy directly from certified organic farms.”

“Commercialisation is a challenge. This is why the CDAIS project supports CNABio. We need to strengthen our capacities to structure our partner’s network and give more visibility to organic agriculture.”

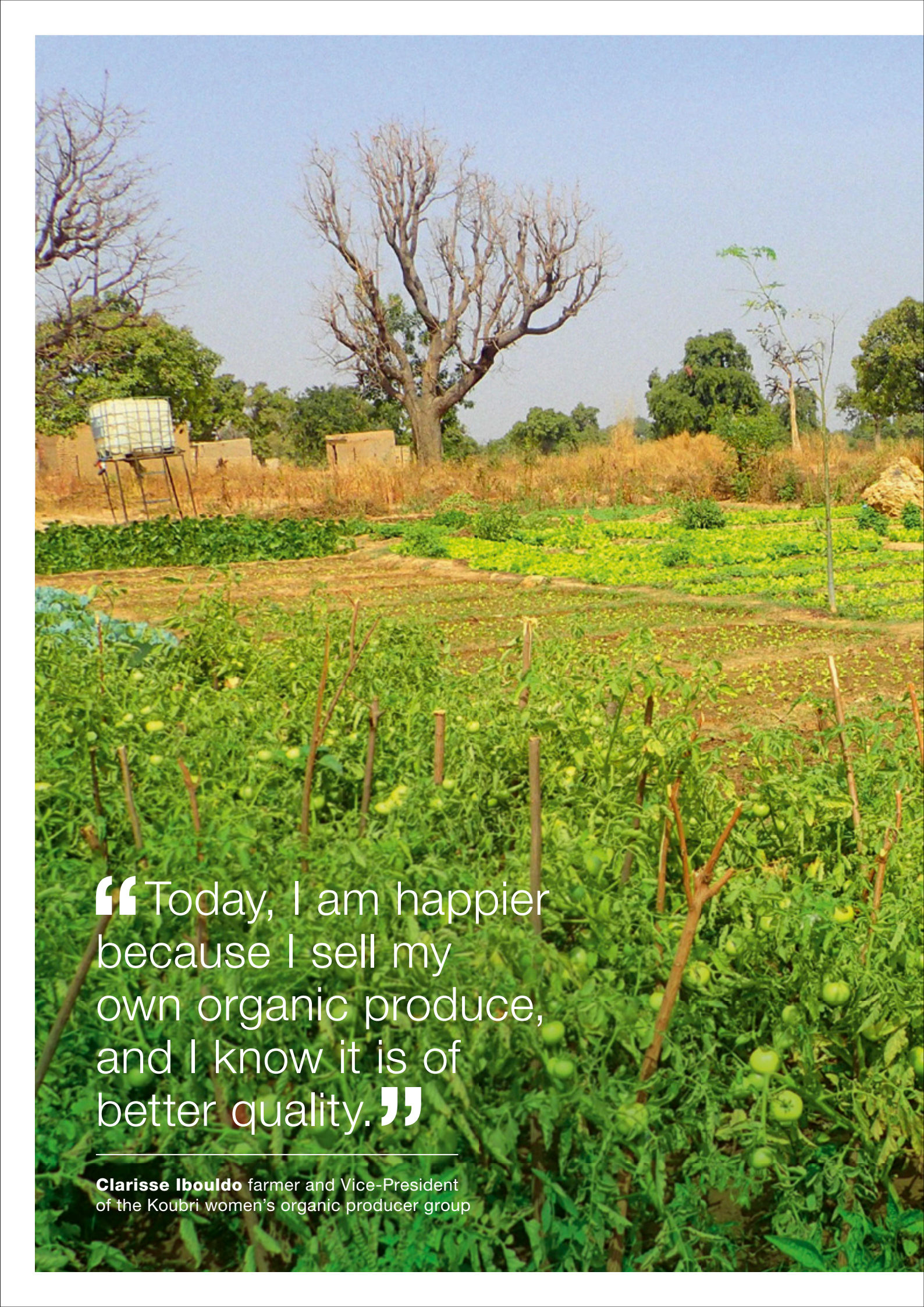
**Clémence Samba** CDAIS Facilitator for the SPG innovation partnership

### Supporting women’s groups

Clarisse Iboulo is an organic farmer, and also vice-president of the Koubri women’s organic producer group. Before becoming an organic farmer, Iboulo used to sell her conventional vegetables at the market. “My organic vegetables are a bit smaller so it is hard for me because for the same price, consumers want more vegetables,” she said. “But my vegetables are healthier!” Thanks to the extra income she now earns, Iboulo can better support household expenditure and, in particular, the costs for her children’s schooling. She also feeds her own family with what she produces.

Around 20 women farm in this area, but only half of their land is cultivated because of a lack of water. Watimona wants to install a larger water pump and invest in a more advanced irrigation system including the construction of two new storage tanks. But even before this, other solutions are being tested and implemented such as the use of buried earthenware jars. More than financial and technical support, Watimona is also a customer, as the association itself buys around 30% of the group’s production to supply the local school canteen, where some of the producers’ children are studying!





“Today, I am happier because I sell my own organic produce, and I know it is of better quality.”

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**Clarisse Iboulido** farmer and Vice-President  
of the Koubri women's organic producer group





*Clarisse Ibouldo on her farm,  
and proud of her harvest*





“We still have a lot of work to do on raising awareness and increasing knowledge amongst consumers and authorities that are not seizing the opportunity of organic agriculture. That is why we will soon launch a radio programme to target a new public,” explained Samba. The advantages of organic food on human health are not well known in Burkina Faso, and more support from research and the effective diffusion of results are needed to help scale up the SPG and the benefits of organic agriculture.

During a capacity needs assessment workshop for this innovation partnership at the beginning of the project, CDAIS helped stakeholders to voice their issues, needs and concerns. Lack of collaboration and among stakeholders was highlighted and, as an answer, stakeholders spontaneously began to provide answers without waiting for further CDAIS interventions. As a result, a monthly meeting of organic producers was established in Ouagadougou and this gave birth to the idea of organising a marketplace of organic produce in which the women from Koubri will participate.

## And tomorrow?

Farmers spoke with one voice: “We hope we will be able to produce much more on our farms, because we see that the technical practices are effective. Before, we used to have poor soils and problems with the growth of our crops. Today, we see that organic farming gives better results, so we want to keep producing and increase our productive capacity.”

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Bio SPG is one of five innovation partnerships in Burkina Faso being developed as part of the CDAIS project. For more information, visit <https://cdais.net/home/pilots-countries/burkina-faso>. CDAIS is implemented in Burkina Faso by Agrinatura (represented by CIRAD), the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation (Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur, de la Recherche Scientifique et de l'Innovation, MESRI), and the local office of FAO.

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