

# **Eating Bitter to Taste Sweet: An Ethnographic Sketch of a Chinese Agriculture Project in Senegal**



Lila Buckley

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*'China envisions its engagement with Africa in the very long term. To nourish its spectacular growth, it will need African land in the future. Thanks to the [Chinese agronomist team] mission, they will know where to cultivate.'*

—Horeau & Denis 2009

**How do Chinese agronomists interpret Senegal's agriculture and how do they think it needs to be managed for optimal production?**

**How does this differ from and interact with Senegalese interpretations and management processes?**

**How does the transfer of Chinese best practices in agriculture function on the ground in Africa?**











# The Script

- Two-year rotating Chinese teams
- Senegal provides personnel, land, water and facilities
- China provides personnel, agriculture equipment, and supplies (700,000 USD per year).



- No agronomists involved in writing
- Short and general
- Structural and financial inequalities
- Technical focus – no language or cultural training

*'We are able to see right away what the farmer needs, and we can adapt our training based on those needs. They are also more willing to work with us in their fields. ... In this way, we can help them correct problems, and they can ask questions about the techniques. This is much more effective than the trainings at the Centre.'*

— Chinese agronomist





*'Before, we used to water and water the crops, and it would all just disappear. Their techniques keep the water in the soil so it can keep feeding the plant for a long time afterward. ... With this method we can produce more using less. The Chinese are good—very, very good. They give us the means to work'*

— Senegalese farmer



*'Before the reporters came here, the Chinese ambassador told us that they would be critical of our work, that they were searching for this colonial angle. But he said, "Let them come anyway, and don't worry about it. They will say what they want." The French see Senegal as their territory. They don't like the idea of Chinese working "their" land. There's nothing we can do to change that, so we just carry on.'*

# Thank You



## 联系我们

国际环境与发展研究所 (IIED)

网址 : [www.iied.org](http://www.iied.org)

地址 : 英国 , 伦敦 , 恩斯利大街 3 号

邮政编码 : WC1H 0DD

电话 : +44 (0)20 7388 2117

传真 : +44 (0)20 7388 2826

电子邮件 : [info@iied.org](mailto:info@iied.org)