

**Business**

# Broadcaster brings agricultural news to rural Africa

Fatogoma Sanogo of Mali has been honoured with the George Atkins Communications Award

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Ottawa – Handed out to rural broadcasters operating in developing countries for the past 20 years, the 2011 George Atkins Communications Award has been won by Mali's Fatogoma Sanogo.

Although Sanogo wasn't able to be there in person, his achievement was recognized in Ottawa Nov. 12 before a large crowd attending a forum put on by World University Service of Canada.

The winner sent a message indicating he was very happy to receive the prize which "gives me more strength to work with farmers."

Sponsored by Ottawa-based Farm Radio International, the award is named for the late George Atkins of the *CBC*, once recognized as the dean of Canadian farm broadcasters.

A former farmer and a founding director of FRI, Atkins died two years ago in his 90s.

CLOSER TO home, Kemptville's Ryan Hreljac received

the Lewis Perinbam Award during the WUSC forum, a prize which Atkins, in 2004, was instrumental in establishing. This award recognizes grassroots achievements in improving life in developing countries and in expanding awareness among the Canadian public.

Going back more than 12 years when young Hreljac, now 20, decided he had to do something to help get clean water to those without, Ryan's Well Foundation has funded 700 wells and 800 latrines for more than 735,000 impoverished people.

Using the Atkins template, FRI researches and writes radio scripts which are translated into 70 languages, providing the basis of some 12,000 broadcasts a year worldwide. The Atkins award recognizes rural radio broadcasters for outstanding contributions to food security and poverty reduction in low-income countries.

The latest recipient got into radio from the ground up after he went to Fana, Mali, in 1995 to visit his grandmother. His uncle worked for Radio Fanaka and young Fatogoma decided to learn everything he could

about the business.

He began accompanying radio hosts and carrying their bags when they visited outlying villages, and he stuck close to technicians in the studio. Eventually, he was hired as a technician's assistant and his career took off.

Today, Fatogoma is program director at Radio Fanaka. Through farmer interviews and research, he produces an information program about weekly market prices called *Aw Ni Sugu* or "thank you for being at the market."

Fatogoma began producing *Aw Ni Sugu* as part of FRI's African Farm Radio Research Initiative. The show has helped farmers connect to discuss market challenges and solutions, informing them of ways to earn more money.

During busy market day in Fana, Fatogoma uses a digital audio recorder to capture all the sounds from people bargaining to chickens clucking. The recordings are blended with interviews and prices to produce the program.

After each broadcast, he takes phone and text questions from listeners. He's proud of the fact his program has trans-

mitted valuable information such as the need to vaccinate chickens for sale at the market.

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