

6 June 2008

RCA Geographer Shilpi Saxena takes a good look at vegetables in Senegal and finds a market for organic produce

## Tomatoes in Thiès



During a recent trip to train enumerators in Senegal I had the opportunity to visit some vegetable markets in the capital, Dakar, and organic vegetable farmers in Thiès (about 70 km northeast of Dakar). The local project partner from Institut Sénégalais de Recherches Agricoles - Center for Horticultural Development and I met with an NGO, Agrecol, which has helped small-scale farmers use organic agriculture practices and find markets for their produce.

One tomato farmer sought the help of Agrecol after he saw how his neighbor's income increased from growing organic vegetables. Agrecol helped him install a drip irrigation kit for his 500-square-meter plot, where he now produces 2.8 tonnes of tomatoes every 3 months.

Agrecol targets the European export market, for which its organic growers must be certified. The Agrecol farmers' cooperative is aware that export markets can be volatile, so Agrecol also aims to build local markets for organic producers. It has opened several organic

shops in Thiès as well as "Le Tikarra," an organic restaurant. A weekly organic farmers' market is held opposite the NGO office every Saturday. One organic farmer sells at the conventional market in Thiès. The Agrecol organic farmers also supply two supermarkets and a hotel.

The NGO bases its local marketing approach on the Japanese "Teikei" – a direct farmer-consumer sale based on trust. This system does not require certification and thus reduces the number of actors in the supply chain. Agrecol's organic vegetables are promoted via radio, a journal, and a short film.

In Dakar, I visited informal vegetable markets located downtown; Marché Kermel, a market catering to upper-class

consumers; and the Casino supermarket, which has several outlets in Dakar. The outlet we visited sells local as well as imported fresh vegetables such as cherry tomatoes and lettuce. It also carries organic vegetables imported from France in jars, which are certified by Agriculture Biologique or EcoCert.



Photo (top): Informal market, Dakar  
Left: Enjoying organic tomato, near Thiès  
Right: A variety of local and imported salads at Casino supermarket, Dakar

With better access to improved seed, African farmers can produce quality vegetables that will be sought after in local, super and export markets, organic or conventional. AVRDC breeders in the vBSS program are working to create and spread new varieties to give farmers a good start.

– Shilpi Saxena, Regional Center for Africa

## The LIBRARY

### New publications

#### *...from the Cucurbits SDI Bulletin*

Ananieva, K., Ananiev, E.D., Mishev, K., Georgieva, K., Tzvetkova, N., van Staden, J. (2008). Changes in photosynthetic capacity and polypeptide patterns during natural senescence and rejuvenation of *Cucurbita pepo* L. (zucchini) cotyledons. *PLANT GROWTH REGULATION*. v.54 (1):23-29.

Boonkorkeaw, P., Hikosaka, S., Sugiyama, N. (2008). Effect of pollination on cell division, cell enlargement, and endogenous hormones in fruit development in a gynocious cucumber. *SCIENTIA HORTICULTURAE*. v.116(1):1-7.

Chao, C.J., Rong, T.R., Hua, Q.M., Lu, L., Tang, Z.Y., Quan, Z.Z. (2008). Trinorcucurbitane and cucurbitane triterpenoids from the roots of *Momordica charantia*.

*PHYTOCHEMISTRY*. v.69 (4):1043-1048.

Choi, Y.J., Shin, H.D. (2008). First record of downy mildew caused by *Pseudoperonospora cubensis* on bottle gourd in Korea. *PLANT PATHOLOGY*. v.57(2):371.

Fukumoto, F., Fuji, S., Shinoda, K., Izuka, M. (2008). *Cucumber mosaic virus* isolated from *Aconitum* spp. in Japan. *JOURNAL OF GENERAL PLANT PATHOLOGY*. v.74(1):88-90.

Ito, T., Sharma, P., Kittipalorn, K., Ikegami, M. (2008). Complete nucleotide sequence of a new isolate of tomato leaf curl New Delhi virus infecting cucumber, bottle gourd and muskmelon in Thailand. *ARCHIVES OF VIROLOGY*. v.153(3):611-613.

Sakata, Y., Morishita, M., Kitadani, E., Sugiyama, M., Ohara, T.,

Sugiyama, K., Kojima, A. (2008). Development of a powdery mildew resistant cucumber (*Cucumis sativus* L.), 'Kyuri Chukanbohon Nou 5 Go'. *HORTICULTURAL RESEARCH (JAPAN)*. v.7(2):173-179.

#### *Two new journals available ...*

We are pleased to announce two new journals are now available in the Library: *American Entomologist* 2005, published by the Entomological Society of America, and *antenna* 2006, published by the Royal Entomological Society.

Thanks to Dr. Srinivasan Ramasamy for contributing the publications to the Library's collection.

— Fang-chin Chen/Communications

## CORNUCOPIA

### News you can use

Catch up on the latest sports scores in Africa. Find out which DG is top dog in the UK. Meet your new colleagues in offices around the world.

How? Visit the AVRDC Intranet and scroll through the newsboard at the top of the home page.

Why have a newsboard when we already have a newsletter? The Center's newsletter is increasingly read by donors, researchers and others outside the organization, and it no longer seemed appropriate to include information

relevant only to campus staff, or to publish items specifically meant for regional offices.

However, we still want to have a place where people can post items of interest to their office or to others in the Center. That's what the Intranet newsboard is for: social events, sports scores, celebrations, introductions, sales, and other internal Center news.

To put an item on the board, email it to Oliver Hanschke or Maureen Mecozzi, and we will post it for you. When all the features of the

newsboard are working, you will be able to post your own items directly to the board.

Get the news while it's fresh: Go to [www.avrdc.org/intranet/index.html](http://www.avrdc.org/intranet/index.html)

Send your news items to:

[oliver.hanschke@worldveg.org](mailto:oliver.hanschke@worldveg.org)  
[maureen.mecozzi@worldveg.org](mailto:maureen.mecozzi@worldveg.org)

— Communications

## PEOPLE

## Welcome



**Dr. Dennis Knierim** has been appointed as Post-Doctoral Fellow in Virology through April 2009.

His fellowship was awarded by the National Science Council, Republic of China. Dennis received his PhD in 2007 from Leibniz University, Hannover, Germany, Institute of Plant Diseases and Plant Protection. He worked on molecular characterization of *Capsicum chlorosis* virus, Tomato yellow leaf curl Thailand virus, Tobacco leaf curl Thailand virus and RNA-mediated virus resistance in *Nicotiana benthamiana*. Dennis was with the National Chung Hsing University of Taiwan before moving to AVRDC.

Under the supervision of Dr. Sylvia Green, Dennis is to develop user-friendly diagnostics (ELISA, PCR, RT-PCR) for major tropical cucurbit viruses, such as luteoviruses, tospoviruses and geminiviruses. Contact Dennis at ext. 351, e-mail:

[dennis.knierim@worldveg.org](mailto:dennis.knierim@worldveg.org)



**Vivian Marie Bernau**, a summer student from the USA sponsored by The World Food

Prize Foundation, will work on

resistance to whiteflies in tomato during her two-month stay at the Center, which began on May 31. She will learn about evaluating tomato lines for insect resistance, study the genetics of resistance, and identify molecular markers under the supervision of Drs. Robert de la Peña, Kadirvel Palchamy and Srinivasan Ramasamy. Contact Vivian at ext. 361, e-mail:

[vmbernau@iastate.edu](mailto:vmbernau@iastate.edu)



**Sylvia Shao-Yu Hsu** 許紹瑜 was appointed as Food and Dormitory Services Manager on June 2. She will be in

charge of the overall management and administration of the Center's cafeteria, dormitory, guest houses and training hostel. Sylvia holds a Bachelor's degree in Commerce from Ryerson University, Ontario, Canada. She previously worked at several notable food and beverage outlets in Taipei including Oriental House, Fresco Restaurant and the Grand Hyatt Hotel. Contact Sylvia at ext. 240, e-mail:

[sylvia.hsu@worldveg.org](mailto:sylvia.hsu@worldveg.org)



**Stanly Yi-lin Lin** 林宜麟 was appointed as Research Assistant (vBSS project) in

the Pepper Unit on June 2. Stanly obtained his B.A. degree in 2001 from Aletheia University. He can be contacted at ext.331, e-mail: [stanly.lin@worldveg.org](mailto:stanly.lin@worldveg.org)

— Human Resources



Tímea Júlia Földi



Marta Balogh

**Tímea Júlia Földi** and **Marta Balogh**, research interns from the Agricultural Biotechnology Center, Hungary, arrived at the Center on 5 June 2008 for two weeks of training. They will study pepper breeding, pathogen resistance and molecular studies under the supervision of Dr. Robert de la Peña. Contact Tímea and Marta through Letty Lin at ext. 301 (office) and ext. 874 for Tímea <[ftj@abc.hu](mailto:ftj@abc.hu)>, 875 for Marta <[bmarta@abc.hu](mailto:bmarta@abc.hu)>.

— Lydia Wu, Communications

## SKETCH



**Name:** Jan Helsen

**Home:** I grew up in Landen, an agricultural community in Belgium located between the Flemish (northern) part of Belgium and the Walloon region in the south. I am a Fleming.

**Position:** Program Manager, Vegetable Breeding and Seed Systems for Poverty Reduction in Africa (vBSS)

**Why you do what you do:** I was told by my mom that the old shoebox in the basement of our house is at the root of all I do. My mom kept in that box letters and photographs sent to her by my father, portraying his life and work defending what was at the time the Belgian Congo. Although I have not

yet set foot in the Congo, those images and letters must have influenced my interest in Africa. So what am I doing? I monitor the establishment and implementation of Regional Breeding Units; manage the process of science to ensure RBU activities lead to improved vegetable breeding and seed systems; establish and monitor public/private partnerships; and ensure the program has effective financial and administrative management.

**Why you do it at AVRDC:** I suppose because AVRDC provided me with the opportunity. I must admit, though, that at the time of my application I had very little insight into what the vBSS would be all about. But I felt it would be rewarding if I could be remembered, if only by few, for having had an impact. The job allows me to work in a “paradise” much more conducive to life than I was used to in the Sahel. Although we all have our daily vibes (call them frustrations), I don’t regret working with the World Vegetable Center.

**Research:** I’m not a scientist per se, but I do want to understand the processes of science and how results contribute to the goal of the vBSS and AVRDC. I’m personally interested in AVRDC’s “soft matrix” management set-up; at one stage in my career with the organization I’d like to assess its effectiveness. For now, my “research” project is to master managing vBSS. In particular, I’m keen on understanding and improving the requisite institutional arrangements.

**What’s next:** The future will tell.

**My most unusual experience in Africa:** I previously worked on the island of Anjouan, part of the Comoros Archipelago in the Indian Ocean. At the time the islands were ruled by French, South African, and Belgian mercenaries. Despite my genuine motive to do well for the island, people often thought I, too, was a soldier of fortune. They would point at me and shout: “*Mercenair, Mercenair!*”

## FOCUS: INDIA

### SRTT Planning Meetings



Participants of the SRTT Planning Meeting

Planning workshops for the Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT)-funded project “Improving vegetable production and consumption for sustainable rural livelihoods in Jharkhand and Punjab, India” were held from 28 April to 3 May in Ludhiana and Ranchi. Both meetings were attended by SRTT representatives and proposed partners from universities, the Indian Council of Agricultural

Research Horticulture and Agroforestry Research Programme, prominent NGOs, and AVRDC staff. Drs. Jaw-fen Wang, R. Srinivasan, and Ray-yu Yang from HQ helped develop the project workplan.

— M.L. Chadha,  
Regional Director, AVRDC-RCSA

## MORE NEWS FROM INDIA

### Learning program



The World Vegetable Center and the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) organized a learning program on “Germplasm

management and utilization of vegetables and legumes” from 26-29 May at AVRDC-RCSA, ICRISAT campus, Patancheru. Twenty-five participants from Afghanistan,

Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and India attended.

### Visit to Pakistan



Dr. M.L. Chadha visited Pakistan from 12-17 May to strengthen regional networking ties. In Lahore, he met the Secretary of Agriculture,

AVRDC and PARB. In Faisalabad, Dr. Chadha discussed the project proposal between AVRDC and the University of Agriculture for the

along with Dr. Mubarik Ali, Chief Executive Officer, Punjab Agriculture Research Board (PARB) and discussed the collaboration between

promotion of safe vegetable production techniques in peri-urban areas. In Islamabad, he met Dr. M.E. Tusneem, Chairman, Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), and other scientists working in vegetable R&D programs, and talked with Dr. Akhlaq Hussain regarding Project Incharge’s Facilitation Units for Participatory Vegetable Seed and Nursery Production program.

— M.L. Chadha,  
Regional Director, AVRDC-RCSA