

9 November 2007

## The Shape of Future Vegetable Marketing



Appearance can be everything – as well as deceptive. By simply changing the shape of a common vegetable and timing its marketing carefully a student in Vietnam has been able to create a new source of income and whole new market for square-shaped watermelons.

Adding to the success of scientists in developed countries like Japan and the United Kingdom. Dinh Tran Nguyen, a senior student of agriculture and applied biotechnology had been researching square melons for several years.

The square fruit was first produced in Japan where they sell for 10,000 yen (about US\$82) a piece. In Viet Nam, people have been prepared to pay VND500,000 (US\$32) for a pair of the melons which are particularly popular during the lead-up to the lunar New Year.

In Vietnamese culture, watermelon is an indispensable offering to ancestors during Tet, the lunar New Year. In Vietnamese ancient philosophy, the square shape represents the earth, and the round shape the sun. Having a pair of round and square melons to offer ancestors is therefore a perfect match.

In 2004, Nguyen was fascinated when he saw a television programme about the sale of square-shaped melons in Japan. Surfing the Internet, he found an on-line forum on square melons – where discussion was rife as to whether they were genetically engineered or not.

His conclusion was that scientists probably placed wooden boxes around the growing fruit, which naturally swell to fill the surrounding shape.

Despite several early failures, but encouraged by a student assistantship and with only \$350, Nguyen bought the material for moulds and asked farmers to co-operate with him in the experiment. Aluminium-framed glass boxes were placed over the melons 43 days after planting, or when the melons were 11 or 12cm in diameter, forcing the fruit to take the shape of the boxes as they grew to full maturity. They followed the melons every day, adjusting their conditions until they got the desired shape. The result was that 14 out of the first 50 melons grown were successfully shaped.

Nguyen's melons sold out at Xuan Khanh Market in Can Tho city, even at the hefty price of VND500,000 a pair. He refused to sell the last pair, even after getting offers of VND650,000, for fear of losing the seeds needed to produce more melons. He is continuing to refine his management and marketing methods, but his success shows that even ordinary crops can be made extraordinary with the right management and marketing.

*Modified from a story in: [vnagency.com.vn](http://vnagency.com.vn), October 2007*

## Selections from the Eggplant SDI Bulletin Produced by the Library

Copies of other SDI bulletins for different crops can be found on the library website

Alpsy, H.C., Seniz, V. (2007). Research on the in-vitro androgenesis and obtaining haploid plants in some eggplant genotypes. *ACTA HORTICULTURAE*. no.729:137-141.

Balliu, A., Sallaku, G., Kuci, S., Cota, E., Kaciu, S. (2007). The effect of major nutrients (NPK) on the growth rate of pepper and eggplant seedlings. *ACTA HORTICULTURAE*. no.729:341-346.

Ishii, H., Yano, K., Date, H., Furuta, A., Sagehashi, Y., Yamaguchi, T., Sugiyama, T., Nishimura, K., Hasama, W. (2007). Molecular characterization and diagnosis of QoI resistance in cucumber and eggplant fungal pathogens. *PHYTOPATHOLOGY*. v.97(11):1458-1466.

Ivey, M.L.L., McSpadden, B.B., Opina, N., Miller, S.A. (2007). Diversity of *Ralstonia solanacearum* infecting eggplant in the Philippines. *PHYTOPATHOLOGY*. v.97 (11):1467-1475.

Krasteva, L., Neshev, G., Vassileva, M. (2007). Some results on evaluation of Bulgarian eggplant (*S. melongena* L.) germplasm collection. *ACTA HORTICULTURAE*. no.729:81-84.

Krishna, V.V., Qaim, M. (2007). Estimating the adoption of *Bt* eggplant in India: who benefits from public-private partnership?. *FOOD POLICY*. v.32 (5/6):523-543.

Lovelli, S., Perniola, M., Ferrara, T., Tommaso, T.D., (2007). Yield response factor to water (Ky) and water use efficiency of *Carthamus tinctorius* L. and *Solanum melongena* L. *AGRICULTURAL WATER MANAGEMENT*. v.92(1/2):73-80.

Prohens, J., Rodriguez-Burruezo, A., Raigon, M.D., Nuez, F. (2007). Total phenolic concentration and browning susceptibility in a collection of different varietal types and hybrids of eggplant: implications for breeding for higher nutritional quality and reduced browning. *AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR HORTICULTURAL SCIENCE, JOURNAL*. v.132 (5):638-646.

Shibuya, T., Nakashima, H., Shimizu-Maruo, K., Kawara, T. (2007). Improvement of graft development in tomato and eggplant grafted cuttings by supplying warmed water to graft union during low-air-temperature storage. *JAPANESE SOCIETY FOR HORTICULTURAL SCIENCE, JOURNAL*. v.76(3):217-223.

Vassileva, M., Neshev, G., Krasteva, L. (2007). Regression models of an eggplant (*Solanum melongena* L.) collection of breeding and economic importance. *ACTA HORTICULTURAE*. no.729:77-80.

Venkatasubramanian, A., Umarani, R. (2007). Evaluation of seed priming methods to improve seed performance of tomato (*Lycopersicon esculentum*), eggplant (*Solanum melongena*) and chilli (*Capsicum annum*). *SEED SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY*. v.35 (2):487-493.

Wu, L., Orikasa, T., Ogawa, Y., Tagawa, A. (2007). Vacuum drying characteristics of eggplants. *JOURNAL OF FOOD ENGINEERING*. v.83(3):422-429.

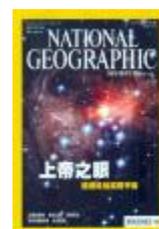
## New Popular Magazines Now Available in the Library

**The Economist:** The new wars of religion – 3rd–9th November 2007

**National Geographic** – November 2007

**Scientific American** (English): Do We Need New Nukes? – November 2007

**Time:** Asia's Happy Artists – 12 November 2007



- Source: Fang-chin Chen/Communications

## 2007 Internal Review and Planning Workshop Next Week

The 2007 Internal Review and Planning Workshop (IRPW 2007) is fast approaching. This year's IRPW 2007 differs from previous ones. For this year we will have three major programs:

### Introductory Session:

- ∇ 12 November 2007, Monday, 0820-1100 h
- ∇ Venue: Auditorium, 3rd Floor Administration Building

### Review and Planning Sessions:

- ∇ 12-14 November 2007, Monday to Wednesday
- ∇ Venue: Conference Room, 3rd Floor Administration Building

### Concurrent programs:

- ∇ 15-16 November 2007, Thursday to Friday
- ∇ Venues: Conference Room, 3rd Floor Administration Building
- Meeting Room I, 2nd Floor Administration Building
- Meeting Room II, 3rd Floor Administration Building

The Introductory Session and Concurrent Programs, except for the Directors' Meeting and the vBSS Project Meeting, are open to all interested persons. The Review and Planning Sessions are open only to invited participants.

Details of the programs are as follows:

**Introductory Session:** This includes talks and presentation by the DG, DDG-R, DDG-AS, the Chair of the External Program and Management Review (EPMR) panel and the Chair of the AVRDC Board of Directors.

**Review and Planning Session:** This includes presentations on the Regional Centers, Theme presentations and planning, selected research programs, projects and topics and the closing session. These sessions are open only to invited participants.

**Concurrent Programs:** This includes Theme meetings, Directors' meeting, vBSS project meeting, and Communications workshop. Please check the program for the specific schedule and venue of each meeting. All research staff are encouraged to attend the Theme Meetings on November 15 and 16.

**Closing Dinner (14 November 2007, Wednesday).** The Closing Dinner will be held in front of the cafeteria building. The research staff, management assistants, campus residents and their families, trainees and invited participants are all invited to join this dinner.

- Source: Dr. L M Engle/Chair, IRPW 2007 Program Committee

## Recommended Web Link of the Week:

### Organic-Europe Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa

“Organic Europe” was set up by Stiftung Ökologie und Landbau, Germany in 2000, with co-funding by the EU-Commission, Agriculture Directorate-General. Since 2002 the site has been maintained by the Swiss Research Institute of Organic Agriculture – Forschungsinstitut für biologischen Landbau (FiBL). Its contents include reports on organic farming in European countries; organic contacts in Europe;

information related to European organic farming and research; current European organic farming statistics and links.

Please visit <http://www.organic-europe.net/>

- Source: Fang-chin Chen/Communications

## Review and Planning Meeting on Vegetable Variety Selection in Central Asia and Caucus, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 16-18 October 2007



Twenty-six participants, scientists representing NARES partners/collaborators from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, the World Vegetable Center, other CGIAR centers and local/regional donors participated in the “Review and Planning Meeting on Vegetable Variety Selection in Central Asia and Caucus (CAC)”, held during 16-18 October 2007. This was organized in Tashkent (Uzbekistan) by the AVRDC/CAC regional office.

The objective of the workshop was to review the progress and performance of AVRDC regional varietal trails conducted by NARES partners in each of the eight countries of the region. Experiences on the conduct of the trials were also shared among the partners and there was discussion of the constraints and action plans for next year. During and after the workshop AVRDC scientists also took the opportunity to discuss potential joint collaboration with CGIAR Centers in the region. Consultations were also held with donors such as ADB, SDC, GTZ, JICA to explore possible partnerships in AVRDC projects planned for the CAC region.

- Source: Dr. Madhusudan Bhattarai/Socio-economics Unit



A low cost solar green house for off-season winter tomato production visited by the workshop participants.

## New Staff – Mr. Ambrose Siau Site Coordinator for the ACIAR-funded Project in Solomon Islands

Mr. Ambrose Siau has been appointed as Site Coordinator for the ACIAR-funded project entitled “Integrated Crop Management Package for Sustainable Smallholder Gardens in Solomon Islands” for a period of one year, effective 3 December 2007.

Ambrose received his Bachelor’s degree in agriculture from the University of Papua New Guinea. He has over seventeen years of professional work experience in agriculture as chief field officer, senior agriculture technical officer, project officer and national consultant. Ambrose will be based at Honiara, Solomon Islands and will report directly to Dr. Manuel C. Palada, the appointed AVRDC Project Leader.

Ambrose will work closely with researchers and development specialists in the disciplines of crop and soil management, socio-economics, extension, plant protection and plant breeding. These include specialists from AVRDC, ACIAR, NSW-DPI, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL), and local NGOs, under the supervision of Manny. His main tasks are to provide coordination and facilitation services for the numerous lines of investigation and activities in the project as outlined in the project proposal, inception

workshop report, and ACIAR project management guidelines. He will cooperate with the project partners in implementing and monitoring activities, involving regular travel to project sites in Makira, Malaita and Guadalcanal in the development and promotion of integrated and improved crop management packages to increase the economic status and potential income generation opportunities of smallholder vegetable gardens in Solomon Islands.

From 3 December 2007, Ambrose may be contacted at:

AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center  
Rooms 3&4, SIDT Building  
P.O. Box 147, Honiara, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands  
Telephone: +677 23409 (temporary)  
Fax: +677 21131 (temporary)  
E-mail: [ambrosesiau@yahoo.com](mailto:ambrosesiau@yahoo.com)

We wish Ambrose every success in his appointment with AVRDC.

- Source: Lilia Tan Habacon/Human Resources Manager

## Welcome



The Center extends a warm welcome to Mr. Wu Chih-ming 吳至明, Machinery Operator, Technical Services Office. Mr. Wu reported for

duty on 5 November 2007. He can be contacted at ext. 525.

- Source: Felisa Wang/HR