

**THE MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION**

**Collaborative Crop Research Program**


**Rebecca Nelson**  
Scientific Director  
**Kelly Bulkeley**  
Administrative Assistant

Cornell University  
303A/303D Plant Science Bldg.  
Ithaca, NY 14853  
<http://mcknight.ccrp.cornell.edu>

Tel: (607) 254-7475, 254-6499  
Fax: (607) 255-4471  
Email: [rjn7@cornell.edu](mailto:rjn7@cornell.edu), [kal44@cornell.edu](mailto:kal44@cornell.edu)

**CCRP Quarterly Newsletter**

**To:** The McKnight Foundation Board and CCRP grantees  
**From:** Office of the CCRP Scientific Director

**April-June 2008**
**CCRP News**
**Program highlights**

- Bill Payne will be joining the CCRP as Liaison Scientist for the West Africa Community of Practice (CoP-WAf) on August 1. Bill is a Plant Physiology at Texas A&M University (TAMU) with many years of experience in the region. As Liason Scientist for the CoP-WAf, Bill will work closely with regional representative Hamado Tapsoba to facilitate the work of the CoP. Welcome to the CCRP, Bill!
- A workshop on experimental design and data analysis was held April 6-12 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, for the CoP-WAf. This event was organized at the request of the CoP group based on a proposal submitted by Bettina Haussmann. The lead resource person was Roger Stern of the Statistical Services Centre at the University of Reading in the UK. Twenty participants from six projects participated in the meeting and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive.
- The second annual CoP-WAf meeting was held April 14-17 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Representatives of the six CCRP projects in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger shared strategies and plans for their projects; explored topics of mutual interest; and enjoyed two special topics and a field day. Louise Sperling led the group in exploring issues related to participatory approaches in crop research. The field trip to the village of Kaya, 100 km north of Ouagadougou, included visits with innovative farmers and to sorghum processing units. The meeting was coordinated by Regional Representative Hamado Tapsoba. Click here to access the meeting page in [English](#).
- A consultation workshop on climate change in the Andes took place April 29-May 1 at CIP in Lima, Peru. A small group of key actors in climate change research in the Andes explored climate-related issues of relevance to existing CCRP projects, allowing the program to identify potential areas for future funding. Dr. Corinne Valdivia led the workshop, which was hosted by Roberto Quiroz of the International Potato Center. Participants included members of the current CCRP Community of Practice in the Andes, members of the



SANREM CRSP in the Andes, and members of the CCRP management team. Click here to access the meeting page in [English](#) || [Español](#).

- A workshop on statistical analysis and experimental design was held May 12-16 at World Neighbors in Quito, Ecuador. This workshop was led by Carlos Barahona, a senior statistician at the University of Reading in England. Each CoP project was invited to send two representatives to this workshop. The scope of the workshop was to discuss statistical tools with an emphasis on a free software package, Genstat, to provide hands-on analysis of participants' data and to discuss the importance and various aspects of experimental design. Feedback from participants was extremely positive.

- The fourth annual Andes CoP meeting was held July 14-19 in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Thirty representatives of the eight CCRP projects in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru shared strategies and plans for their projects; explored topics of mutual interest; and enjoyed a tour of PROINPA, a poster fair, an evening cultural exchange, group reports; and visited farmer stations and other displays during a field day held in Japo, Tapacari, Cochabamba. Four guest speakers discussed ways of linking farmers to markets, and three CoP participants presented the roles of modeling in CCRP research.



McKnight Foundation Board Member John Natoli; the CCRP Oversight Committee also attended the meeting coordinated by regional representative Claire Nicklin and coordinated by Leonora Zambrano. Click here to access the meeting page in [English](#) || [Español](#)

- See the project updates section to learn about what our projects have accomplished since last quarter.

### Reports and deadlines

- Annual reports received this quarter: Sweetpotato breeding (Uganda), Biodiversity and soil (Peru), Cover agriculture (Ecuador), Green manures/legumes (Bolivia), Lupin/quinoa (Ecuador), Native potato (Peru), Potato moth (Ecuador), Seed systems (Ecuador)
- See the deadlines page of the CCRP web for upcoming report deadlines. <http://mcknight.ccrp.cornell.edu/participants/deadlines.html>
- Reporting is a key element to project monitoring and evaluation. The program uses the information to inform decisions about project renewals. The McKnight Foundation needs timely annual reports before it can release funds for the next payment. Guidelines for writing annual reports can be found at the following link: <http://mcknight.ccrp.cornell.edu/about/policies.html#admin>

---

## Upcoming CCRP events

### 2008

**October 6-9**

#### **Second meeting of the CCRP's Eastern/Southern Africa Legumes Community of Practice Maputo, Mozambique**

The second annual E/S Legumes CoP meeting will be held October 6-9 in Maputo, Mozambique. Representatives of the six CCRP projects in Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania will share strategies and plans for their projects

and explore topics of mutual interest. More details will follow as they are available. Click here to access the meeting page in: [English](#)

---

## Related items and upcoming related events

- The Africa Rice Center (WARDA) and its partners developed a range of farmer-education videos covering topics such as rice seed conservation, good agricultural practices and rice processing. The videos are available in English and French, have been translated in about 20 African languages and used in more than 10 African countries. If you are interested in obtaining a copy, please check the WARDA website to find the contact person nearest to you: <http://www.warda.org/warda/guide-video.asp>

## 2008

**September 14-18**

### **The Harlan II International Symposium Biodiversity in Agriculture: Domestication, Evolution, and Sustainability**

**University of California, Davis CA USA.**

This symposium will feature plenary talks organized around three themes: plant and animal domestication processes; processes of agricultural evolution; and global implications of agricultural biodiversity and sustainability of California agriculture. A flyer with details of the program is available:

[http://www.grcp.ucdavis.edu/projects/Brochure\\_onepage.pdf](http://www.grcp.ucdavis.edu/projects/Brochure_onepage.pdf). The symposium website is located: <http://harlanii.ucdavis.edu/>. Poster presentations related to the three themes are invited.

**September 14-18**

### **Seventh International Symposium on Plant-Soil Interactions at Low pH**

**South China Agricultural University, China**

This three day symposium, hosted by South China Agricultural University, will provide an opportunity for CCRP project representatives to exchange new knowledge and techniques on increasing plant productivity on acid soils with other scientists. The McKnight Foundation generously approved a grant to support attendance of ten African and Southeast Asian participants. For more information, please visit the symposium website at [www.7thpsilph.org.cn](http://www.7thpsilph.org.cn) or contact: Dr. Xiaolong Yan, Chairman of Local Organizing Committee for PSILPH, by email at [xlyan@scau.edu.cn](mailto:xlyan@scau.edu.cn).

---

## CCRP web update

The CCRP web is located at... <http://mcknight.ccrp.cornell.edu>

### CCRP web snapshot

As of 7/15/2008:

- Total number of files associated with the CCRP Web: 3,108
- Total number of links: 32,397
- Total number of HTML files: 1,280
- Total number of tagged HTML (those that we update on a regular basis): 272
- In English: 175 | In Spanish: 63 | In French: 34

In January-March 2008, we had an average of **3,060** unique visitors per month.

### Upcoming changes to the CCRP web

- *Updated project pages.* Kelly will continue to update the look and feel of project pages in all three languages.
- *Continued translation.* With our intrepid French and Spanish translators, Kelly will coordinate translation of web pages on a high to low priority basis.

Keep checking the site to know what is happening in the CCRP, and **update your project pages regularly!** If you have any impact statements, publication lists, or any other updates, please contact Kelly Lindsay.

---

**Updates from the CCRP Projects.** The updates below are published as received. Minimal edits have been made.

---

### International Collaborative Projects

---

#### Rice biodiversity (Southeast Asia)

- A training workshop on rice biodiversity analysis was conducted at Chiang Mai on May 25-28, 2008 for 15 researchers and field officers from Vientiane and other provinces in Laos.
- Project collaboration expanded:
  - Prof Ismail Cakmak from Sabanci University visited project lab on May 22-24, 2008 to discuss collaboration on Zn in rice, with twin focus of overcoming Zn deficiency in plant nutrition and improving human nutrition that plans to include Lao partner as well.
  - Chanakan Prom-u-thai (post-doctoral fellow) began work on parboiling to fortify rice with Fe and Zn with partial support from Queensland University.
- Two from Lao project management team visited project management office at Chiang Mai University to discuss management of project accounts and how to work with spreadsheets programs on PC, May 26-27, 2008.
- Researcher from Lao partner institution (*Khemkham Hongphakdi*) arrived for 5 months (January to May) training in biodiversity analysis under *Sansanee Jamjod*, and started MS study in June 2008, with joint funding from project and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).
- Students successfully defended thesis and completed PhD (*Jumnien Wongmo*, *Sunisa Niruntrayakul*) and MS (*Jenjira Mongon*, *Chonticha Tawinprai*, *Wachira Porchit*) studies in the Agronomy Graduate Program
- Project spin-offs
  - 'Zinc fertilization of rice in Thailand', a two-year subproject of the 'Global Zinc Fertilizer Project' of HarvestPlus, coordinated by Sabanci University, has started and will be operated by one of the project's new PhDs.
  - Student (*Jenjira Mongon*) has been awarded a Royal Golden Jubilee PhD scholarship to work on physiology of tolerance to iron toxicity in rice.
  - Student (*Anupong Wongtamee*) has been awarded a PhD scholarship from the Commission for Higher Education to continue to work on genetic diversity of wild rice.
  - Researcher (*Somchit Youpensuk*) was awarded project funding from Thailand Research Fund to work on arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi for tangerine rootstocks.
- Papers and publications (first two selected for publication in the special issue of Biodiversity, The Value of Biodiversity to Food and Agriculture, to celebrate the International Day for Biological Diversity (May 22, 2008) and distribution at the Convention on Biological Diversity, 9<sup>th</sup> Convention of Parties in Bonn, Germany on May 19-30, 2008.

- Rerkasem B. 2008. Diversity in local rice germplasm and rice farming: a case study of Thailand. *Biodiversity* 9: 49-51
- Yimyan N, Youpensuk S, Wongmo J, Kongpan A, Rerkasem B and Rerkasem K. 2008. Arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi, an underground resource for sustainable upland agriculture *Biodiversity* 9: 61-63
- Prom-u-thai C, Huang L, Rerkasem B., Thomson G, Kuo J, Saunders M, Dell B. 2008. The distribution of protein bodies and phytate rich inclusions in grain tissues in relation to iron density in low and high Fe rice genotypes. *Cereal Chem.* 85: 257–265
- Prom-u-thai C, Fukai S, Godwin I D, Rerkasem B, Huang L. 2008. Iron-fortified parboiled rice - A novel solution to high iron density in rice-based diets. *Food Chemistry* 110: 390–398

---

### Sweetpotato breeding (Uganda)

- Mr. Benard Yada is finalizing his MS work at Makerere University, Kampala, on characterization and evaluation of sweetpotato germplasm in Uganda using morphological and molecular markers. He went to the Biosciences eastern and Central Africa (BeCA) laboratory in Nairobi, Kenya (April to June 2008) to characterize 190 selected germplasm accessions of the collection in Uganda using simple sequence repeat (SSR) markers. Mr. Yada is expected to complete his MS degree at Makerere University by the end of 2008.
- Dr. Marc Ghislain, Biotechnology advisor and Head of Applied Biotechnology Laboratory at the International Potato Center, Lima, Peru and Dr. Jan Kreuze (CIP virologist) visited Namulonge, Uganda, April 7-8, 2008, to assess possibilities of PhD thesis research for a prospective student at Makerere University in tissue culture regeneration of African sweetpotato (SP) cultivars for genetic modification for SP weevil resistance. They also visited the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), at Makerere, Kampala, and the Biotechnology Center at Kawanda near Kampala and discussed with scientists when the training starts possible areas of integration of the proposed training with on-going sweetpotato research activities at Namulonge.
- The PI of the sweetpotato project in Uganda, Dr. Robert Mwanga, was one of the team members of the team that visited Zambia, Nigeria, Mali and Burkina Faso (June 9-28, 2008) to assess the current situation of research and development in preparation of a sweetpotato research and development proposal for funding by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Other teams (2-5 people per team) visited Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, Madagascar, and Uganda. The consultative visits will be followed by a series of regional workshops leading to participatory development of the proposal for sweetpotato research and development including, breeding, seed systems, integration of health, agriculture and nutrition, partnership and monitoring and evaluation. The International Potato Center is facilitating the whole process of proposal development and country teams will be expected to complete individual country proposals by December 2008.

---

### Tef/finger millet (East Africa)

- Dr. Solomon Chanyalew, member of the African Chloridoid Cereals team, was awarded Gold medal and certificate of recognition for meritorious national achievements in Post graduate studies (new finding), Science and Technology category by the Ethiopian Science and Technology Agency, 01 July, 2008. The award was handed over during a colourful ceremony where H.E. Girma Woldegiorgis, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was the guest of honor. The award has very much contributed in magnifying the role CCRP has been playing in tef improvement research. Solomon completed his PhD studies in 1997 in a sandwich model arrangement between Haramaya University in Ethiopia



and Cornell University.

- The latest two libraries enriched for SSR repeats have resulted in the generation of 312 new SSR markers for tef. This brings the number of markers developed to a total of 552 markers. We expect 250 (45%) of the SSR markers developed to show polymorphism between the two parental lines of which 168 SSR markers have already been screened on the entire population of 160 RILs. Adding the 168 SSR markers to the previously developed linkage map has shown an increase in the genome coverage from 77 to 86.8%. We intend to assay the remaining 80 SSR markers on the entire population of the RILs and update the linkage map before the QTL analysis.
- In our finger millet activities:
  - An MSc student, Andualem Wole, member of the finger millet/Ethiopia team, has successfully defended his thesis in May, 2008. Andualem did his thesis on one of the project objectives under the title “Characterization, evaluation and variability for grain yield and related traits of finger millet germplasm accessions in northwestern Ethiopia”.
  - Forty-five more landraces were collected from four districts in Uganda and have been added to the finger millet germplasm collection.
  - Finger millet activities reports for Kenya in 2006/07 have been reported in the 2007 KARI-Kakamega annual report where they formed a significant part of the report.
  - The acting PI for Kenya, Rachel Opole, left for Ph.D studies at Kansas State University in the USA and the PI, Mr. Chrispus Oduori has resumed his responsibilities.

## Regional Communities of Practice (CoPs)

### Andes

#### Quinoa (Andes)

- The register for minimum temperatures is below the norm for this season (-5 to -14°C), which is causing serious bronchial and respiratory infections in children under five years of age.
- The rise in the price of quinoa continues to rise. Currently, the price is \$US 1.85 per kilo, at the farm. This situation, because it is very beneficial for the grower, will reverberate in the prices for the rest of the links in the chain.

#### Seed systems (Ecuador)

- **City-Rural Relationships: Community Food Baskets.** Over the last few month the project has begun a new relationship with urban consumer organization with the aim of analyzing how to strengthen links between urban consumer organizations – through the initiative of Community Food Baskets – and organizations of small-scale farmers – through a functional agro-ecological proposal for the conservation of local agrobiodiversity.
- **Support the “eat healthy, safe and sovereign” campaign.** The project implementing organizations are a part of a agro-ecological collective that is promoting a national awareness and education campaign for the consumer to promote the consumption of agricultural products grown under environmental and farmer friendly products, as well as to promote the protection of Andean food species.
- **Research on the importance of farms on family strategies.** We have concluded two studies on the historic and current significance of peasant farms on the livelihood strategies of rural communities. The final results will be presented in the following months.

**Eastern/Southern Africa Legumes**

**Climbing beans (E/S Africa)**



- On Farm bean seed Multiplication: Farmers from 6 selected sites (with adequate water supply) planted all the 20 bean varieties under irrigation in order to multiply the seed. Photo 2 at left shows one of the young bean crop, admiring is the Climbing bean core team.

partners on the project management in 2007 season and farmers' perception, and plan for the 2008 season.



- Management meeting: The climbing bean core team had a two day management meeting from 29<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> May 2008, in Malawi. The partners from extension were also invited to the meeting. The main objectives of the meetings were to review the progress of project, receive feedback from our extension partners on the project management in 2007 season and farmers' perception, and plan for the 2008 season.
- Four partners from Agricultural Extension attended the training on Participatory Variety Selection (PVS) held from 27 to 30<sup>th</sup> May 2008 in Malawi. The training was organized by the project on "Getting back to basics: Creating Impact Oriented Bean Seed Delivery System for the Poor (and others) in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania."

**Cowpea/Alectra (E/S Africa)**

Activities undertaken during this quarter are as described below:

- **Identification of *Alectra* hot spots for planting cowpea demonstration plots 2008/09 in Malawi.** Most of the farmers' fields where the field trials were conducted had *Alectra* present. Careful observations were made and sites were noted as host spots. *Alectra* is a much serious problem in Ngwangwa in Lilongwe. It was also discovered that the site at Bunda College is a serious hot spot for *Alectra*, and a trial will be precisely located at this spot next season. Other hot spots have been identified in Kasungu district. We intend to widen the on-farm testing sites in order to collect sufficient replication for the variety release process.



***Field highly infested with Alectra –identified as a hot spot for Alectra, Bunda College Malawi 2008***

- **A confirming of the lines in on-farm testing for resistance to *Alectra vogelii***

The 10 entries, which were under field evaluations, had also been planted in a three replicate screen house to confirm resistance to *Alectra*. The *Alectra* seed was collected from groundnut crop at Bunda College in 2006, the same sample as was used in the first screening. Three entries IT98K-503-1, IT98K-1092-1, and Bunda-1 (mislabeled 1T83E-16) showed no *Alectra* emerging on them. Two other entries, IT99K-407-8, IT99K-7-21-2, and IT97K-825-15 have shown good resistance, supporting only one plant per station as maximum. This work was part of BS.c student project. The results are encouraging in that there are still resistant lines prevailing, which can be used on a wider scale for on-farm adaptation studies and eventually recommendation for release to farmers.

- **Monitoring and evaluation of the project activities:**

The evaluation of the project activities started on 20<sup>th</sup> April by visiting farmer's fields and on station activities starting from Bunda College in Malawi and ending on 29<sup>th</sup> April at Ilonga Agricultural Research Institute in Tanzania. The composition of the evaluation team was as listed below.

1. Joseph Mligo (Breeder) ARI Ilonga Kilosa Tanzania
2. Vernon Kabambe (*Striga* specialist, Agronomist) Bunda College Malawi
3. Christine Mtambo (Plant protection extension) Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security Malawi
4. Boukar Ousmane (Breeder) IITA Kano Nigeria
5. Ambonesigwe Mbwaga (Project leader) ARI Uyole Mbeya Tanzania

The team visited project activities at Bunda College, which included breeder's seed multiplication and screen house verification of *Alectra* resistance of cowpea lines and varieties currently on farmer's fields. The team also visited two farmer groups in two villages namely Mseteza and Mapondela of Extension Planing Area Mngwangwa. Generally, it was observed in these villages that farmers need knowledge on cowpea production and management techniques. It was also noted that there is a need to set a demonstration plot of the sprayed and unsprayed for one of the released varieties and a local variety to convince the farmers the advantage of protecting cowpea crop from the insect pests at flowering and podding. Some of the lines identified as resistant last season were not included in all activities including farmer's field, pot experiments and on-station multiplication; it was urged those lines to be included in the pot and on farm evaluation trials next season. There is a need to confirm the resistance of line IT99K-7-21-2-2. In Tanzania, the group visited four on-station experiments at Ismani, Bihawana, Hombolo and Ilonga and three on-farm demonstrations at Mangalali, Mkungugu (Iringa), Kikombo (Dodoma). General observation at all the trial sites, *Alectra* infestation was observed. Farmers informed the M&E team that *Alectra* is a serious problem. In Tanzania only B301 did not allow *Alectra* emergence across the sites and TZA 263 did not, show *Alectra* emergence at four of the sites where it was tested. Some lines reacted differently in terms of allowing *Alectra* emergence, suggesting a possible existence of *Alectra* strains. It was observed at two sites in Tanzania that there is a cowpea activity for Project entitled Tropical Legume II activities and at one site there is a groundnut project activity under McKnight suggesting a potential opportunity for collaboration among different projects working in the same villages and locations.

- **Community of Practice between McKnight Funded Projects:**

As part of the learning activities of the McKnight ESA legumes CoP, four members of the Groundnut Breeding (ESA Africa) Project, Emmanuel Monyo (PI & Groundnut Breeder, ICRISAT, Malawi), Omari Mponda (Collaborator & Groundnut Breeder, Naliendele Agricultural Research Institute, DRT, Tanzania), Moses Osiru (Collaborator & Groundnut Pathologist, ICRISAT, Malawi) and Frank Masankha (Collaborator & Crop Production Specialist, NASFAM Malawi) visited the Cowpea *Alectra* (ESA) Project sites in Dodoma Tanzania. The aim was to improve cross learning and lesson sharing amongst the two project teams. From this meeting we learned that *Alectra* is also a problem not only on cowpea but also it infests groundnuts and bambaranuts as it was observed jointly at Bihawana farmer Training centre Dodoma Tanzania. The two photos below demonstrate infestation of groundnuts and bambaranuts by *Alectra vogelii*. It was recommended the location to be one of Groundnut Project test site in the coming 2008/09 season.



*Alectra vogelii* on groundnuts and bambaranuts

### Legume best bets (Malawi)

- The main activities done during this quarter include field day, data collection from on farm trials, harvesting and residue incorporation. In April 2008, five farmers from Kaluluma EPA of Kasungu district, working with MALEZA project participated in a field day organized by the Soils, Food and Healthy Communities Project (SFHC) in Ekwendeni. Field day activities included visit to Mc Knight Legume best bet demonstrations on legume and maize technologies, food recipes and preparation. Farmers learnt about planting pattern in intercropping versus sole stands, and field hygiene. They appreciated the good crop stands, clean fields and associated high yields. On utilization of legumes, both men and women were actively involved in food preparation and documentation of recipes (Fig 1). The role of legumes in diets and human nutrition was highlighted. On the way forward, the visiting farmers from Kasungu agreed to hold a field day to share their experiences with a larger community back home.
- **Kaluluma Extension Planning Area, Kasungu District, Central Malawi.** The MSc student (Austin Phiri) monitored crop performance in “mother and baby” trials, collected soil and plant samples, and harvested maize and groundnut. Soil and plant analysis is in progress. Fig. 2 shows sole stand of groundnut. Harvesting was done in May, 2008 (Fig 3). Yield and yield components data were collected and residues were incorporated.
- **Ekwendeni Study Area, Mzimba District, Northern Malawi:** The PhD student (Wezi Mhango) collected plant samples to assess nodulation efficiency, residue quality and quantify biological nitrogen fixation. Maize and groundnut were harvested in June, 2008. Biomass measurements were taken; yield and yield components data are being processed. Residues were incorporated soon after harvesting in all plots to facilitate decomposition and also protect them from livestock grazing (Fig 4). During the same quarter, the PhD student also successfully completed a Summer 2008 course “Methods in Soil and Plant Ecology for Sustainable Systems” at Michigan State University.



Fig1: Field day, food preparation



Fig 2: Groundnut field, Kasungu

Fig 3: Farmer removing groundnut pods at harvest, pigeonpea plants in the background

---

## West Africa

### Sorghum/millet improvement (West Africa)

#### Advances in two McKnight-Foundation-funded projects on participatory improvement and seed commercialisation of pearl millet in Niger.

The period from April to June 2008 was a key period for both the Seed - and the Participatory Breeding project in Niger as it comprised i) seed commercialisation activities and ii) rainy season preparation and trial installation.

- The farmer organisations involved in the Seed Project in Niger managed to sell almost all of their pearl millet seed produced in either the rainy season 2007 (the farmer union “Mooriben” at Falwel: 3,2 t of the ICRISAT pearl millet cultivar ICMV IS 89305, “Fuma Gaskiya” at Serkinhaoussa: 3,2 t of the ICRISAT cultivar ICMV IS 99001) or in the off-season 2007/08 (“Mooriben” at Tera: 0.7 t of the ICRISAT/IER cultivar Sosat). Efforts that led to the successful marketing included at Falwel: Advertising seed availability during the General Assembly of Mooriben; at Tera: a Rural Radio discussion about the value of improved cultivars; and at Serkinhaoussa: a seed fair held in mid-May in conjunction of the weekly market day as well as contacts to rural development projects and to FAO.
- The successful marketing encouraged farmer unions to plan for and plant even more seed production fields of improved pearl millet cultivars during the rainy season 2008.
- The participatory pearl millet improvement team is busy realising very ambitious plans for the rainy season 2008: three different methods of recurrent population improvement are to be compared and evaluated on-farm: simple mass selection; mass selection with parental control; and progeny-based full-sib selection. While the first two mass selection methods do not require special care at planting, the full-sib selection trials are much more complicated to plant. It is thanks to farmer’s excitement about developing their own cultivar, and thanks to the excellent dedication of both animators and project technicians, that all three types of selection fields had been successfully planted at all three project sites in Niger by the time of writing these bullet points.