

Darwin Initiative: Half Year Report

Project Ref. No.	15-003
Project Title	Conservation of Biodiversity in Traditional West African Vegetable Species
Country(ies)	Benin, Mali
UK Organisation	CAZS Natural Resources, Bangor University
Collaborator(s)	Institut Nationale des Recherches Agricoles du Benin (INRAB); Institut d'Economie Rurale (IER) du Mali
Project Leader	Dr. Margaret Pasquini
Report date	27 October 2008
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 3
Project website	http://www.cazs.bangor.ac.uk/ccstudio/Research/cazsproject_Darwin1.php

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September)

The work for the first six months of the third year has concentrated primarily on three areas: 1) continuation of the domestication trials; 2) awareness-raising and dissemination activities and; 3) finalisation of the catalogues. This section will summarise progress in these areas in Benin, and a detailed response to the reviewer year 2 comments is attached to the end of this report.

- 1) In Benin, on-farm domestication trials started in May in Ayetedjou (*Lactuca taraxacifolia*, *Crassocephalum rubens* and *C. crepidioides*) and Bognongon (*Crassocephalum rubens* and *C. crepidioides*). Eight farmers are participating in each village and there is a resident technician supporting the activities. Nurseries have been established to evaluate germination rates of the three species, and trials are being carried out to compare leaf size and yield of plants produced from seed, from root cuttings planted horizontally and vertically for *L. taraxacifolia*, and of plants produced from seed and stem cuttings for *Crassocephalum* species. In parallel, the INRAB partners have been carrying out on-station germination tests (in the lab and in nurseries) and propagation work for the three species, and also for *Ceratotheca sesamoides* which has been selected for the forthcoming trials in Ganro. A research assistant is also carrying out seed viability trials for *Bombax costatum*, testing germination rates after storage at different temperature and water content combinations.
- 2) The preparatory work for the awareness-raising and dissemination activities commenced in the latter part of the reporting period. In September a meeting attended by various stakeholders (including the Ministry of Agriculture, Cotonou municipality, the INRAB extension office, radio journalists, marketing agencies, farmer representatives, and researchers from the University and Bioversity) was held to discuss the awareness-raising, training and dissemination activities, and to identify relevant supporting actors.

The main activities/outputs that are currently being planned and developed are: 1) a radio programme series targeted at the general public; 2) technical information pamphlets for farmers; 3) a workshop for representatives from various relevant Ministries planned for December (facilitated by the Ministry of Agriculture), and to be attended by the press; 4) participation in a culinary programme on national television. Very recently, the INRAB partner had a stand in the cultural food fair organised by the Ministry of Culture, Artisanery and Tourism which took place 9-11 October 2008.

- 3) Work on the catalogue is on-going. To facilitate this work a request was made to the Darwin Initiative Secretariat to use part of the travel funds to allow Mr Sognigbe N'Danikou to visit Bangor for a couple of months in the summer. Permission was given in mid-June, and Mr

N'Danikou arrived in Bangor on the 11th of August (the visit took place a bit later than planned owing to delays with the visa process). Currently, summaries of 86 out of circa 250 species have been written.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments

Commenting on the second year annual report, the project reviewer recommended that the project concentrate on Benin for domestication and further related work, and that in Mali the emphasis should be on completing the catalogue. This recommendation, together with the full report, was shared with the project partners. However, it appears that there has been no further progress in Mali.

In Benin the domestication activities are going well in Ayetedjou but not in Bognongon. Though the village expressed interest in taking part in the trials, many of the participating farmers are actually neglecting their plots. The INRAB partners are currently evaluating the situation and deciding how to address it.

Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

The new procedure for addressing the situation in Mali was discussed with Eilidh Young from ECTF in a series of emails in May. Given the on-going problem of staff unavailability in IER, a formal request to close down the project in this location will be made to the Secretariat in the near future.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat:

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: As recommended by the reviewer.

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan or budget should not be discussed in this report but raised with the Darwin Secretariat directly.

Please send your **completed form email** to Eilidh Young, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme at Darwin-Projects@ectf-ed.org.uk. The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message eg Subject: 14-075 Darwin Half Year Report**