

## Vegetable producers gather in Mali's famed Dogon country



Dogon villages such as Anakanda and Bandiagara on Mali's central plateau are renowned for their architecture, mask dances, and wooden sculpture. AVRDC – The World Vegetable Center hopes they will be recognized for their vegetables as well. Thirty-five vegetable producers representing seven villages recently participated in a **Farmers' Day** hosted by the Center to see new varieties of amaranth, African eggplant, tomatoes, pepper, onion, okra, and hibiscus. The chief of the host villages welcomed the farmers, the AVRDC team (Theresa Endres and Sidy Lamine Coulibaly), and officers of the three nongovernmental organizations that monitor vegetable production in the field.

As the group viewed the field plots, regional radio reporters asked the producers to explain the process of vegetable production. The

producers outlined the route from the nursery to flowering, fruiting, and harvest, emphasizing that no mineral fertilizers or chemical treatments had been made to date in the plots. They pointed out that although the local variety of tomato had more fruit at the moment than the new variety 'Bèbiyèrèyé' (high beta-carotene orange tomato), the 'Bèbiyèrèyé' plants had more flowers than the local variety. The producers opted for the new variety due to the strong flower production, which promises good yields for the future.

A plot of African eggplant featured a local variety, new variety 'N24' (a white eggplant), and 'Keur Mbir Ndao.' The participants analyzed the development of the different types of eggplant, especially of the new varieties planted for the first time in this area.

One producer mentioned the possibility of replacing *niébé*

(beans) with amaranth if he could get enough seed, and encouraged others to do the same. Three thriving onion varieties growing in Anakanda village drew envious glances from other producers; a producer from Bandiagara asked an Anakanda onion farmer for his secret in raising good quality onion.

After the field visits, the participants enjoyed a dinner featuring hibiscus, two varieties of pepper, 'Nafama' and 'Nisondia,' and the *cube magnifique du Mali*, a savory dish of local spices and vegetables. Farmers appreciated the fresh taste of the vegetables and the fact that no artificial condiments were used in preparing the recipes. The farmers also saw a display of AVRDC products: new vegetables varieties, processed vegetables, photos, and recipe brochures.



Theresa Endres, Community Development Specialist, Nutrition  
[theresa.endres@worldveg.org](mailto:theresa.endres@worldveg.org)