AVRDC breeding lines
**CLN-2498E** and **CLN-2498D**
are the proud parents of new triple disease resistant tomatoes in India.

**The new golden rule: grow vegetables at school**

A project to promote school gardens in Africa and Asia aims to raise community awareness of health issues and decrease malnutrition.

In addition to reading, writing and arithmetic, students in Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia and the Philippines will soon find a new subject on the curriculum: vegetable cultivation.

“Vegetables Go to School: Promoting Food Security and Nutrition through School-based Approaches,” the opening phase of a planned 8-year project funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), began building national capacities in the six countries to plan, implement and monitor vegetable school garden programs during an expert consultation on **Home, School and other Public Facility Vegetable Gardens in Southeast Asia** held in Bangkok from 27-30 August 2012.

The event, hosted by the ASEAN-AVRDC Regional Network for Vegetable Research and Development (AARNET) with funds from the Taiwan Ministry of...
Foreign Affairs (MOFA), brought together country representatives, teachers, researchers, gardening specialists and others to discuss strategies for developing and promoting home and public vegetable gardens with a focus on nutrition. Vegetable gardens can contribute to food and nutritional security as the global climate changes and causes fluctuations in agricultural and horticultural productivity.

After being welcomed by Regional Director Robert Holmer, the session of keynote speakers was opened by Jacqueline Hughes, Deputy Director General – Research, who set the overall framework of the consultation with a presentation on the contribution of vegetable gardens to the Millennium Development Goals. Reynaldo Laguda, Assistant Secretary of the Philippine Department of Education, gave an overview of past and present school garden programs in the country and how those connect with the specific educational and health objectives of the department. Gayarti Rana, Director of the Center for Consumption Diversification and Food Safety, Ministry of Agriculture, Indonesia, shared how her agency successfully addresses food security through the establishment of several thousand home gardens in the country. Jintana Yhoun-Aree of the Community Nutrition Division, Institute of Nutrition, Mahidol University gave valuable insights on experiences with community-based nutrition programs in Thailand, while Hsueh-shih Lin, Director of the Taitung District Agricultural Research and Extension Station of the Council of Agriculture, explained how the community-based “Citizen Farm Gardens” developed in Taiwan and contribute to domestic vegetable consumption.

Katinka Weinberger, Director, Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture (CAPSA) of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission......
of Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) closed the morning session by discussing policy interventions for promoting home and public facility gardens in Southeast Asia. In the afternoon, different country presentations on best practices for vegetable gardens were given by Trinh Khac Quang, Director General, Fruits and Vegetable Research Institute (FAVRI), Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Hanoi, Viet Nam; Ho Puthea, General Directorate of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Bounnueng Douangboupha, Director, Hadokeo Horticulture Research Station, National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Vientiane, Lao PDR; and Myint Shwe, Director, Horticulture and Biotechnology Division, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Department of Agriculture, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. Mandy Lin, Assistant Specialist, AVRDC Global Technology Dissemination, shared recommended practices and appropriate technology options for home gardening in Southeast Asia.

Additional regional insights were given by Nakorn Limpakuptathavon (Thailand City Farm Project), Perfecto Rom (Urban Container Gardening in the Philippines), Dennis Lesnick (Sowing the Seeds of Cambodia’s Future: Helping Address Rural Vulnerabilities and Ecosystem Stability through Home and School Gardens) and Priscilla Pinky L. Castillo (Onslaught Racing Dragons: Promoting Healthy Lifestyle through Physical Activity and Better Nutrition).

On the second day, the participants brainstormed ideas and developed small model projects to support the adaptation and promotion of nutrition-focused home and public facility gardens in their national environment, which will be implemented in the following months.

On the last day, the group visited two successful urban public facility gardens: the Rooftop Garden Learning Center of the Lak-Si Government Office and the Klong Pak Lak School Garden.

The Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided financial support for the event. Robert Holmer expressed confidence that home, school and other public facility gardens will get a strong boost from the consultation, and Raynaldo Laguda closed the event with the remark: “Vegetable gardening not only contributes to food and nutrition security, but is also dignifying.”
The legacy continues...

For 40 years breeding lines developed by AVRDC plant breeders have contributed to the improvement of vegetable varieties around the world. The legacy continues: On 5 September 2012, the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR) in Bangalore, India celebrated the occasion of its Foundation Day by introducing ‘Arka Samrat’ and ‘Arka Rakshak,’ two new triple disease resistant tomato hybrids. AVRDC breeding lines CLN-2498E (male parent of ‘Arka Samrat’) and CLN-2498D (male parent of ‘Arka Rakshak’) were used in the breeding program to create the new hybrids, which resist Tomato leaf curl virus, bacterial wilt, and early blight, three of the most serious problems in tomato production. AVRDC tomato breeder Peter Hanson supplied the breeding lines and worked with researchers at IIHR to stack multiple resistance traits into the hybrids. By planting varieties bred to be resistant to diseases, farmers can reduce pesticide use when growing crops of high-yielding, nutritious vegetables and ensure more of the harvest can be marketed.

The Center in the news

Summer intern Lorraine Wong interviewed Deputy Director General-Research Jackie Hughes, Head of Global Technology Dissemination Greg Luther, and World Food Prize intern Michelle Laterrade during her time at the Center for the radio program “Health on Earth.” The program was aired on 11 September 2012 on CKUT 90.3, Montreal, Canada:

http://archives.ckut.ca/128/20120911.20.32-21.01.mp3
People

Welcome

The Center’s ability to monitor and evaluate projects and develop strategies to ensure farmers can bring more of their harvest to market will be strengthened with the arrival of two new AVRDC staff members on 1 October 2012:

Pepijn Schreinemachers will join AVRDC as an Agricultural Economist at headquarters. Previously he was the Scientific Coordinator of the University of Hohenheim’s Uplands Program in Thailand and Vietnam, which aimed to make a scientific contribution to the conservation of natural resources and the improvement of living conditions of the rural population in mountainous regions of Southeast Asia.

He has a particular interest in *ex-ante* and *ex-post* impact assessment, farm management economics, and integrated modeling of farming systems, and has taught university courses on economic modeling, policy simulation, and land use modeling. Pepijn took his PhD in Agricultural Economics from the University of Bonn, Germany.

Ngoni Nenguwo, the Center’s new Postharvest Specialist, will be based at the Regional Center for Africa in Arusha, Tanzania. Ngoni, a horticultural development consultant, has more than 20 years of experience working on sustainable production and postharvest handling systems for agricultural producers in developing countries.

His research examines techniques and practices for farmers with limited resources, including treatments to reduce postharvest diseases, and evaporative and charcoal coolers. Ngoni holds an MSc and M.Phil in Postharvest Technology from Silsoe College, Cranfield University, UK.

Haksoon Choi, Visiting Scientist from Korea’s National Institute of Horticultural & Herbal Science (NIHHS), Rural Development Administration (RDA) arrived at AVRDC headquarters on 4 September 2012 for a one-month stay under the supervision of Genebank Manager Andreas Ebert.

Haksoon will be involved in research activities under the RDA-AVRDC collaborative project “Multiplication and evaluation of tomato genetic resources for breeding for disease resistance and food-related functional traits.”

Moritz Blanke, MSc student in Environmental Governance at the University of Freiburg, Germany, joined AVRDC East and Southeast Asia on 20 August 2012 to start a three-month internship. Moritz’s particular interest is to deepen his understanding of food and nutrition security in urban areas of developing countries, with a specific focus on the contribution of home, school and community gardens.
Seminars

**Til Feike**, Postdoc at the University of Hohenheim, Germany spoke to staff at AVRDC headquarters about his research on “Grasping the complexity of intercropping: Developing and testing an integrated decision support system for vegetable production in the North China Plain” on 10 September 2012. Intercropping—growing two or more different crops at the same time on the same plot of land—has long been a feature of small-scale agriculture in China, but the practice is in decline as agriculture becomes more mechanized and less labor is available in rural areas. Dr. Feike’s modeling methods can be used to compare variables such as row width and crop height to determine optimum intercropping strategies, which will help farmers make full use of their land, generate more income, and reduce disease pressure that may occur with monocropping.

**Sanjeet Kumar**, AVRDC Pepper Breeder, updated colleagues on research in male sterility in peppers on 13 September 2012. Male sterile plants do not produce functional pollen, and do not self-pollinate; they are used as female parents in breeding programs for new hybrid development and hybrid seed production. The technique has been used successfully with peppers, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, onion, radish, carrot, and melon. Using male sterile plants significantly reduces seed production costs, as labor-intensive hand-pollination of crops is eliminated.

In recent weeks AVRDC staff at headquarters had the opportunity to meet candidates for various job positions and hear them speak on topics related to their previous research and work experience:

**August 22, Postharvest Specialist:** “Vegetable postharvest technology: Connecting farms and people, creating health and wealth” by Antonio Acedo, Jr. *(left)*; “Development of vegetable postharvest systems for increased market access by small-scale producers” by Ngoni Nenguwo.

**September 5, Genetic Resources Scientist:** “Plant genetic resources in use for humanity: the case in Bulgaria” by Tsvetelina Stoilova *(left)*. **September 6:** “Genetic resources of vegetables: seed, germplasm – and my potential to add value to AVRDC activities” by Brita Jensen.

**September 7, Postdoc in Agricultural Economics:** “The effect of agricultural policy incentives and technology on sustainable land management and income of small farm households: a case study in northwestern Ethiopia” by Yitayal Anley Mengistu *(left)*; “Agricultural production and marketing nexus: implications of empirical analyses” by Srinivasulu Rajendran *(center)*; “Socioeconomic analysis tools in project management” by Ken Chamuva Shawa.
Visitors

**Emile Frison**, Director General, Bioversity International, visited the AVRDC campus on 9 September 2012 to meet with staff and discuss cooperation between the institutions on the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources (ITPGRFA), the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) Diversity for Development initiative, the upcoming Second Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD II) in Uruguay on 29 October – 1 November 2012, and other matters of interest. Dr. Frison sees opportunities for collaboration in delivering messages on the need to diversify landscapes, agriculture and diets, and he also shared some of Bioversity’s experiences in introducing indigenous vegetables to supermarkets in Kenya. His visit was the second in a series entitled *Networking to Enhance International Cooperating Vegetable Research and Development* sponsored at AVRDC headquarters by Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

Forty-four members from **farmer organizations** and **rural women’s leadership federations** in **Korea** toured the AVRDC campus on 6 and 13 September 2012. The study tour organized by the Cheongju City Agriculture Technology Center was led by Myeong-Cheoul Cho, Pepper Breeder seconded to AVRDC from the Korea Rural Development Administration (RDA). The two groups of 22 members visited the genebank and Demonstration Garden.

**Chairit Damrongkiat**, Director General of the Rice Department, Thailand led a delegation of six visitors to AVRDC headquarters on 6 September 2012. The group was briefed by Maureen Mecozzi, Head, Communications & Information, and toured the Demonstration Garden with Willie Chen from Global Technology Dissemination.
AVRDC’s 31st International Vegetable Training Course (IVTC) “Vegetables: From Seed to Table and Beyond” officially opened on 10 September 2012 at AVRDC’s East and Southeast Asia Research and Training Station, located on the Kamphaeng Saen campus of Kasetsart University (KU), Thailand.

Regional Director Robert Holmer and Administrative & Training Officer Sheila de Lima welcomed 23 participants from 11 countries who enrolled in Module 1, “From Seed to Table.” The participants hail from government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, research institutes, and the private sector from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, South Africa, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.

The one-month long module focuses on the essentials of integrated vegetable production within the framework of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). An introduction to crop improvement as well as relevant technologies on seed production, seed health and seedling management will be shared with participants. An overview on how to facilitate and manage farmer education programs is included in the training activities.

The IVTC aims to enhance the technical, scientific and managerial skills of the participants, who will contribute to the sustainable development of their countries by increasing the production and consumption of health-promoting vegetables.

Module II begins on 8 October and Module III on 5 November.

(1): Participants introduced to fruit quality testing at KU Postharvest Laboratory.

(2): Participants introduced to online catalogues at KU Library.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Main Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad Mazharul Karim</td>
<td>Scientific Officer</td>
<td>Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI)</td>
<td>Research on vegetable and fruit crops in hilly region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Md. Rabiul Islam</td>
<td>Scientific Officer</td>
<td>Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI)</td>
<td>Collection and evaluation of vegetable crops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taslima Jahan</td>
<td>Scientific Officer</td>
<td>Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI)</td>
<td>Collection and evaluation of vegetable crops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOK Che-ki</td>
<td>Senior Field Officer</td>
<td>Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, Horticulture Section, Tai Lung Experimental Station</td>
<td>Supervising the overall administration and maintenance of AFCD wholesale food market and processing applications for tenancy agreements and contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Vannak</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Khal Koh Vegetable Research Station, Department of Horticulture and Subsidiary Food Crop</td>
<td>Collection and evaluation of vegetable crops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Thomas Meprthu</td>
<td>Research Scientist</td>
<td>Maharashtra Hybrid seeds Company Limited</td>
<td>Manage and support key aspects of okra and oilseed crops commercial breeding program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arul Murugan Palanichamy</td>
<td>Assistant Manager for field research and development</td>
<td>IAP Farm Services Private Limited</td>
<td>Research and development activities for the cultivation of gherkin, tomato, onions, dill weed and banana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ida Bagus Ketut Suryawanta</td>
<td>Agricultural Extension staff</td>
<td>Bali Food Crops Offices, Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>Provides extension services specifically on planning, implementation and evaluation of agricultural projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anak Agung Istri Inten Wiradewi</td>
<td>Head (Development section)</td>
<td>Department of Food Crops, Bali Provincial Government</td>
<td>Implementation of programs of the department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Gusti Made Widianta</td>
<td>Agricultural Extension staff</td>
<td>Assessment Institute for Agricultural Technology AIAT- Bali</td>
<td>Provides extension services specifically on planning, implementation and evaluation of agricultural projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

(...continued from page 9)

Ida Bagus Aribawa (Indonesia)
Present Job/Position: Researcher
Employer: Assessment Institute for Agricultural Technology AIAT- Bali
Main responsibilities: Research activities on cacao plants

Phathana Seng Ounkeo (Lao PDR)
Present Job/Position: Researcher
Employer: Haddokkeo Horticulture Research Center
Main responsibilities: Vegetable seed production and research

Yotti Hadiana (Indonesia)
Present Job/Position: Staff (Horticultural seeds)
Employer: Department of Agriculture, Sector of Horticulture, Blitar Regency, East Java
Main responsibilities: Horticultural seeds and seedling management

Christiaan Mauritz Lombaard (South Africa)
Present Job/Position: Agronomist
Employer: EMVEST
Main responsibilities: Monitoring of agricultural protocols and production processes and provides assistance to farm managers.

Eli Korlina Edisaputra (Indonesia)
Present Job/Position: Researcher
Employer: Assessment Institute for Agricultural Technology AIAT- East Java
Main responsibilities: Plant protection

Hsiu-fung Chao (Taiwan)
Present Job/Position: Assistant researcher
Employer: Tainan District Agricultural Research and Extension Station, Council of Agriculture, Executive Yuan
Main responsibilities: Traditional agricultural breeding on cucumber for greenhouse; application of biotechnology for agricultural breeding

Heri Harti (Indonesia)
Present Job/Position: Researcher
Employer: Center for Tropical Horticulture Studies, Bogor Agricultural University
Main responsibilities: Development of technologies

Min-li Liu (Taiwan)
Present Job/Position: Assistant researcher
Employer: Kaohsiung District Agricultural Research and Extension Station Council of Agriculture
Main responsibilities: Research and implementation of agricultural technology improvement on vegetable breeding

Chandra Hidorat (Indonesia)
Present Job/Position: Technical Staff
Employer: Food Diversification Division, Center of Diet Diversity and Safety Food, Food Security Agency, Ministry of Agriculture
Main responsibilities: Promotion of the programs and activities of the Center

Nakorn Limpacuptathavon (Thailand)
Present Job/Position: Director
Employer: Kaohsiung Veggie Prince City Farm Learning Center
Main responsibilities: Provides capacity building through training to urban and rural communities on sustainable agricultural practices.

Dhany Hermansyah (Indonesia)
Present Job/Position: Technical Staff
Employer: Food Diversification Division, Center of Diet Diversity and Safety Food, Food Security Agency, Ministry of Agriculture
Main responsibilities: Implementing food diversification programs

Khuyen Thi Bui (Vietnam)
Present Job/Position: Researcher
Employer: Fruits and Vegetables Research Institute
Main responsibilities: Research on quality control for fruits and vegetables
South Asia’s improved field research facilities

**AVRDC South Asia**, located on the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) campus in Hyderabad, India, moved its research field and 500 m² net house facilities to a new site in July.

AVRDC’s former trial site was located toward the back of the campus. After five years of continuous intensive use its clay soil was showing increasing problems of disease and pest build-up, and the need to rotate out of vegetables. Moving to a new site with sandy soil has proven ideally suited to legume trials. **Ram Nair**, AVRDC Legume Breeder, said the legume breeding team has had prolific production in its mungbean, vegetable soybean, yard-long bean and cowpea trials this season.

**Research Technician Tomar Omvir Singh** said the site provides more uniform soils for trials, but requires careful management to avoid erosion and weed problems.

The improved facilities for trials, seed production and demonstrations are helping to raise the profile of AVRDC with campus visitors, as the new site is easily visible from the campus entrance road.

A temporary fence made from net is keeping out rabbits and the odd porcupine that have taken an interest in the new opportunities for dietary diversification. To the relief of field staff, the net fence also has kept out a couple of curious cobras in recent weeks. A permanent mesh fence will be installed at the end of this season to complete the new research facilities.

Who’s eating vegetables?

AVRDC summer students (*l to r*): **Wei-Lung Chen**, **Yen-Ting Tung**, **Chia-Che Li**, **Yi-Sin Hong**, **Xin-Yi Lu**, and **Tsai-Han Yao** dress for success in the Center’s famous T-shirt emblazoned with the word “vegetables” in 40 languages.

Where do you eat vegetables? Wear your AVRDC “Eat your Vegetables” T-shirt, take a photo, send it to Kathy Chen [<kathy.chen@worldveg.org>], and we’ll include it in a future newsletter. Need a shirt? Order one for US$ 7.80 from Shiu-luan Lu [<shiu-luan.lu@worldveg.org>].
On 1 September 2012 a USAID team visited activities under the Horticulture Project in Churamon Kahti village, Jessore Sadar Upazila in Jessore District, Bangladesh. The delegation included Paul Weisenfeld, Assistant to the Administrator for Food Security; Denise Rollins, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator, USAID Asia; Amit Mistry, USAID Washington DC; Richard Greene, Mission Director, USAID Bangladesh; Ramona El Hamzaoui, Director, Economic Growth Office, USAID Bangladesh; and David Leishman, Anar Khalilov, and Nazmul Bhuiyan, USAID Bangladesh. The visitors were accompanied by project partners including Shawkat A. Begum, Chief of Party; Mohammad Hossain, Sector Leader, Potato and Sweet potato; Shahabuddin Ahmad, Sector Leader, Vegetables; Shofiqur Rahman and Zahir Ullah, Field Coordinators; Firoz Ahmad, Chief Scientific Officer, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) Jessore; Md. Rafiuddin, Senior Scientific

Feed the Future, the US government’s global hunger and food security initiative, is focusing on 20 countries based on five criteria: level of need, opportunity for partnership, potential for agricultural growth, opportunity for regional synergy, and resource availability. AVRDC is participating in several Feed the Future projects, and in recent weeks two United States Agency for International Development (USAID) delegations have visited project sites to familiarize themselves with the ongoing activities.

Bangladesh

On 1 September 2012 a USAID team visited activities under the Horticulture Project in Churamon Kahti village, Jessore Sadar Upazila in Jessore District, Bangladesh. The delegation included Paul Weisenfeld, Assistant to the Administrator for Food Security; Denise Rollins, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator, USAID Asia; Amit Mistry, USAID Washington DC; Richard Greene, Mission Director, USAID Bangladesh; Ramona El Hamzaoui, Director, Economic Growth Office, USAID Bangladesh; and David Leishman, Anar Khalilov, and Nazmul Bhuiyan, USAID Bangladesh. The visitors were accompanied by project partners including Shawkat A. Begum, Chief of Party; Mohammad Hossain, Sector Leader, Potato and Sweet potato; Shahabuddin Ahmad, Sector Leader, Vegetables; Shofiqur Rahman and Zahir Ullah, Field Coordinators; Firoz Ahmad, Chief Scientific Officer, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) Jessore; Md. Rafiuddin, Senior Scientific

(continued on page 13)
Officer, BARI Jessore; and Sitesh Chandra, Agriculturist, BRAC.

The team toured two commercial vegetable gardens established by project farmers on adjacent plots. Ashraful Islam grows bottle gourd on his 15-decimal (607 m²) garden plot. He sowed seed of three different varieties during the first week of June 2012 and started harvesting in mid-July. So far, Ashraful has sold 1065 bottle gourds in the market.

Hashem Ali established his brinjal (eggplant) garden on a 10-decimal plot (404 m²). He sowed seed of two different varieties in mid-May and started harvesting during the first week of August. To date he has harvested 32 kg of brinjal, which he has sold to local traders.

Ashraful and Hashem talked with the visitors about their participation in the project, their motivation for joining project activities, the performance of their gardens, and their future plans.

After the tour, the team had a meeting with 22 farmers in an adjacent open field. The women farmers grow vegetables and multiply sweet potato vines in their home gardens, and also graft and raise summer tomato seedlings to sell to commercial farmers. The men grow vegetables and potatoes for commercial markets. One of the women farmers gave a demonstration of summer tomato grafting, a technology disseminated by AVRDC. The visitors also enjoyed a mini exhibition of vegetable crops produced by the project farmers, including bottle gourd, bitter gourd, snake gourd, ridge gourd, yard-long bean, brinjal and summer tomato.

(front row, l to r) USAID’s Paul Weisenfeld, Denise Rollins, and Richard Green met with farmers in Jessore district, Bangladesh.
A delegation of 10 people representing the United States government visited AVRDC’s on-farm activities in Finkolo-Ganadougou (near Sikasso in southern Mali) on 20 August 2012.

The delegation included Janet K. Stormes of the US Senate Appropriations Committee and member of the State Foreign Operations Subcommittee; Dorothy J. Rayburn, a Senior Appropriations Advisor at the Bureau of Legislative Affairs, US Department of State; Rebecca Black, United States Agency for International Development USAID/Mali Mission Director; Stephanie Garvey, USAID/Mali Governance and Communications Team Leader; Mary Norris, USAID Mali Economic Growth Team Leader; Ibrahima Sissoko, USAID Mali Education Acting Team Leader; James-Evan Butler, USAID Mali Governance and Communications Team Member; and Moussa Doumbia, USAID Communication Officer and Public Relations.

With funding from USAID/Mali under the USAID Feed the Future Initiative, AVRDC launched an ambitious project in December 2011 to improve vegetable production and consumption in Mali, with an initial focus on the Sikasso region. The project establishes best practice demonstration and dissemination hubs where new varieties, crop management practices and water delivery systems are showcased in collaboration with local communities and Integrated Initiatives for Economic Growth in Mali (IICEM), a large local NGO. IICEM provided support for fencing and tools to collect water; the communities ensure maintenance of the experiments. Keriba Coulibaly, AVRDC-Mali Junior Vegetable Breeder assisted by Amadou Marico, Farm Operations Supervisor and AVRDC field staff explained to the delegation how the 80 women currently working at the Finkolo-Ganadougou Hub look after the experiments and are the primary assessors of performance of the showcased production options.

Following a guided tour of the ongoing hub activities, the visitors met the District Mayor and AVRDC partners, and interacted with people from local communities, particularly members of the women’s associations working with on the project with AVRDC.

The delegation also visited the USAID Africa RISING project in Northern Ghana, another initiative in which AVRDC is active.

**Integrated Initiatives for Economic Growth in Mali**

[http://www.iicem.net/](http://www.iicem.net/)

**Africa RISING**

[http://africa-rising.net/news/](http://africa-rising.net/news/)

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**USAID in Mali**

**Doumbia**, USAID Communication Officer and Public Relations.

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