

Bio-Benin December Newsletter
How we spent your money in 2021:

Bio-Benin made major strides towards becoming fully functional and financially self-supporting in 2021. Your money is always welcome and needed, but we anticipate a time when we will no longer have to ask. In the meantime, here's how we spent your money this past year:

• Solar Power (for all our energy needs, including pumping water)	\$11,500
• Land acquisition (we now have 8 hectares, 20 acres)	\$11,000
• Irrigation	\$ 5,000
• Fish Pond	\$ 5,172
• Upgrade chicken coop to breed Goliath chickens	\$ 1,724
• Compost, seeds, garden supplies	\$ 1,500
• Cisterns and gutters for water collection	\$ 3,000
• Day labor to clear fields of weeds and harvesting crops	\$ 2,500
• Salaries for gardeners, training and guardian (approx. \$400/month)	\$ 4,758
• Upgrade Storage Barn for crop storage and beer making	<u>\$ 2,500</u>
TOTAL	\$48,624



Gardeners in the onion field



Landscape plan of Bio-Benin

What we need now:

Our immediate needs include rebuilding and reinforcing the fishpond, which was destroyed by a particularly fierce rainstorm in July (\$7,000). We would also appreciate contributions towards our \$400/month salary costs as we try to improve life here for many by training students in organic gardening and showing them the way towards reducing their environmental footprint.

As we continue to upgrade and improve in 2022, we look forward to building rabbit hutches and breeding rabbits (\$2,700); installing beehives and welcoming bees to the property on which we have planted hundreds of flowering trees, shrubs and flowers (\$5,000); establishing a banana plantation for both sweet bananas and plantains (known as aloko); learning the secret of cultivating Effective Microorganisms in our compost; expanding our knowledge of biological pesticides using neem, hot pepper, tobacco, ginger, turmeric and papaya, all of which we grow on the property; and growing tilapia in our restored pond to sell in the local and national markets (\$1,800).

We've received visits from several government officials in recent weeks and expect to be asked to serve as a government-approved training center for students who want to make their living in organic farming. This may lead to some government grants to install dormitories and a teaching auditorium for classes. But we're not there yet!

We now have four new members in our "family": Two kittens, known as Charlie and Calico; Beauregard our guard dog, named Beau Beau; and Ferdinand the bull, who escaped from a truck taking him to slaughter and now enjoys his time outdoors munching grass and gazing around at the beautiful flowers - a happy reading memory from childhood.



Beauregard ("Beau-Beau")

Ferdinand the Bull

Guillaume also had a soft launch of his beer in October when he participated in the "Consume Our Local Products" fairs in Natitingou and Cotonou. The préfet here (like a state governor) bought several bottles and promised to help him promote it. We're building a website and facebook page and will soon hire two employees to sell to local bars. The only supermarket in Benin is also very eager to stock it. So we're on our way!



La Natayaise Beer

Several of you have started to give us an annual donation and we'd like to encourage any of you have already given to do the same, or to give for the first time. It's hard to imagine how much the local Beninese gain from seeing a well-run, organized farm and all that is possible to achieve. Guillaume's craft beer, the first one in Benin, is a great example of how hard work, imagination and an entrepreneurial spirit can produce amazing results. We hope many will follow his example in their own different ways.

Thank you for your generosity. As you can see, we put your money to good use. All our best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a safe and healthy New Year. Let's hope we can all put Covid behind us in 2022, or at least learn to live with it as a minor inconvenience, like the flu.

With love from Julie and Guillaume