

*Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year  
Joyeux Noel et Bonne Nouvelle Année*

Wow! What a difference eight months makes in all that is happening at Bio-Benin.

During my absence, Guillaume has completely cleared the land around our house, planted fruit trees, built a large chicken house and shelter for our guardian and his family, and beautified the plantings in the entrance area. He has fortified the driveway with rocks, sand and cement to protect against erosion during the months of torrential rain; constructed the foundations of a building where local women will add water to the sorghum they grow and boil this mash into a wort for making beer.

In the meantime, several very fertile fields close to the stream have been tilled by students from the local agricultural college who until now had no place to practice their profession organically or otherwise. They have been adding chicken compost collected from local farmers until our own chickens multiply and furnish our needs. We collect eggs daily and enjoy omelettes for breakfast, lunch and occasionally supper!

So far, we have five students (young men aged from 18-24; we intend to include women too) who appear each morning around 7 to water the seedlings they are nurturing until big enough to transplant into the fields. They are growing cucumbers, lettuce, cabbage, tomatoes, amaranth, onions, watermelon, papaya, cassava and sorghum. Most market vegetables will need to be covered during the very hot months (known as *la chaleur*) to survive the intense heat and dryness here.

Soon, we will add a small lake for raising tilapia, feeding them with the wet residue sorghum as well as chicken manure. In this way we will encourage a closed circle of organic production, whereby the waste products of one process, feed the production of another. Nothing is wasted; everything left over is composted and used to enrich the soil.

We still need to buy equipment to make all this work efficiently and would greatly appreciate your help in doing so. We need a mechanized tilling machine ( ), a motorized tricycle to pick up compost and other products ( ), pumps and tubing for irrigation ( ), and a building where the women will work, sheltered from the sun., including a play area for their children. My hope is that in the spirit of giving during this Christmas season if each one of you gave only \$25, we would have enough to pay for most of the above.

Giving is simple, either through PayPal on our website, [www.bio-benin.org](http://www.bio-benin.org), or send a cheque to Bio-Benin, 7483 Pinebrook Road, Park City, UT 84098. Many thanks to all of you who have donated in the past and we hope will continue to do so. To those who contribute for the first time this season, we won't let you down. In a country of deep food insecurity your generosity makes a difference. Thank you.

Best wishes for the Holiday Season

Julie and Guillaume

