

Niger Plantation 2008

This year we topped our goal of planting 30.000, actually ending up with 35.000 new trees.

Growing in the nursery in Niamey, the trees were transported 150 km east to Dosso. This little trip 'stressed' the trees positively, resulting in a faster spreading of their roots when finally planted. Who says that stress is always bad!

With a team of 10 forestry technicians and the help of 15 villagers the first site was filled in only 5 days.

We are happy to say that the conditions were perfect, as it rained just before and after we planted the trees.

Holes were made and then we waited for 3 days for the rain (which is actually not too bad of a waiting time). The following days we were able to plant in good conditions and it rained again just after planting. What a perfect timing!



The Nursery in Niamey



Our First Planting site



The landlord of the terrain, Seini Abdou, is a very energetic person and did a great job preparing his terrain for the plantation. In two years we will see the trees deliver the first fruits and leaves that the villagers will be able to use for their different purposes.

4000 trees were used to build a fence around the plantation using a first line of 0,5 meter separation between trees and a second line of 1 meter just behind. This year Seini will also add a wired fence to prevent animals from entering the plantation.

Apart from the 4000 trees planted as a fence, a further 9000 trees were planted at the Dosso site: Ziziphus Mauritania, Acacia Senegal, Acacia Sieberiana, Adansonia Digitata, Jatropha Curcas, Bauhinia Rufecens, **Moringa**.

From last year's trees we had a 90% survival rate, which can be considered a success. The palm tree species, Borassus and Doum, the least resistant of the planted species, had some bad results this year. We will replant the missing trees next year and we expect much better results as the Acacias will already have developed a strong root system. This allows for better humidification of the soil and makes it easier for all other trees to grow.

The **Moringa** is an amazing plant with a lot of excellent properties. It enhances plant growth and crop yields of other plants and when the leaves are processed they are used by both animals and humans for nutritional purposes (leaves contain complete proteins, which is rare for a plant). We just planted a few to see the resistance of this species in the area. If all goes well we will certainly start to plant more next year.



Baobab, planted in 2008



Acacia Senegal, planted in 2007

The first year in a trees' life is the most decisive one. By successfully passing this first step and getting to the new rainy season, the plants are in perfect shape for the following years.

The most surprising is the baobab with some plants already reaching 1,5 meters, with an average of 1 meter for all Baobabs. As from next year the cultivation of the leaves will be possible. A bag of baobab leaves can be sold 2.500 to 3.000 FCFA (approx 4,5€ or \$6) on local markets allowing already a good income for the locals.



We planted a total of 22.000 trees.

The second planting site a bit further north from Dosso is more arid. The terrain belongs to the village of Talakia. Braving the difficult living conditions the villagers are a very hardworking people. They digged an impressive 22.000 holes in the valley of the hills bordering the village. The holes are shaped downhill in a kind of 'champagne fountain' so that rain is collected and that the soil is kept in a fixed place



On The Second Planting site



A former project had used the same technique on a small part of this valley and it resulted in beautiful trees. The only problem was the choice of the trees species made. Basically they have no utility for the villagers, which is not the case with our plantation.

Together with the villagers, we decided to plant the Baobab trees right into the village. The reason is that they highly value this particular species and also because the baobab needs more water than other species. Each village member was given one baobab to take care of.

As well as with the Dosso site, the trees were planted once the first rain had fallen, humidifying the holes. Again, we had excellent conditions. All in all, 12 days were needed to complete the work on this site, with 30 people helping us to plant.

Let's not forget the active participation of the 2 Tree-nation members who joined us during this planting season! They had a hard time under the sun but did a beautiful job and planted many trees!

