

## The groundnut research program in the Sudano-Sahelian Region of North Cameroon: Past and present status

Groundnut is an important cash and food crop which occupies an important place in the farmers' livelihood in Africa. Prior to the introduction of cotton in 1951, groundnut was the major export crop in North Cameroon. However, groundnut is no longer exported since 1976 due to strong competition from cotton and high local demand. Since 1990, groundnut area and production are almost stable in the country due to lack of improved seed supply facilities. The area is estimated at 140,000 ha and production at 120,000 tons of pods with an average yield of 800 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>.

The groundnut research program in the country was established in 1982 at the Regional Centre of Agricultural Research for Development (CRAD), Maroua. The goal of the program was to increase groundnut yield and production in quantity and quality through cultivar introduction and selection as well as agronomic research. Before the establishment of the program, groundnut research activities were carried out at the "Projet Semencier" Farm by the Institute for Tropical Agricultural Research (IRAT) from 1965 to 1979. The end results of these research activities consisted of an oilseed variety, 28-206 and a confectionary cultivar, GH119-20, released in 1970. These research activities were interrupted in 1979 due to financial constraints and the lack of groundnut breeder. The groundnut research activities were restarted in 1982 by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Project. They were interrupted again in 1986 at the end of the Project. During this period several improved oilseed and confectionary varieties were identified, but not released. The Maroua Project supported the program from 1990 to 1996 with the main objective of establishing a variety map for North Cameroon. At the end of the Project, this objective was not achieved.

The Groundnut Germplasm Project (GGP) supported two on-station regional trials on rosette and early leaf spot resistance in Cameroon during 1999 to 2001. Besides, a field experiment was conducted over two years (2001 and 2002) to identify high-yielding genotypes. Improved varieties and early leaf spot resistant genotypes of the GGP were used for the experiment. ICGV 86003 and JL 24, two improved varieties, produced significantly ( $P \leq 0.5$ ) higher pod yields than others. In addition to regional trials, GGP supported in 2001 seed production in Cameroon. These funds helped to increase seed and release of the two varieties. The proposed names are BIRMAR 6 for ICGV 86003 and BIRMAR 7 for JL 24.

Frequent interruptions in the continuity of groundnut program in the country has affected the outcomes of research activities and their impact on groundnut production.

Since 2002, groundnut research program is running on a very low pace due to lack of funding. All the research activities are conducted at the Maroua research station only, using low incomes obtained from the sale of seeds and in a few cases, the contributions of the African Development Bank.

Considering the high regional importance of groundnut compared to cowpea, which is strongly funded by the USAID Project, I urge international donors to support the groundnut research program in the Sudano-Sahelian region of North Cameroon to the advantage of the whole Central African region.

**Contributed by:** A Hamasselbé

Groundnut Breeder

Institute of Agricultural Research for Development  
(IRAD)

PO Box 33, Maroua

Cameroon

Email: ahamasselbe@yahoo.com