

# Discover News-sheet for colleagues in Africa

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## Coping with drought 3. Zai holes: Experience from Togo



Dear Friends

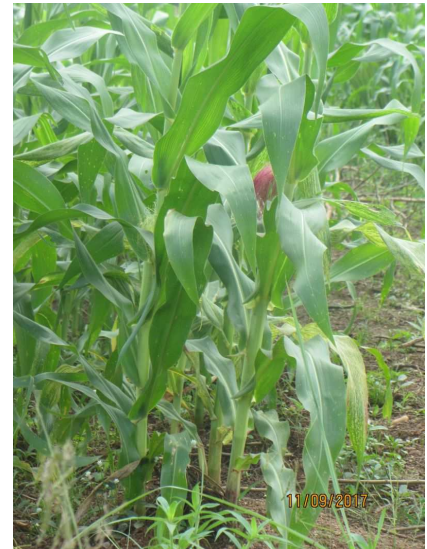
In Bassar, Togo, Gbati Nikabou succeeds in growing better maize and having an earlier crop than his neighbours. How does he do it?



His method is to dig “zai holes”.

He digs holes 30cm deep, and fills them with well-rotted manure and compost. He covers this compost with a little soil. He leaves a small depression in the hole so that, when it rains, the rain collects in the hole.

He sows three seeds in each hole. After they germinate, he leaves the two strongest plants. If the ground is wet, he sows the seed directly into the compost. If the soil is dry, the compost may be too hot, and he sows the seeds in the earth covering the compost.



As the maize grows, he scatters leucaena leaves onto the surface of the soil around the plants; they provide an additional fertiliser.

When planting trees, Gbati digs a much bigger hole.

Cocoa is grown along the coast in West Africa, but people say that cocoa cannot be grown in Bassar. Using this method of zai holes, Gbati has demonstrated that cocoa can indeed be grown there. He hopes that, by cultivating cocoa, local farmers may benefit from another source of income.

Is the idea of zai holes good? Try it! I wish you success.

Best wishes, Keith



Gbati Nikabou in his wonderful tree nursery teaching others how to plant seeds, take cuttings and plant trees.