Composting to beat striga

Because striga prefers to grow on poor soils, it is important to keep the soil moist and fertilized in the fight against striga. A good and priceless possibility to make the soil rich, is compost.

Mineral fertilizer and organic matter will help to manage striga, but mineral fertilizer is expensive. Compost is better than fresh manure, because the fresh manure can burn the crop, especially on sandy soils. Furthermore, fresh manure contains weed seeds. Compost will improve the structure of the soil and keep it moist for a long time.

Making compost

Compost can be made out of stalks of cereals, household waste, fallen leaves and animal excretions. It also needs water. In humid countries or during the rain season you should store the compost in a heap to prevent it from getting to wet. In dry areas you should make a pit, so the compost stays moist enough.

You can store compost for one hectare in a pit that is four metres long, two metres wide and half a metre deep. Add straw, fallen leaves and millet or sorghum stalks. To help the straws decomposing, you can chop them or let your animals walk through or urinate on them.

After this you can add kitchen rests and animal excretions. Then add ash. Always water after each layer. If the pit is full, close it with fine soil, palm leaves or old mats, to make sure it stays moist. If it gets dry anyways, you can always add water. After two to three month the compost is ready.

Applying compost

You can spread the compost on the field and work it into the soil. On the same day you can start planting your crop. Just before planting you can put compost in small holes and ditches.