

DIRECTORATE OF CROP SERVICES

WEST AFRICA AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY PROGRAMME - GHANA

SUSTAINING HEALTHY CASSAVA PLANTING MATERIAL PRODUCTION

BY GEORGE PRAH (ROOTS & TUBER LIAISON OFFICER)

Introduction

Enhancing availability and accessibility of improved cassava planting materials is essential to sustainable up-scaling of techniques for multiplication, distribution, and linkages among the value chain actors.

During the implementation of WAAPP 1 the concentration was on development of National Centre of Specialization hence the development of technologies at the national level.

WAAPP 2 has a focus of expanding the frontiers for technology development and dissemination towards achieving regionalization. In addition, the harmonization of procedures for the release and registration of genetic materials to enable easy movement of materials within the region requires that technologies be tested across relevant agro-ecological zones for adaptability.

Over the past decade, the multiplication and distribution of improved and healthy cassava planting materials has been championed by the Roots and Tuber Improvement and Marketing Programme (RTIMP) an IFAD/Government of Ghana initiative. The programme adopted Farmer Participatory approach in disseminating available technologies in over 80 districts in the Volta, Northern, Brong Ahafo, Eastern, Central and Ashanti Regions of Ghana. This was to address the challenges to multiplication and distribution of cassava planting materials which includes low yield (5-6ton/ha); low income level; multiplication and spread of diseased planting material; use of long stem cuttings (resulting in low multiplication ratio and scarcity of planting material at the beginning of the planting season); random planting (making post planting activities difficult with low planting density).

Presently, the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Programme (WAAPP) which is a World Bank funded project seeks to complement the efforts and initiatives of the RTIMP through a sustainable Research Development, Technology Dissemination and Adoption.

CSIR - CRI under the first phase of WAAPP was responsible for the development of 4 improved, market-targeted, quality and specific – desired crop variety of cassava responsive to small-scale farmers, stakeholders' requirement and the needs of agro-based industries. The varieties includes Sika Bankye, Among, Broni Bankye and Otuhia.

The WAAPP through the Directorate of Crop Services has adopted the RTIMP 3 tier multiplication system which involves Primary and Secondary Multiplication as well as Tertiary distribution of improved and healthy planting materials.

At the primary level, few materials from breeders are multiplied under optimal agronomic conditions to produce clean and healthy foundation planting materials. The planting materials are inspected in the field on two occasions by a team of experts, to ensure quality and standards, before coppicing to secondary fields. The MoFA Agricultural Stations, at Wenchi, Asuansi, Kpeve, Babile and Mampong) are responsible for primary multiplication of improved cassava planting materials and training of farmers in multiplication of planting materials.

The secondary level involves further multiplication of certified materials by contracted or commercial planting material producers for distribution to tertiary farmers. This level is being facilitated by the Regional or District Units of Agriculture. Secondary fields are also inspected by a team of experts to ensure quality and standards.

The tertiary level is where certified planting materials from secondary fields are distributed to farmers mainly for production as food. Materials from these sites are also given to the Directorate of Agricultural Extension Services (DAES) to carryout demonstrations.

Overall coordination, management, monitoring and evaluation of project activities are carried out by the WAAPP PCU, DCS focal persons and DAES.

Presently with the assistance from World Bank and research, the programme has established 55 hectares of improved cassava varieties (Sika Bankye and Ampong) at 5 primary sites. It is envisage that by close of the 2014 major season, 190 hectares new area will be covered to these varieties. The expected output of production will plant 1,900 hectares of secondary multiplication (taking into consideration a ratio of 1:10). The target is also to distribute these materials to RADUs/DADUs and commercial planting material producers in non-RTIMP zones nationwide.



Primary Multiplication- Mampong Agric. Station



Primary Multiplication- Wenchi Agric. Station



New Primary Material Establishment

At the secondary level, the programme will support contract farmers through the RADUs and DADUs with healthy improved cassava planting materials, cost of land preparation, weeding (3 times) and fire belt creation among others. They will establish secondary fields for expansion of planting material base. Currently, WAAPP has supported the establishment of 20 hectares of cassava planting materials at the secondary level.

Conclusion

It is predicted that the innovations in the 3 tier system of planting material multiplication and distribution in respect of cassava, will enhance production and productivity of cassava farmers as well as improved accessibility of healthy improved planting materials.

To ensure the adoption of improved planting materials, farmers have to be linked to processing centres, breweries, industries and other actors along the value chain to enable them market their produce for better prices.