

Staple Crops Programme

Staple crops are a crucial source of food, feed, raw materials, improved nutrition and employment and are a major source of income. The Staple Crops Programme focuses on banana, cassava, maize, millet, potato, rice, sorghum, sweetpotato and wheat, which are priority staples in the region.

Highlights

- The programme has introduced germplasm for different staples crops which has resulted into increased productivity. Over 96 high yielding cassava genotypes have been introduced resulting in increased yield from 1.2 ton/ha to about 3.6 tons/ha, generating between 400- 700 USD per ha.
- Over 90 potato and 65 sweet potato varieties have been released to the region. Farmers who adopted these varieties realised yield increases from 5-7 tons/ha to 15-20tons/ha for potato and from 4-8tons/ha to 10-16tons/ha for sweet potato.



Tackling devastating cassava diseases

- Staple Crops Programme has actively participated in the management of Banana Xanthomonas Wilt (BXW) disease, Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD) and Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD).
- CMD resistant materials have been improved for resistance to CBSD. By the end of this year (2011), more than ten genotypes will have been released in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. A CBSD resource kit with various communication products was developed and used widely in the region to raise awareness about the disease, how it spreads and how it can be managed.
- The programme has coordinated efforts to develop new innovations and adapting existing technologies for BXW management in Burundi, DR Congo, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda. The proportion of farmers who have effectively controlled BXW has increased from about 5% to 60% in Uganda and DR Congo. As a result, banana production has improved from 2.5% at the peak of the disease, to 30% in Uganda alone.
- Seed production strategies for vegetative propagated staples such as potato have been developed and are being disseminated. The seedplot technology that yields 3 times more tubers than the conventional planting is now ready for upscaling throughout the potato growing areas of ECA.
- Varieties of sorghum, millet, maize and cassava that withstand the effect of drought have been developed together with innovations for soil and water conservation techniques.
- Initiatives to change the perception of sorghum from being a poor man's crop are ongoing. Currently, 14 sorghum value-added products have been developed. These are meant to appeal to various consumers, especially those in urban areas.

Some of the sorghm products



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For further information contact: staples@asareca.org