

Why Sustainable Management of Xanthomonas Wilt of Banana in East and Central Africa Has Been Elusive

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Banana is an important food and cash crop and constitutes a large proportion of the total crop production in East and Central African (ECA) countries. Banana production has been threatened by Xanthomonas wilt (BXW) disease caused by the bacterium *Xanthomonas campestris* pv. *musacearum*. Besides being a threat to food security in the region, the disease has severe economic implications, which emanate from yield losses and management costs. Without proper management, yields in affected areas are reduced to zero. Management approaches of the disease include use of cultural practices and awareness creation among the stakeholders along the banana value chain. These efforts to control the disease produced partial results, and the disease has continued to encroach into previously disease-free areas and to resurge in areas where it had been controlled. One of the major challenges to sustainable management of the disease has been poor understanding by stakeholders of the factors influencing disease spread and severity. Awareness creation among stakeholders has not been sustained due to limited technical, financial and infrastructural capacity. Incorrect application of cultural practices and lack of appropriate methods for field disinfection of tools coupled with weak institutional frameworks for enforcing byelaws and quarantine measures are key drivers to the continued presence of the disease in ECA. It should however be emphasized that no single management option is adequate to sustainably manage the disease. In this paper, we review mechanisms of disease transmission and drivers of the continued disease presence, and suggest approaches for sustainable management of BXW.

Tinzaara W, Karamura EB, Blomme G, Jogo W, Ocimati W, Rietveld A, Kubiriba J, Opio F;

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