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Liberia Cassava Value Chain Project

# Dos and Don'ts of Cassava Production


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# Contents

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# Introduction 1

Cassava (Manihot esculenta Crantz) is the most important staple food in Africa and the third most important source of calories in the tropics. Cassava is the second most consumed staple food crop after rice in Liberia. It can grow and do well in almost all counties in the country and is produced by over 60% of farming households. Apart from providing food for about 4.5 million people, cassava is an important contributor to GDP. Cassava contributes immensely to the empowerment of women, who make up the majority of smallholder producers and carry out over 80% of trading activities in the rural areas. The consumption of cassava and cassava products as well as the area under cultivation are increasing rapidly, therefore there is a need to strengthen and increase the domestic production systems to achieve food security, improve the standard of living of those in cassava business, and contribute to the country's GDP.

In achieving these, robust extension and capacity building packages must be put in place to showcase modern/ improved cassava production techniques and facilitate adoption by smallholder farmers. Farmers know "How to plant cassava" but their attention must also be drawn to "How not to plant cassava" for better results.

This manual seeks to address the right and the wrong practices in cassava root production to give farmers a basic understanding of best practices that will lead to increases in yield.

Plant on well-drained land.

Avoid waterlogged area.

Plant on friable, loamy land.

Avoid stony ground.

Plant leguminous crops in rotation with cassava.

Do not crop cassava after cassava.

Allow organic manure to cure 3□4 weeks before applying.

Do not apply uncured, organic manure.

# Land clearing 4


Good land clearing has little or no effect on top soil.

Do not tamper with top soil when clearing with heavy equipment.

Spot burning should be encouraged to reduce refuse after clearing.

Uncontrolled burning should be discouraged.

# Ploughing 4

Good ploughing creates little or no space in the field.

Poor ploughing forms gutters and will encourage erosion.

# Harrowing 5

Good tilth and a smooth surface indicate good harrowed land.

A rough land surface indicates poorly harrowed land.

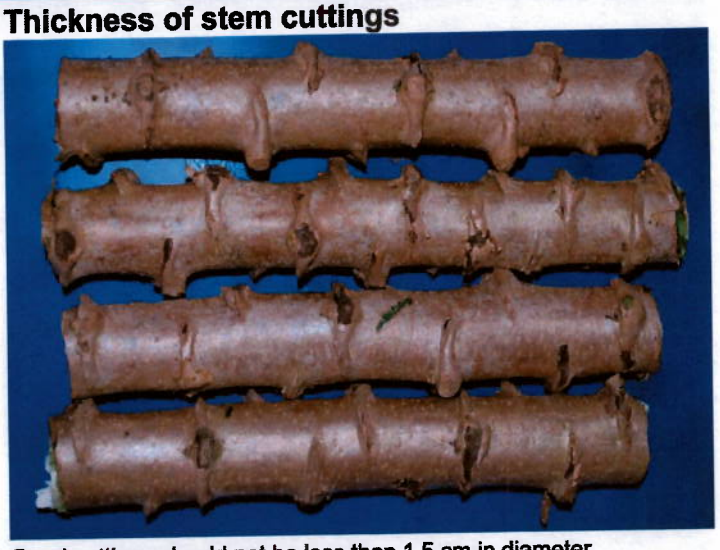
# Ridging 6

Ridging should be uniform and spaced equally.

Avoid irregular shapes, space, and distance between ridges.

# Stem quality 7

## Thickness of stem cuttings

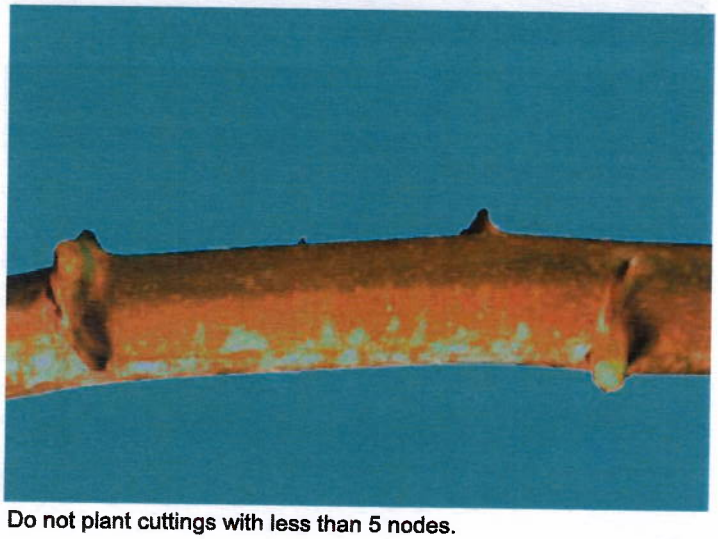


Good cuttings should not be less than 1.5 cm in diameter.

Do not plant thin stem cuttings.

## Number of nodes

A good cutting should have above 5□8 nodes



Do not plant cuttings with less than 5 nodes.

## Surface of stem cuttings

Cuttings should be smooth at the edge using sharp tools.

Do not use a blunt tool to avoid rough edges on cuttings.

## Maturity of stems

Make cuttings from mature stems of 9□15 months old.

Do not cut stems from immature or very old plants.

## Health of stem cuttings

Select and use healthy stems.

Do not use diseased stems.

# Stem storage 8

Keep stems vertical and under shade for planting.

Do not keep stems lying horizontally under shade or in the sun.

Nodes should face upward in a vertical or slanting position.

Do not plant with nodes facing downward.

# Population density 10

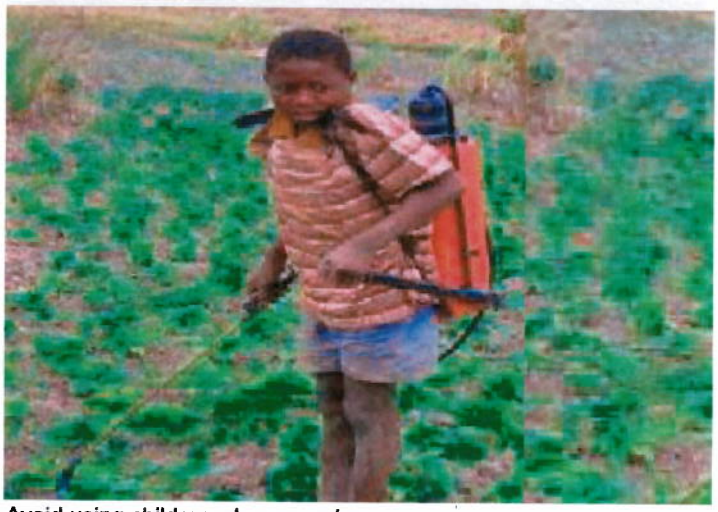
Ensure good plant density in your plot.

Avoid scanty or poor plant population.

A good cassava field should be weed free.

Do not allow your cassava to compete with weeds.

Use adults when spraying.



Avoid using children when spraying.

## Protective clothing for herbicide application

Use the right protective clothing when spraying.

Do not spray herbicides when improperly dressed.

## Precaution in herbicide application

Spray when there is clear weather.

Do not spray when the weather is poor.

You can eat before or after spraying.

Do not eat or drink while spraying.

# Fertilizer application 12

Apply fertilizer by band or ring method.

Do not scatter fertilizer on the plant or the leaves of the plant.

Apply fertilizer on weed-free plots.

Do not apply fertilizer on weedy plots.

Harvesting big farms with the use of a mechanical harvester saves time and costs.

Harvesting with many workers takes more time and incurs higher costs.

Harvest carefully with the use of a hoe, cutlass, or harvesting tool.

Do not use bare hands to pull roots forcefully.

## Cassava root yield

Following best practices leads to bumper yields.

Poor yields result if farmers get it wrong.

Use cutlass to cut roots from the stem.

Do not use your hand to break root's base.

## Cassava root transportation

Load roots gently in layers in vehicle.

Avoid head loading or using a bicycle.

Convey roots to processing centers immediately (within 24 hours) to add value.

Do not leave roots for too long (more than 24 hours) after harvesting to avoid spoilage.

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