

Pruning of cocoa

Recognize the problem

When the cocoa trees are carefully pruned it helps the tree to bear more fruits and bring a higher income to the farmer. Unpruned trees are not very productive and are unmanageable.

Background

Pruning is the removal of dead and unwanted branches e.g. curved branches and branches affected by witches broom etc.

Pruning allows more light to enter the field and increases air flow which could reduce the risk of disease such as black pod and witches broom.

Pruning also allows more nutrients to be available for more flowers and therefore increases fruit yields.

Management

Pruning should begin after the first year of planting. This should be done to remove dead branches and weaker stems when there is more than one stem.

Make a clean cut on stumps that were left from earlier pruning and where decay could enter the trunk a drain should be made into the trunk downwards.

Using sharp clean cutlass, chop off chuppon (low branches), branches with witches broom, curved branches, dry and stumps remains. After pruning each tree remember to sanitize tools before moving to another tree.

When cutting off chuppon make your cut away from trunk and cut at a 45 degree angle so that water will run off, then dress with tar.

A heavy pruning is done just before the rainy season begins and one pruning per crop.

Farmers should prune tree to height at which they can harvest crop, 15-20ft accepted.

Never prune while the tree is in bloom.

Do not remove more than ¼ of tree.

Farmers should prune every 2-3 months depending on the growth.

Farmer pruning with bow saw in farmers' fields school. (Photo by Thaddeus Peters)



Farmer pruning cocoa with cutlass.



The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: many countries where this pest or problem is present



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