

Clean cassava cuttings to stop mealybug spread

Recognize the problem

Cassava mealybug (*Vidung'ata* in Swahili) is a pest of cassava which can reduce yields by half. The cassava mealybug is whitish, soft-bodied and only about 1 to 3 mm long. It is covered with white wax. The mealybug sucks liquid out of shoots and leaves. This causes malformation or folding of leaves. Attacked plants have bushy growing tips.

Background

Mealybugs lay eggs on the leaves. Eggs hatch into bugs that live on leaves and tips. They live for at least a month, and produce many generations which lead to high numbers. Cassava mealybugs like dry weather. They are spread with the cutting materials obtained from infested fields for planting.

Management

- Collect planting materials from strong and high-yield plants of a well-known mealybug-free area, or from research centres like Kibaha Research Centre
- Avoid collecting planting material during the dry season because mealybugs prefer dry weather, and plants might be infested
- Cut 10 to 20 cm off the top and bottom of the to-be-planted cassava stems because mealybugs stay on tips and leaves
- Cut the remaining middle part of the stem into 20 to 30 cm long pieces which will contain 5 to 7 nodes; enough for rooting
- Soak cuttings for 5 minutes in hot, not boiling, water to kill pests that might be present
- Cool the cuttings, and pack them carefully in wooden containers to avoid node damage
- As soon as possible, transport cuttings and plant them
- The cuttings can only be stored for a maximum of a week before planting, while you prepare the land
- During storage, place cut stems upright in a cool, dark place or at least in the shade
- Place the base of the stems on soil that has been loosened with a hoe and is watered regularly

Cassava mealy bug, 1 to 3 mm long. (Photo by Biological Case Study: IITA)



Bushy top caused by many mealy bugs. (Photo by IITA)



Scientific name(s) > *Phenacoccus manihoti*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia



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