

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.

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



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

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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Edited by Plantwise.