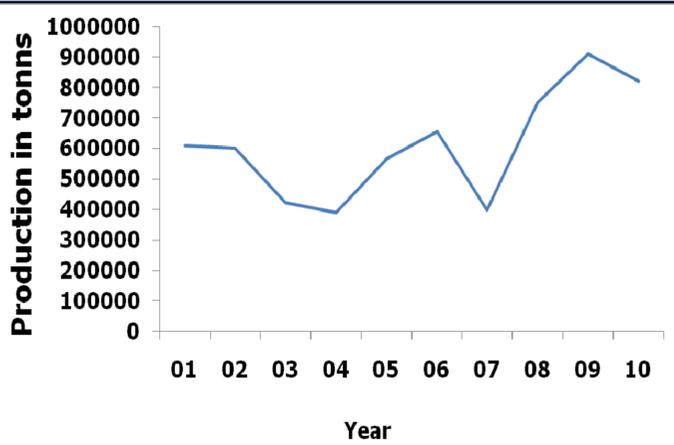


Introduction

-Kenya produces about 750,000 tons of cassava of which 60% is grown in western Kenya (FAO stats, 2008). The crop is one of the major root crops second only to potato. Production constraints include virus diseases such as cassava mosaic disease (CMD) and cassava brown streak disease (CBSD). Other constraints include cultivar decline, low yielding landraces, lack of clean planting materials and insect pests. Cassava virus diseases are mainly perpetuated by use of infected cuttings and whitefly vectors.

Cassava is mainly consumed as boiled roots or milled to make ugali-like patse. Or as a vegetable. However, cassava is also used for industrial purposes such manufacturing of crisps, bread, starch and ethanol among other products. Cassava has therefore become important as a famine relief crop due to emergence of challenges such as the maize lethal necrosis disease (MLND) and erratic weather patterns.



Cassava production trends in Kenya from 2001-2010

Constraints to Cassava Production



Cassava brown streak disease



Whiteflies



Cassava mosaic disease

Other constraints

- Lack of disease –free planting materials
- Use of inferior varieties (genotypes)
- Insect pests (e.g mites, mealy bugs)

Commercialization of Cassava

Generally, cassava in Kenya is characterized by production for subsistence and low on-farm and off-farm value addition. There is very limited product development despite the fact that cassava has been used in the formulation of food products (crisps, chips, bread, chapati etc), feed, pharmaceutical and industrial products including biofuels (biodiesel). Interventions are urgently required in order to commercialize this crop.



Cassava chapati



Cassava chips



Cassava crisps



Cassava bread



Cassava flour

Strategies for enhancing Production and Commercialization

1. Increase Productivity and Products Value

- Increase land area under cassava
- Promote value addition and product utilization
- Establishment of a clean seed production and delivery system
- Promoting the use of clean planting materials

2. Research and Development

- Improvement of varieties through breeding
- Development of sustainable disease management approaches
- Training of farmers on management of cassava diseases
- Development of improved post-harvest handling techniques
- Value addition methods and development of new products



Training of farmers on diagnosis and management of cassava diseases



3) Policies to support cassava

- Development of a certification program or cassava planting material
- Regulation of germplasm movement
- Substitution of wheat flour with cassava flour (10-30%)