

Sweet Success in Uganda

Participatory studies carried out by a Ugandan NGO, BUCADEF, found that a key food security constraint was the declining productivity of local indigenous varieties of sweet potato. BUCADEF approached Namulonge Agricultural and Animal Production Research Institute (NAARI) and the Regional Potato and Sweet potato Improvement Program in Eastern and Central Africa (PRAPACE) to determine what interventions were available to help local communities.

It was through contacts made during these approaches that BUCADEF became aware of new virus-resistant, higher yielding sweet potato varieties being developed with CPP funding. An earlier project (R6617) had focused on the identification and mode of transmission of the sweet potato virus, which causes major yield losses, threatening rural livelihoods. A current project (R7492) is developing, screening and multiplying resistant varieties.



Sweet potato success: new virus-resistant varieties also give higher yields

These initial contacts led to BUCADEF becoming involved with multiplication of varieties that had been successfully farmer tested, and conducting research on other varieties on selected farmer plots. Impact from project R7492 is being restricted through bottlenecks in the multiplication and distribution of plant material. Utilising the BUCADEF infrastructure will greatly facilitate

the availability of the farmer acceptable varieties.

The first trials were very successful. Farmers realised that production had greatly increased, especially for varieties like NASPOT 52, New Kawogo and Sowola Wagabolige.



Farmer harvesting a sweet potato virus disease-resistant variety

The farmer response to the new varieties has been overwhelming and adoption is on the increase: "One multiplication site in Luwero District controlled by Mr. Ssetyabula Rajab has been able to distribute vines to over 300 farmers. Mr. Ssetyabule was able to realise approximately £480 in the year 2000. Many farmers are flocking to these sites in their big numbers and they have confessed that yield is as two times compared to the land race varieties." (letter from BUCADEF, 2001)

The Crop Protection Programme hopes to commission a project led by BUCADEF, with technical support from PRAPACE. This project will further promote the outputs of R7492, to meet the widespread demand for these varieties. BUCADEF expect to extend the varieties to more than 500 homes in every district of Buganda in 2001, reaching a total of 3500 homes, with the possibility of doubling this number each year.

R6617: Identification, characterisation and epidemiological studies of the whitefly-borne component of sweet potato virus disease complex in Africa, R. Gibson, NRI

R7492: Promotion and technical support for methods of controlling whitefly-borne viruses in sweet potato in East Africa, R. Gibson, NRI