

COMMERCIAL CROP PRODUCTION GUIDE SERIES

# Growing Cocoyams in Nigeria



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Information and Communication Support  
for Agricultural Growth in Nigeria  
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# Growing Cocoyams in Nigeria

Cocoyam is another tuber crop used mainly for human food. It is commonly grown amongst small scale farmers who operate within the subsistence economy. In the past, it is regarded as a lowly important crop which cultivation and consumption lie within the less privileged farmers.

## Choice of Land

Cocoyam thrives better on a well drained sandy loamy soil. It produces optimum yields when planted in fertile soil with a good water retention capacity.

## Land Preparation

Clear the bush, burn the thrashes if it is a virgin land. If it is a ploughable land, plough twice at 15 days interval. Heaps or ridges can be made at 1 m x 1 m apart.

## Time of Planting

Immediately the rain is steady in the area suitable for its cultivation.

## Variety

There are two main varieties white and pink varieties.

## Spacing

Plant on the crest of the heaps or ridges at 1m apart on row. A whole cormel or cut sett from corms is planted at about 15fi20 cm deep. The cut surface of the sett should face upwards in a slanting position.

## Planting Material

A whole corm or cormel can be cut into setts for planting. The sett or corm should not be too big or too small.

## Seed Rate

10,000corms/ha.

## Fertilizer Application

Fertile soil may not be fertilized for cocoyam but it may be needed if the soil has been depleted. Apply N.P.K. 15:15:15 at 5fi6 beer bottle capfuls in a ring form about 10 cm to the plant.

## **Weed and Pests**

### **FUNGAL ATTACK**

Fungus attacks cocoyam plant, leaves turn yellow prematurely and the entire plant becomes wilt and damping -off of the seedlings may also result. In severe attack, uproot the affected plant, bury it or burn it.

### **PEST**

- (i) **WHITE ANTS:** White ants cause damage on the tubers at any stage of development or even in storage.
- (ii) Other pests include rodents that eat the corms and cormels on field.

## **Harvesting**

Most cocoyam varieties mature in about 8 months from planting. Harvesting is done by shaking up the plant and uprooting it and bringing out the cormels while those cormels that remain in the soil are dug out. Cormels should not be bruised for proper storage.

## **Yields**

Yields are variable depending on the variety but may be in the region of 4 to 10 t/ha.

## **Storage**

The cormels are cleaned but not washed. They may be arranged on raised platforms where they may remain in good condition for up to 3-4 months. Other storage techniques include packing on spots and dusted with wood ash, or leaving on heaps/ridges unharvested for 2-3 months but sprouting should not be allowed.

## **Uses of Cocoyam**

- (i) Cormels are peeled, cut into necessary pieces then fry and eat; boil and eat; or boil to pound like pounded yam.
- (ii) Cocoyam flour is made from dried cormels, and can be used for confectionary.
- (iii) The broad leaves are equally used for wrapping purposes for example kolanut, bitter-cola (orogbo) etc.

# About ICS-Nigeria

**Information and Communication Support for Agricultural Growth in Nigeria (ICS-Nigeria)** is a project which aims to increase the quantity and quality of information available for increased agricultural production, processing, and marketing and also strengthen the capacity of farmer assistance organizations to package and disseminate information and agricultural technologies to farmers for the alleviation of rural poverty.

In recent past, investment in the support services to Nigerian agriculture has been neglected with the result that this sector has not realized its full potential to contribute to the prosperity and economic development of the country. Meanwhile, increasing population pressure and the accompanying need to intensify agricultural production is leading to erosion of the natural resource base on which agriculture depends.

The sustainability of production is threatened by a vicious cycle of declining soil fertility and increasing problems of pests, diseases, and weeds. Moreover, the lack of knowledge on how to add value through proper storage, processing, and marketing impedes agricultural growth.

Promising technologies exist to address these problems, but their adoption is constrained by a lack of information packaged in appropriate formats, and poor communication channels for this information, between farmers and the research, extension, and education organizations that are supposed to address these issues.

**ICS-Nigeria** aims to assist in meeting these challenges by developing appropriate-format materials for disseminating information and agricultural technologies to target user groups, while increasing capacity of farmer assistance organizations to produce information materials. At the same time, communication channels will be reinforced so that information flow is enhanced.

Agricultural technologies have been selected on the basis that they will lead to agricultural commercialization thereby enhancing rapid income generation for farmers and private sector practitioners. The project is taking advantage of existing agricultural development programs in Nigeria, national research institutes, and international research institutes in and out of Nigeria to identify these technologies. The project is also taking advantage of existing successful partnerships arising from recent and ongoing programs to enhance information flow.

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