

Changing from Crude (Rudimentary) to Modern Method of Cassava Processing in the Ngwo Village of Njikwa Sub Division of North West Region of Cameroon

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Abstract : The processing of cassava from tubers or roots into food using crude and rudimentary method (hand peeling, grating, frying and to sun drying) is a very cumbersome and difficult process. The crude methods are time consuming and labour intensive. While on the other hand, modern processing method, that is using machines to perform the various processes as washing, peeling, grinding, oven drying, fermentation and frying is easier, less time consuming, and less labour intensive. Rudimentarily, cassava roots are processed into numerous products and utilized in various ways according to local customs and preferences. For the people of Ngwo village, cassava is transformed locally into flour or powder form called 'cumcum'. It is also sucked into water to give a kind of food call 'water fufu' and fried to give 'garri'. The leaves are consumed as vegetables. Added to these, its relative high yields; ability to stay underground after maturity for long periods give cassava considerable advantage as a commodity that is being used by poor rural folks in the community, to fight poverty. It plays a major role in efforts to alleviate the food crisis because of its efficient production of food energy, year-round availability, tolerance to extreme stress conditions, and suitability to present farming and food systems in Africa. Improvement of cassava processing and utilization techniques would greatly increase labor efficiency, incomes, and living standards of cassava farmers and the rural poor, as well as enhance the-shelf life of products, facilitate their transportation, increase marketing opportunities, and help improve human and livestock nutrition. This paper presents a general overview of crude ways in cassava processing and utilization methods now used by subsistence and small-scale farmers in Ngwo village of the North West region in Cameroon, and examine the opportunities of improving processing technologies. Cassava needs processing because the roots cannot be stored for long because they rot within 3-4 days of harvest. They are bulky with about 70% moisture content, and therefore transportation of the tubers to markets is difficult and expensive. The roots and leaves contain varying amounts of cyanide which is toxic to humans and animals, while the raw cassava roots and uncooked leaves are not palatable. Therefore, cassava must be processed into various forms in order to increase the shelf life of the products, facilitate transportation and marketing, reduce cyanide content and improve palatability.

Keywords : cassava roots, crude ways, food system, poverty

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