INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

SURVEILLANCE AND CONTROL OF CASSAVA DISEASES IN AFRICA

PÔLE DE PROTECTION DES PLANTES (3P) SAINT-PIERRE, LA RÉUNION ISLAND

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CASSAVA GENETIC DIVERSITY IN CENTRAL AFRICA : A SURVEY CONDUCTED WITHIN A UE-PRASAC PROJECT FOR SUSTAINABLE CASSAVA PRODUCTION IN THE CEMAC REGION

Marie-France DUVAL CIRAD UMR AGAP, France

riginally domesticated in the southern rim of Amazonia, cassava was introduced into Africa by Portuguese in the 16th century at the Congo Estuary and quickly adopted and spread by African populations. Cassava is now a major staple crop for the Central African region. However its productivity is low and farmers face major constraints including recent devastating pandemics of viral diseases.

Faced with this difficult situation, PRASAC and Institutes from the six CEMAC countries developed a regional project funded by EU for sustainable cassava production adapted to local markets (2011-2015). One of the project goals is to improve the knowledge of local genetic resources. For this purpose 753 accessions were collected among five countries: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon and Tchad. The sampled accessions were analyzed using SSR markers together with 38 American varieties selected for their geographical diversity.

Despite their considerably lower representation the American accessions displayed a higher number of specific alleles. Nevertheless and despite the bottle-neck following their introduction, the African accessions reached high levels of genetic diversity. Although African farmers generally report a strictly vegetative propagation, it is highly probable that sexual reproduction played a major role in the diversification of cassava in Central Africa.

CASSAVA INTERNATIONAL TRANSIT SITE ON LA RÉUNION

Michel ROUX-CUVELIER

Researcher, CIRAD, France

ocated in the Indian Ocean, Réunion Island is relatively isolated. Sanitary conditions are exceptional for growing and studying cassava because no known cassava virus diseases (especially CMD and CBSD) are present and the incidence of other diseases such as CBB caused by *Xanthomonas axonopodis pv. manihotis* remains very low. These favorable factors, together with the presence of the Plant Protection Center's infrastructure and human skills, make La Réunion ideal for developing an international transit site of healthy plant material and so facilitate international exchange of disease-free cassava material in the near future. CIRAD's Bassin Plat and Ligne Paradis experimental stations have more than 10 ha of experimental fields and 4,600 m² of insect-proof tunnels or greenhouses. The Ligne Paradis station hosts the Plant Protection Center (Fig. 2A, G), where research in plant pathology and plant genetics is carried out. The 3P Center contains an *in-vitro* culture laboratory and a staff qualified to carry