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MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, LAND AND FISHERIES
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Record Keeping for Cassava Production

Record keeping is very important for the farmer who wants to treat his farm as a legitimate business rather than as an income generating hobby.

- Records make it easier to obtain loans since the lender receives genuine information on expenditure and returns rather than guesses.
- Records open up markets, since many agro-processors and exporters require some level of traceability in order to safeguard their customers and to protect themselves from litigation.
- Most importantly, records allow the farmer to see where the bulk of the money is being spent and identify areas where costs can be reduced in order to maximize profits.
- It also shows up strengths and deficiencies in the crop husbandry programme that will allow the farmer to make continuous improvements and better decisions.

Record keeping for any crop, including cassava, begins as soon as the first decision on the crop to be planted is taken. This is usually ploughing and the addition of crop-specific soil amendments. Farmers should record what is added to the soil, how much and when. They can then cross-reference this against the quantity and quality of the eventual harvest, in order to assess if anything was lacking and if any adjustments should be made for the next planting of the same crop. Anything of note should be recorded, for example, if the day after ploughing in fertiliser the field was flooded.

The source of planting material is very important in cassava production since the farmer does not always have planting material on hand. If planting material is bought from several locations, this should be recorded. When buying cassava setts, double check with the seller that the setts originated on his holding. If multiple varieties are being cultivated, aimed at different markets, record clearly where on the field the varieties are planted, since processors may have a preference for specific varieties.

KEY POINTS

- Record keeping is continuous through the crop's lifespan including at the very start.
- Record keeping is the first step in treating farming as a business.
- A notebook, spreadsheet or online app can be used to take and maintain records.

Varieties clearly labelled in field

All inputs applied to the crop should be recorded, once again: what is applied, when it is applied and how much. In the case of pesticides, the farmer should also record method of application: drench, spray, mist blower etc.

Date	Crop	Reason for Treatment	Products used	Rate	Volume Water	Area Sprayed	Applicator	Crop Growth Stage

Pesticide Record Sheet

A regular crop monitoring schedule should be established and followed through. More frequent monitoring may be necessary in the early stages of crop establishment (up to three months), so any problems are noticed and addressed in a timely manner.

Pest, disease and weed problems and all control methods to treat them - cultural, physical or chemical used - including dates, should be recorded.

Types of pests (if known – e.g. worms, gall midge) and diseases (e.g. leaf spots; stem or root rot) should also be recorded.

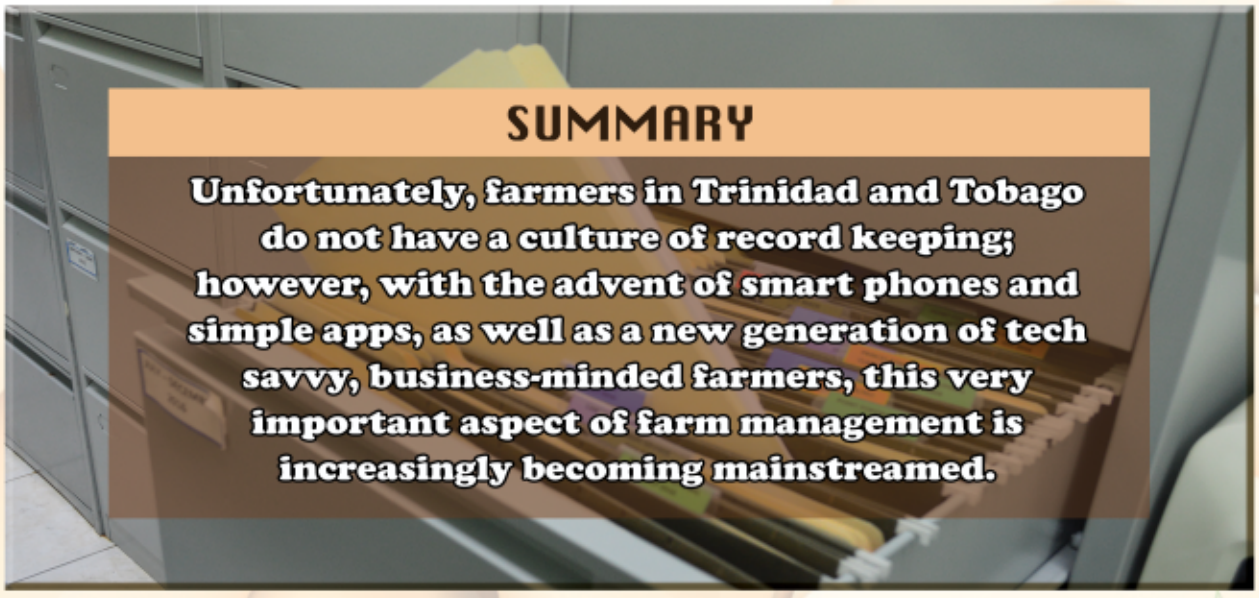
Farmers should also record dates of severe weather such as excessive drought, heat or floods. For the latter, the length of time the field is flooded should be recorded.

Labour costs are usually the most difficult for the farmer to estimate since the labour contribution of the farmer and family are usually overlooked. This gives a skewed idea of the labour requirements and cost to produce a crop of cassava. Every effort should be made to accurately record the complete labour requirement.

Careful note of the yield should be taken since this will be the main source of income to offset all of the costs incurred in producing the crop.

How to keep records

Records may be kept in a diary or notebook and eventually transcribed onto a spreadsheet. There are also several digital apps including one developed by The University of the West Indies (UWI) that can help the farmer to keep the relevant records. Many record-keeping apps can be accessed via the smart phone or tablet or computer/laptop.



SUMMARY

Unfortunately, farmers in Trinidad and Tobago do not have a culture of record keeping; however, with the advent of smart phones and simple apps, as well as a new generation of tech savvy, business-minded farmers, this very important aspect of farm management is increasingly becoming mainstreamed.

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