

# Pack 105, Item 8

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**Farmers grow old, but farming is constantly new: New standards for growing and harvesting cassava**

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**Notes to broadcaster**

To ensure that food is safe, to help farmers and processors, and to improve value chains, governments help create and enforce standards for growing and processing foods such as potatoes and cassava.

Standards are detailed guidelines for producing safe, high quality produce. They cover all aspects of production, processing, labeling, and transportation. The National Bureau of Standards in each country collaborates with other stakeholders to create and enforce these standards.

When producers and processors follow standards, product quality improves, producers and processors can expect increased income, and consumers are assured of safe, high quality products. Also, trade and marketing across national borders is possible, as is the case with the East and Central African harmonized standards for potatoes and cassava. While this drama deals with standards in East and Central Africa, there could be very similar standards in your country. Do some research to find out.

This eight-scene drama shows how potato and cassava growers and processors can grow and prepare these crops. The script talks about standards for harvesting, storing, processing, and packing cassava and potatoes.

You could use this drama as inspiration to produce a similar program on standards for cassava or other crops in your area. Or you might choose to present this drama as part of your regular farmer program, using voice actors to represent the speakers.

You could follow the drama by interviewing a cassava or potato processor, a farmer who grows cassava or potatoes for the processing market, or an expert on the potato or cassava value chain. Invite listeners to call or text in with questions and comments. Topics for discussion might include:
• What are the best opportunities for growers to sell for the processing market?
• Under what conditions should a farmer process his or her own cassava or potatoes, and when should the farmer go to a processor?
• If a listener wants to start a small-scale processing business, what steps should be taken to research the market and determine whether there is an opportunity for profit?

Estimated running time: 20 minutes, with intro and outro music.

*Note: This is the fourth in a series of four items on cassava and potato standards in East and Central Africa. The first,* [Cassava is wealth: New harmonized standards for processing cassava flour in East and Central Africa](http://www.farmradio.org/radio-resource-packs/pakage-99-cassava-the-post-harvest-value-chain/cassava-is-wealth-new-harmonized-standards-for-processing-cassava-flour-in-east-and-central-africa/)*, was published in September 2014 in Resource Pack #99. The second was published in Resource Pack #103 in March 2016, and the third was published in Pack 104 in September 2016.*

1. **NARRATOR:** Mbarute is a young farmer who lives in the countryside with his parents. He is a clever young man and his cassava harvest proves this to his father, Semana. If you want to know how to treat your cassava harvest, listen to this drama!
2. **SCENE 1**
3. **narrator:** It’s evening after the Sunday rest and Semana Evariste’s extended family is discussing the activities of the week. Mbarute Eugene, Semana’s oldest son, meets his father in front of his compound.
4. **SFX:** VOICEs OF CHILDREN, SOUND OF GOATS COMING HOME
5. **MBARUTE:** Good evening, *Mzee* (*Editor’s note: this is a term of respect for an elder*), how was the day?
6. **SEMANA:** Not bad, son. But I haven’t had a bottle of *urwagwa* (banana beer) today, and water doesn’t kill thirst!
7. **MBARUTE:** Oh, *Mzee*, we had drinks at our neighbour’s …
8. **SEMANA:** Aaah, you should have let me know, son. It’s over? Ok, I can go there tomorrow; it’s a bit late now. (PAUSE) Eh, tell me, I heard that you’re going to harvest your cassava soon. Is that true, son?
9. **MBARUTE:** It is true. I must start harvesting my cassava in the field on top of the hill. Is there a problem, dad?
10. **SEMANA:** Son, I don’t want you to harvest this cassava so quick. Only a year and a few months after sowing! I am not going to harvest. My family has never suffered hunger to the point that they had to harvest cassava before it was ripe! Harvesting early is a way to invite hunger to my family.
11. **MBARUTE:** Come on – don’t exaggerate, dad! Fifteen months for cassava is enough. That is a good growing period, especially for the new varieties! Remember that I used the new techniques and applied fertilizer in my field! It is time to harvest!
12. **SEMANA:** (A LITTLE DISGUSTED) Modern know-nothings! Who told you that cassava must last only one year in the field, counted like a single finger? (ASTONISHED) One year only! Since I was born, we never harvested cassava at one year, never! And you're not ashamed to talk about fertilizer. That's the way to damage our soil, not to make it fertile! You will regret this! My children are going to shame me in front of the whole community! My God! I cannot accept this, never!

**SCENE 2**

1. **SFX:** VOICES OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN. SEMANA ENTERS THE COMPOUND, mutterING, INFURIATED WITH HIS SON. BIBI, SEMANA'S WIFE, SAYS GOOD EVENING TO HER HUSBAND.
2. **SEMANA:** (ANGRY) Tell me, since Mbarute was born, have we harvested crops before they were ripe? Particularly cassava! We usually harvest cassava after at least three years! And today, Mbarute wants to shame me! He wants to harvest his cassava at 15 months, at 15 months only! People will say that my child, my son is getting poor – my son, poor, while I am still alive, no, nooo!
3. **BIBI:** But Mbarute is not stupid. He must have a reason for harvesting this early. He told me that these are new varieties that don't take long in the field.
4. **SEMANA:** Ahhh, you're on his side? Right, I should have known! You and your son have been plotting to shame me in the community! Ok, Mbarute is right, these are new varieties, etc. etc.… (firm voice) But what reasons does he have for harvesting so early?
5. **BIBI:** (IRRITATED) I am not an accomplice! Besides, my child may be right. He is bright; he knows what he's doing. (she leaves)
6. **SEMANA:** (MONOLOGUE. QUIET VOICE, UNCERTAIN) Here I am, getting old and weak … oh, poor Semana! My son wants to insult me in front of my community, my wife doesn't understand me … What should I do, my friends?

(PAUSE, THEN STRONGER VOICE) Ok, let Mbarute do what he wants with his cassava field. I will tell him that he made a mistake *after* he fails. I, Semana, will harvest my own cassava! It's been three years now; three years and a few months, yes! They're ripe for sure! They're ripe for a rich peasant! (VERY STRONG VOICE) I am rich in this community, and that's why I must harvest my ripe cassava!

**SCENE 3**

1. **NARRATOR:** Mbarute is harvesting and so is his father. The extension agent has been training farmers how to harvest their cassava according to the harmonized standards for East and Central Africa so they can have a better market and even be able to sell outside of the country. Today a middleman is coming to buy cassava to take to a factory for processing flour to sell to the city people. His price is better than the other local middlemen.
2. **SFX:** morning birds singing, children playing. sound of young people gathering AND talkING, sometimes shouting.
3. **MBARUTE:** (SHOUTING) Come on over if you want a job today! Everyone must come with a sack, a clean one! Come quickly, you will carry my cassava from the field to the factory!
4. **YOUTH FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD 1:** *Yego* (yes), boss! We're going to get our empty sacks and come. Is there a lot of cassava? Enough for everyone to fill five sacks?
5. **MBARUTE:** More than five! I will keep going until my harvest is all carried to the factory. It is time! It’s the proper time for harvesting!
6. **YOUTH 1:** *Yego* (yes), boss!
7. **YOUTH 2:** I have two sacks, I have two … I can lend one to someone who has none!
8. **YOUTH 1:** Lend it to me, my friend! Lend it to me! Eeh, Mbarute is going to give us a job! Heyyy, come on everybody … I will do at least seven rounds! (LAUGHTER)

**SCENE 4**

1. **SFX:** FARMERS HARVESTING CASSAVA, THEIR VOICES ECHOing through the hills
2. **MBARUTE:** Listen, listen all you farmers! How do you harvest? Today, the rain is falling and the soil is not so hard. You are going to use the hoe to loosen the soil, but very softly, very carefully, so you don't hurt the cassava. If a root happens to break, you can use the hoe softly, softly to avoid wounding the cassava. Understood?
3. **FARMERS:** *Yegoooo* (yes), boss!
4. **MBARUTE:** Your attention, your attention please! For carrying the cassava, I have brand new sacks. Use them! It is recommended by the factory. Old dirty sacks are dangerous for cassava. They can spoil and contaminate it. They must be avoided, my friends!

After we finish, let us sort out all the cassava, the big, the small and those that are injured. Those that are injured, we will take them home to my mother and she can process them into flour.

**scene 5**

**IN SEMANA’S CASSAVA FIELD**

1. **SFX:** hoes hit the ground in turn. workers talking about the harvest.
2. **SEMANA:** My friends, listen carefully and I’ll tell you how we're going to harvest. I have no money to go back into this field and prepare it for the new season. So everyone must harvest the cassava with the hoe and at the same time cultivate so that I can sow cassava again. So we are harvesting but at the same time we are cultivating. One more thing, if someone among you doesn't work fast, I am not paying. Ok? Let's work!
3. **WORKER:** How are we going to carry the cassava? Are we going to use baskets … or …?
4. **SEMANA:** (INTERRUPTING) It's simple. You all have big old sacks, torn, that you don't use often. Cassava ruins the sacks. So you guys can use torn sacks, neglected sacks that are only meant for carrying cassava!
5. **WORKERS:** Ok! Understood, understood, understood (in turn).
6. **Semana:** I'm leaving. I'll come back in an instant!
7. **WORKER 1:** I have a sack that is really old, but it's good enough for the cassava.
8. **WORKER 2:** I have one, too. Mbarute gave me a fertilizer sack. It's good even if it's small. I'll make it longer with lianas.
9. **WORKER 1:** Ok, let's work my friends! Cassava is money! Cheer up!

**scene 6**

1. **SFX:** SOUND of FARMERS IN A LINEUP. THEY ARE WAITING FOR THE businessman WHO buyS cassava to take to the FRESH CASSAVA MARKET IN THE city.

1. **FACTORY checker:** *Karibu* (welcome), clients! Come over here. All cassava baskets and sacks over here! All those who have Mbarute's cassava, come after him, all of you! Ehhh, here is Semana, too! Ehh, it's family day today! *Karibu*, Mr. Semana. *Karibu* with all your companions! *Karibu*, *karibu*!
2. **SEMANA:** Thanks a lot. I'm coming, brother. I have very ripe cassava; the agronomists will check, it's true!
3. **CHECKER:** Hello dear farmers, dear clients. Open your sacks, we'll check the cassava. And remember: we don't accept damaged cassava!
4. **MBARUTE:** Check here, sir; my cassava is intact. We have paid careful attention to not injuring the cassava during the harvest!
5. **CHECKER:** (PAUSE) Ahhh, Mbarute, your cassava is really good quality! Come on, please. Put it on the scale! We're going to serve you fast because your cassava is intact.
6. **MBARUTE:** Thank you.
7. **SEMANA:** Come on, Mr. Checker, come and see this line too! My cassava is ripe. A few are bruised, but it's not serious!
8. **CHECKER:** (PAUSE THEN SURPRISED) Semana, look at the colour of your cassava, my friend. What happened? Your cassava has diseases. It stayed in the ground for too long. The tubers are not good for cooking.

(ANNOUNCING SO EVERYONE CAN HEAR) Only this young man sorted his cassava. The rest of you, spread the tubers on the ground and sort them out. All the cassava injured during harvest must be sorted out from the others. And all those that are diseased. So take a seat and spread your cassava here to sort it! Bruised or broken cassava is not accepted here!

1. **SEMANA:** Ehh, young people, come here! We're going to spread out all the cassava to sort the tubers. That's what the checker demands. Each with the sack that he carried.
2. **CHECKER:** Ehhh, Mr. Semana, you carry around cassava in dirty sacks like these? No! That's not right! Emptied of inputs like NPK? No, the cassava from this fertilizer sack must return to your place, Semana. You must always be careful not to contaminate the cassava and put people’s lives at risk. We are transporting this cassava to the neighbouring country. Now that we have agreed on common standards for fresh cassava, our potential market is much bigger: we can sell in several countries.
3. **SEMANA:** Have mercy, Mr. Checker. Cassava is normally carried in sacks that are very old and just any kind of sack. But next time, I … I … I …
4. **CHECKER:** No means no! Quickly, sir!
5. **SEMANA:** But I’ll lose money!
6. **CHECKER:** Your loss is getting bigger! These cassava are ruined by old age. They look as though they were planted twenty years ago! Sort them out too. You will go back home with the damaged cassava and those that are spoiled because of the late harvest!

Now, we need to pack all the cassava in these good sacks. Look at the writing on the outside of the sack. They give the location where they were grown and the country of origin. These can go even across the border.

1. **SEMANA:** (MONOLOGUE, LOW VOICE, SHOCKED AND UNCERTAIN) Eh, how come Mbarute, my son, makes more money from cassava than me? What can I do? Is it my ignorance? No, Mbarute and his mother don’t know more than me! Is it modern life? No, young, modern people would also be ignorant! So, what makes me lose like this?

**scene 7**

1. **narrator:** Semana gets home, confused and disappointed. Behind him, two youth are carrying the cassava that the factory didn't want to buy. His wife is home. She is surprised to see her husband in such a disturbed state.
2. **SEMANA:** Hello Bibi, where is the pipe that I left here? Tell me!
3. **BIBI:** I saw it somewhere over there … Maybe you can look behind that wall there.
4. **SEMANA:** (Raising his voice)Tell me, where is my pipe? You say you saw it here, over there … where is it exactly?
5. **BIBI:** Here it is, here, behind the chair, right here! But tell me, what’s the problem? You are coming back with the cassava instead of selling it to the factory, and you talk to me in an angry voice. What’s going on?
6. **SEMANA:** (DEEP SIGH) I apologize. Forgive me. (he lights the pipe) The middleman doesn’t want my cassava, both because it is very old and also because the tubers are injured! (WONDERS) But Mbarute seems to have been plotting against me … (SIGHS) Oh no, I know that my son would not do this!
7. **BIBI:** Plotting? No! Don’t say that … my son cannot, he is really kind, this Mbarute. I know my son. But he did tell you. Mbarute told you that your cassava was turning bad because of old age. But since you are conservative, you continue with your old knowledge. (GENTLY, SLOWLY) Ahhhh, times are changing, my husband, and so does knowledge. I think it is time for us to adapt to new ways …
8. **SEMANA:** (SOMEWHAT RELUCTANTLY, SIGHING) I guess you’re right, Bibi, I have to change … It’s true, I must …
9. **SFX: SOUND OF MBARUTE ARRIVING**
10. **BIBI:** Hey, Mbarute, here you are, my son! We were just talking about you! I was telling your father that times have changed, so we must change too. Have something to eat first … you’re not hungry?
11. **MBARUTE:** Eeh, Mama, I’m hungry but I don’t feel like eating. I’m sorry, dad. I’m sorry about what happened to you at the factory.
12. **SEMANA:** (GENTLY) Son, it’s not your fault at all. It is my fault, or rather it is old age. In our generation, the preferred cassava was that which was harvested after three or four years. But today, I can’t sell that cassava. (CONFUSED AND SAD) It’s a shame, it’s sad, it’s, it’s ... I don’t know, my God … Maybe I have to change too …
13. **MBARUTE:** (GENTLY) Yes, Dad, I think you have to ... And from what you are saying, perhaps you are ready to change. For instance, I grew new varieties that have a good yield, big tubers and they adapt easily to our fields!
14. **SEMANA:** You were saying that there are varieties which can be harvested at 15 months and give a good yield and big tubers? You’ve got to explain it all to me, son. I have to change and become a model cassava grower in this community again. I’m ready to listen to you, son, even about using foreign fertilizer, I mean everything! Tell me everything that you used and everything you did!
15. **MBARUTE:** I’ll explain everything to you, Dad. I’m so proud of you! And next year, we will find out where the market is for cassava and we will transport it ourselves and get more money!

**END OF DRAMA**

1. **NARRATOR:** This program has been produced by the *Enhancing adoption of Harmonized Standards for Roots and Tubers in East and Central Africa* project whose goal is to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers through commercialization and increased regional trade of roots and tubers in East and Central Africa.

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For more information on harmonized standards for roots and tubers, please contact the Bureau of Standards in your country.

## Acknowledgements

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