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**Farmer uses good yam storage practices and improves his life**

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### Notes to broadcaster

Yams are one of the most popular foods worldwide. They are a staple in several countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, the yam is an agricultural treasure. It plays an important role in nutrition and the economic well-being of rural people.

However, yam can be difficult to store. Indeed, because it is vulnerable to pests, it suffers significant losses. To ensure that families have enough to eat and to improve farmers’ incomes, finding and promoting post-harvest management solutions for yams is urgent, so that they can be made available over a much longer period after harvest.

The script below tells the story of a farmer who changes his life by adopting good practices for yam storage. He is also a positive influence on other farmers. These storage methods can be implemented by farmers to reduce post-harvest losses and maximize their income.

This script is based on actual interviews. You could use this script as inspiration to research and write a script on a similar topic in your area. Or you might choose to produce this script on your station, using voice actors to represent the speakers. If so, please make sure to tell your audience at the beginning of the program that the voices are those of actors, not the original people involved in the interviews.

**Characters:**

Host

Interviewer

The innovative farmer, Adjèxwé

1st farmer, Agossou

2nd farmer, Gbiglo

*Fade in signature tune to begin the show and cross fade under the host’s voice*

**Host:** Greetings,dear local FM radio listeners! In today’s show, we are going to talk about good storage practices for yam tubers. In that regard, I invite you now to listen to a farmer who successfully stores his yams for a very long time, which allows him to improve his income. He explains in our interviewer’s mic the secret of his success.

***Birds singing and miscellaneous nature noises. Cross fade under farmer’s voice.***

**Adjèxwé:** My name is Adjèxwé. I am a yam producer here in Tchogodo, a village in Savalou, in central Benin. I’m married and have twelve children. My two spouses are over there, working in the fields.

**Interviewer:** I notice that your yam field extends very far. Apparently, you like growing yam much more than other crops. Is it because yam farming is easier than the other crops?

**Adjèxwé:** No, it is not so easy! Yam is difficult both to grow and to store, but it is more profitable if well taken care of.

**Interviewer:** Profitable, because it is more expensive to buy than other produce?

**Adjèxwé:** Yes, the price of yam rises a few months after harvest.

**Interviewer:** Why does yam get more expensive at that time?

**Adjèxwé:** Yams that are stored improperly turn bad quickly. Because they are afraid to lose them, many farmers prefer to sell yams right after harvest. Consequently, the amount of good quality tubers offered on the market goes down soon after harvest, and there is often a shortage. With high demand and little supply, yam prices go up significantly before the new harvest.

**Interviewer:** Despite the fact that yams are difficult to store, you grow yams on a large scale. Do you store them in order to sell them at a higher price, or do you sell them at a very low price right after harvest?

**Adjèxwé:** In the past, I was not able to store my yams properly, so I used to sell them at a very low price right after harvest. It was really not a good deal for me because I lost money. I worked very hard under sun and under rain to maintain the yam field. I invested a lot of money in it. And at harvest time, I used to sell the yams at a very low price. It was really a loss! And I was not able to meet my family’s needs.

**Interviewer:** What about now?

**Adjèxwé:** You know, farmers’ first concern is to find solutions to our problems in order to improve our income. So when bad storage conditions were affecting my income and my spirits, I started experimenting with different practices. Slowly but surely, I ended up discovering that several good practices should be used in combination.

**Interviewer:** What practices? Tell us about these, Mr. Adjèxwé.

**Adjèxwé:** Among other things, I use a storage hut with shelves.

**Interviewer:** What is the purpose of the hut with shelves?

**Adjèxwé:** The hut with shelves here helps me store my yam tubers well. Before building this hut, I first looked for a flat location, as you can see here. The site that will host such a storage hut must be flat and slightly elevated.

**Interviewer:** Why must the site be flat and elevated?

**Adjèxwé:** This is to avoid flooding and erosion in rainy periods.

**Interviewer:** After choosing the site, what else did you do?

**Adjèxwé:** I built the walls of the hut with mud brick. The hut can be rectangular or circular. As you can see, mine is rectangular. Then I covered the top of the hut with straw. Let’s go inside through the entrance door *(A few seconds of silence, then sound of footsteps)* As you can see, I built wooden shelves along the walls. There are three levels

**Interviewer:** What are the dimensions of this hut?

**Adjèxwé:** The hut is six metres long, four metres wide and almost two metres high. Each shelf is about three-quarters of a metre high. The hut has three shelves. The shelves are almost one metre apart.

**Interviewer:** What is the function of those openings in the wall?

**Adjèxwé:** They bring fresh air into the storage room. Each of these ventilation openings is 15 centimetres wide and 15 centimetres high, and is covered with a net to prevent rodents from getting in. This helps maintain freshness. Ventilation openings must be made all around the hut, in the side walls, one metre apart.

**Interviewer:** After building the hut, what else do you do to ensure good storage?

**Adjèxwé:** After building the hut with shelves, I take particular care with the yam tubers I want to store.

**Interviewer:** By doing what?

**Adjèxwé:** I harvest the tubers as soon as the vines and leaves have fully turned yellow. This reduces the damage caused by diseases or pests in the field. Also, I avoid scratching the tubers during harvest. I systematically set aside all the damaged tubers. My family and I eat them. So, I store only yams that are in a good state.

Inside the hut, I place the tubers on the shelves so it’s easy to remove potential shoots as soon as they appear. I separate the small and big tubers. I put small yams in hundred kilo batches, and big tubers in two hundred and fifty kilo batches. I do not mix tubers of different varieties. I make sure that each batch has tubers from the same variety.

**Interviewer:** What other practices do you follow to improve production and storage?

**Adjèxwé:** Yes. Taking care of yam tubers starts well before sowing. First of all, before I plant yam, I select only healthy seed yams. These seeds must come from medium-sized, regular-shaped tubers. Once I have selected the seeds, I plant them on fertile soils that are not infested with small worms called nematodes, termites or other pests that may be harmful to tubers. To avoid soil infestation by nematodes, I grow yams in rotation with cowpea, peanuts and corn.

**Interviewer:** Once you take those precautions, do you have a good harvest at the end?

**Adjèxwé:** Yes, absolutely! Before placing the harvested yams on the shelves, I sprinkle some kitchen ash on the shelves. I first sift the ash through an empty perforated tin of milk or of tomatoes. I use that ash to cover the yams.

**Interviewer:** What is the role of the kitchen ash?

**Adjèxwé:** The kitchen ash protects against pests. The smell and the taste of the ash prevent rodents from attacking stored yams.

**Interviewer:** Perfect! After you have taken all these precautions, how long can you store your tubers?

**Adjèxwé:** The time from one harvest to the next, which is about ten months.

**Interviewer:** And when you combined all these good practices, did it work well?

**Adjèxwé:** Yes, it was very good! I got a clear improvement. I had no more rotting yams in my storage area. Rodents cannot cause any damage any more to my yams. These practices allow me to store my yams for at least ten months. Since that time, I have continued these good storage practices.

**Interviewer:** Did this improve your income?

**Adjèxwé:** Of course! Thanks to this storage system, I am able to sell my yams when the price goes up. During that period, yams are in short supply. Thus, I benefit a lot from the storage system, which allows me to better meet my family’s vital needs.

I can find money to pay my children’s school fees. They are taken care of at the dispensary when they are sick. Thanks to these improvements, I rebuilt my house with bricks. I covered it with sheet metal. I also bought this motorcycle for personal transportation. Seeing the benefits that I enjoy motivates the other farmers in the village, and they are starting to adopt good yam storage practices.

**Interviewer:** Many farmers in the village are inspired by Adjèxwé’s experience and are starting to adopt good practices of yam storage like Adjèxwé. One of those farmers is right here. His name is Agossou. He explains why he decided to give up the other methods of yam storage and follow Adjèxwé’s practices.

**Agossou:** There are many storage methods. Farmers sometimes store yams in various kinds of silos or stockpile them in the fields. But those methods do not effectively protect tubers against losses. With those methods, it is difficult and sometimes impossible to continuously monitor the tubers once they are stored. As a consequence, it is only after you remove the yams from storage that you notice the damage.

**Interviewer:** But with the hut with shelves, it is easy for you to inspect and manage your yams, isn’t it?

**Agossou:** Absolutely! This is precisely why I came to see Adjèxwé and receive his advice and improve the construction of my hut with shelves.

**Interviewer:** Beside Agossou, there is another farmer who has some experience with adopting good storage practices for yams. His name is Gbiglo. By following Adjèxwé’s advice, he has made a profit from his harvest. He explains to us why one should regularly inspect the hut with shelves.

**Gbiglo:** The inspection allows the farmer to control the state of the hut’s roof, and to check whether some yams have started rotting. If there happens to be rotten yams, you should immediately remove them to avoid further contamination. You must also remove partially damaged tubers, as well as the shoots before they reach 50 centimetres long. Regular inspection is an opportunity to maintain good hygiene inside the hut.

During the inspection, you should clean the inside of the hut and the area near the hut. Weeds are gathered and swept away. If necessary, one can set up drainage trenches all around the hut, in order to avoid erosion or flooding during the rainy season.

**Interviewer:** How often do you do this inspection?

**Gbiglo:** Every two weeks.

**Interviewer:** Isn’t it difficult for you to do all that just to store yams?

**Gbiglo:** Even though it is difficult, it is worthwhile for me to use a storage system which is designed to lengthen the period during which I can sell yams. This allows me to increase my income by offering healthy yams as long as possible.

*Fade in closing signature tune and hold under host’s voice*

**Host:** Dear farmer friends, you too can use good yam storage practices like Mr. Adjèxwé and farmers from Tchogodo. Carefully apply these good practices to take care of your yams throughout the year. This way, you will be able to sell them when the price is high. This will help you improve your income.

This brings today’s show to an end. Thank you for joining us. Good bye and talk to you next time.

## Acknowledgements

Contributed by: Felix Houinsou, farm radio show host, Radio Immaculée. Conception, Benin, a Farm Radio International broadcasting partner.

Reviewed by: Peter Golob, post-harvest consultant.

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