

MECHANISED CASSAVA PLANTATION DEVELOPMENT

Supporting emerging farmers

The ARC-Institute for Agricultural Engineering's Mechanisation and Precision Farming Division is currently involved in the mechanisation technology transfer training for emerging farmers, with focus on mechanised cassava plantation development in South Africa. Cassava is a lesser-known climate resilient crop in this country. Farmers are being trained on mechanised production techniques in the sub-tropical areas, where there is comparative advantages for the growth of cassava and root and tuber crops.

Experimental plots on pilot basis have been established at Empangeni in KwaZulu Natal, Nelspruit at Mpumalanga and University of Venda in Limpopo provinces Seedbed have been prepared and cassava planted on ridges to comply with mechanical harvesting at crop maturity especially during the dry season, when the ground is hard. Planting materials have been sourced locally from farmers. Extension officers were trained on correct planting of the cassava cuttings to avoid node reversal at planting. Drudgery evaluation in all the activities from crop establishment through farm sanitation and crop care to harvesting are being monitored and evaluated. It is planned to introduce mechanical cassava harvester developed in Ghana to demonstrate mechanised harvesting to reduce drudgery and encourage commercial cassava production at crop maturity.

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