Prof Ssettumba Mukasa demonstrates how best a farmer can plant banana sucker PHOTO BY FRED MUZAALE

Scientist tips farmers best practices of banana growing

Dr Ssettumba Mukasa advises farmers to replenish their soils with organic fertilisers for better banana yields, writes **Fred Muzaale**

When asked the biggest challenge farmers in Uganda are confronted with while growing banana both on smallholder and commercial, Dr Ssettumba Mukasa, was brief to mention the depleted soils of nutrients.

In his rationalisation, the lecturer at Makerere University, School of Agricultural Sciences, said banana desires fertile clay-loam soils (soils with excessive humus content material) to grow well.

"Because bananas grow best in fertile soils, many farmers get high yields for the duration of the first and second years of planting their crop," he stated.

He added that, "However, due to the fact farmers neglect filling up their soil with vitamins, the size of bunches significantly decrease."

Because of this, he stated, efforts ought to be made to ensure that organic manure is constantly brought to the soil for true yields.

Site selection

Dr Ssettumba says pay attention when selecting a farm land for banana growing. The maximum appropriate site must be a gentle sloping place, in line with Dr Ssettumba.

"Banana does not do well in water-logged soils given that their roots are very susceptible so they can rot quickly," he stated.

Also, given that bananas have weak roots; the soil should be made free, with the intention of making it smooth for the roots to penetrate easily as they search for vitamins.

"But, this does not suggest that if the soil is not good for banana developing, you forget about growing this crop. A farmer can work on the soil to create an amazing environment for developing the crop," Dr Ssettumba explains.

50

KILOGRAMMES OF ORGANIC MANURE RECOMMENDED FOR AN ACRE

Planting

Bananas ought to be planted straight lines with a recommen spacing of three by three metr The hole must be 60 by centimetres or two by two Planting in following line helpful in case a farmer machines in weeding and ferti application.

Additionally, it would be clear vehicle to move via the plant in case the bananas are in a li For that reason, with this sp 250 banana flowers c accommodated on an acre.

Management practices

Dr Ssettumba says bananas require proper control and notes that observing the right control could reduce prices of controlling pests and disease.

One of the appropriate management practices, he says encompass mulching.

"Mulching has three advantages of retaining moisture inside the soil, suppressing weeds and including vitamins to the soil," the agricultural sciences lecturer says.

Mulching may be done using grass or wasted maize stems or banana leaves. But the mulches need to be approximately two feet from the stool.

"If the mulches are placed near the stool, the 'weak and lazy' roots will tend to be very near the plant so this would entice banana wee he says.

Pruning

Dr Ssettumba advises that e suckers be removed to maint three plants such as the mot daughter and granddaughte suckers. He says if many su are maintained, bunches w turn out small.

Banana varieties

Different banana varieties do well in certain regions so before a farmer chooses which variety to plant he/she must know which region he/she is located.

Northern region

Indigenous varieties such as *mbwazirume* and *nakitembe* which are drought tolerant can do well in this region.

Central region

Since this region has two good seasons, all varieties can do well. Varieties such as *mpologoma, mbwazirume, musakala, kisansa menyamagezi, kibuzi nakitembe* and *nafuka* are suitable for this region.

Western region

Most of the varieties that do well in central region can do well in western such as *nfuka, kibuzi nakitembe* and *mpologoma*.

Eastern

In this region, that includes Mbale, Tororo, Soroti and Pallisa districts, varieties such as *mpologoma, nakitembe* and *mbwazirume* can be grown.

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