

Cassava: Feeding Peop



1 The cassava feeds 500 million people in the developing world. With lots of starch, calcium, phosphorous, protein and Vitamin C, it doesn't need much rain, rich soil or fertilizer to grow.



2 In Ghana for instance, cassava provides the population with one-third of the carbohydrates their bodies need to survive each day. For the average Ghanaian, at least one meal, each day, contains cassava.



3 But like other important crops, cassava yields are threatened by the uncertainties of climate change and disease such as white fly infestation (seen on this African cassava), or Cassava Mosaic Diseases.



4 Scientists at the IAEA and the University of Ghana's School of Nuclear and Allied Sciences (like Kenneth Danso) have been using nuclear techniques to boost yields, help plants resist disease, and produce more starch.

le Today and Tomorrow



5 The scientists use radiation to speed up the natural process of mutation that plants undergo on a daily basis. The mutations that produce desirable traits would have needed thousands of years, using just the sun's radiation and natural DNA replication errors.



6 Cassava plantlets developed through radiation mutation have different traits. Researchers are constantly testing and screening plants in the field to see what, if any, changes they have undergone.



7 They might have traits like the ones Godwin Amenorpe is developing, which are tolerant to Cassava Mosaic Diseases. They might have very high starch content or be more nutritious. You never know until you experiment.



8 New cassava varieties developed during these projects haven't been released yet. But when they are, they will benefit farmers and consumers not just in Africa, but across the world.

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