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Conservation of cassava genetic resources by sustainable use of its wild relatives

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Abstract

Wild cassava species are threatened by extinction due to clearing of vegetation and destruction of their natural habitats. Some of these species have been collected, propagated and maintained by this author in a living collection at the Universidade de Brasilia (see www.geneconserve.pro.br). Interspecific hybrids were produced conserving their gene pools in the new interspecific hybrids genetic constitution. It was found that grafting cuttings of tree like wild species on common cassava activates root formation of the common cassava stocks up to 4-5 folds. Distributing grafted cassava to small-scale farmers in the federal district has encouraged them to take care and maintain wild species in their properties. This initiative resulted in improvement of their income because of higher cassava productivity. Interspecific hybrids produced the same effect of root stimulation when grafted onto common cassava cultivars. Their grafts onto cassava were also distributed to small-scale farmers. Bringing wild cassava species very close to interspecific hybrids in farmer properties may lead to better management of cassava evolution.