Why should a farmer know the soil nutrient deficiency symptom in cassava plants?

Cassava is one of the most important drought-tolerant food crops and can be successfully grown in marginal soils, giving 8-12 t/acre fresh tuber yields where many crops do not grow well. The cassava plant cannot grow to maturity without the essential crop nutrients. Each nutrient plays an important role and cannot be replaced by another. Cassava plant needs nutrients for growth, production and survival. Each nutrient deficiency has its visual symptoms. Farmers either do not use fertilisers or do not know how much fertiliser and type to use. The information here will guide farmers on how to diagnose the nutrient deficiencies using plant visual symptoms and how to manage the deficiencies.

Nutrient deficiency symptoms and corrective measures

**Phosphorus**

*Deficiency symptoms*

- Irregular leaf tips
- Older leaves turn dark green or reddish-purple
- Thin stems
- Narrow leaves
- Fewer lobes

*Corrective measures*

Use phosphorus fertiliser applied at the rate of 14 kg per acre

**Nitrogen**

*Deficiency symptoms*

- Yellowing of older leaves (bottom plant)
- Light green colour in the rest of the plant
- Stunted plant growth
Corrective measures
Use nitrogen fertilizer applied at the rate of 54 kg per acre

Potassium

Deficiency symptoms
- Older leaves may wilt or look scorched
- Reduction in plant height and vigour; thin stems, short petioles and small leaves
- Grooves and inter veinal leaf
- Cracks in the upper stem.

Corrective measures
Use potassium fertiliser applied at the rate of 36 kg per acre