

In mature cocoa plantations, Glyphosate like Touchdown can be sprayed @4ts/ha for good weed control for 3months if applied on actively growing weeds, this also has additional benefits of adding potassium salts which is an additional fertility for cocoa. Glyphosate can also be applied on young plantations if ring weeding is first carefully done around a radius of .5m, care being taken to avoid contact with the green parts, this can reduce drudgery.

PRUNING AND HEIGHT CONTROL

The basis of pruning cocoa trees is to encourage tree structure that allows sun light to filter through to the main branch and trunks to stimulate flowering, reduce diseases like black pod and facilitate harvesting.

SOIL FERTILITY

One of the most important measures for improvement and maintenance of soil fertility is the continuous addition of organic materials like both woody and fresh plant materials such as mulch as well as addition of inorganic mineral fertilizers like Kcl, Urea, Magnesium, Boron e.t.c

PEST AND DISEASE CONTROL

- Using disease resistant and pest tolerant varieties.
- Ensuring good field hygiene.
- Regulating cocoa trees height, pruning and shade management.
- Maintaining soil fertility.
- Applying safe and environmentally friendly fungicides and insecticides

FARM SELECTION

- If cocoa tree is to grow well it needs good soil. Cocoa tree has tap root that goes straight into the soil and the branch roots go down very deep.
- Farmers should select a good soil that contains much humus. This allows the roots to go down well. Soil quality can be improved by spreading properly cured manure and working it into the soil.
- Never plant cocoa trees on soil with lots of stones or soil where there is some hard layer.

LAND PREPARATION

- Cut all the tall weeds, the creepers and small trees.
- Make heaps of what you have cut down and arrange the heaps in rows.
- Do not burn all the vegetation you cut, leave it on the ground as it protects the soil against erosion and sun. It also rots and provide humus for the soil.
- Cut down all trees which might give some diseases to the cocoa trees.
- Cut down trees that gives too much shade but leave those large trees which can give no disease to the cocoa trees and which gives a little shade.
- Before planting farmers must dig holes in order to turn the earth and loosen it.
- Dig holes 2 months before planting the cocoa trees.
- When you are digging the hole, do not mix together the soil from above and the soil from below. Make 2 separate soil heaps.

HARVESTING/ FERMENTATION/ PROPER DRYING

Depending on the temperature, pod ripening can take place between 5-7 months from flowering. Pods must be harvested when they are fully ripe with a visible orange or yellow shell.

- Harvesting should be carried out at regular intervals of 1.5-3 weeks.
- Pods must be cut off the trees with knife without damaging the stem on which further fruits will form.
- After harvesting, pods can be kept for few days before opening.
- Cocoa beans must be fermented as soon as they are removed from the pod.
- Fermented beans must be dried to prevent deterioration.

STORAGE

Cocoa beans should be stored in a well ventilated storage. The bags should be stacked off the ground preferably on wooden pallets and off the wall.



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BETTER COCOA, IMPROVED MONEY

STEPS TO GOOD AGRICULTURAL
PRACTICES FOR COCOA
PRODUCTION



PLANTING

- Mark out rows for the cocoa trees leaving about 2.5-3m between rows
- Along each row, mark out with pegs the spots where the cocoa trees are to go, leave about 2.5-3m between trees. In that way you can plant about 1000 – 1600 seedlings/ha.
- Sometimes growers sow cocoa seeds directly in the plantation. This is not a GOOD AGRONOMIC PRACTICE. It is better to put into the plantation either young cocoa seedlings from your own nursery or cocoa seedlings bought from a research centre.
- Few hours before lifting the seedlings from the nursery beds, water the soil then take the seedlings out of the nursery bed with a spade or hoe. Be careful not to break the roots.
- Sort out cocoa seedlings by throwing away diseased plants that have twisted tap roots.
- Dip the roots of the seedlings in liquid mud so that the cocoa plants take roots again easily.
- Plant cocoa trees at the beginning of the rainy season when soil is moist.
- Plant the young seedlings when they are about 6 months old.
- A few days before planting, fill the holes you dug earlier with first top soil and then the bottom soil.
- You may mix the soil with a well-treated manure.
- Seedlings can now be planted and be careful not to twist the tap roots.
- Do not cover the crown with earth
- For the first few days after planting, protect the young seedlings from sun.



MAINTENANCE OF COCOA PLANTATION

Proper maintenance of cocoa trees during early stages of growth improves later yield of the plantation. For good development, most young cocoa plants need favourable growing conditions with soil protected from weeds, proper pruning, adequate shade and improved soil fertility.

SOIL PROTECTION AND WEED MANAGEMENT

In a sustainable cocoa plantation, the soil is covered mainly by spontaneous vegetation and cocoa leaves which protects the soil against erosion. Weed control is critical in the early stages after planting in order to avoid competition with young cocoa. However, leguminous cover crops can also be grown in between cocoa trees.