B-54 : EFFECTS OF STORAGE TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE THE STORABILITY OF CASSAVA (*Manihot esculenta* L.)

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Cassava is an important root crop which earns foreign exchange to Sri Lanka. The drawback faced by the exporters is the high level of perishability of roots which begin to deteriorate soon after harvesting. Therefore, the possibility of applying several storage techniques to prolong the storage life of cassava, was studied.

Physiological and microbial deteriorations (internal) were observed during the storage period. On the fourth day, roots stored under ambient ($29 \pm 2^{o}C$ & 75-80% RH), air conditioned ($23 \pm 2^{o}C$ & 55-60% RH) and treated with benlate (50% wp,

500 mg/l) showed approximately 55% deterioration. Other treatments: cold storage (3-5°C), storage in wooden boxes with damp saw dust and storage in sealed polythene bags (200 gauge) with holes, showed 9%, 29% and 40% deterioration, respectively.

Storage under cold temperature was effective only upto the sixth day after storage. Storage in sealed polythene bags and in wooden boxes with damp saw dust were the best methods for long- term storage. Using these methods, roots were stored upto 20 days at ambient temperature with only 40% deterioration.

The taste of the cooked cassava roots was not related to the type of the storage conditions used. However, the cyanide content of roots increased slightly with the storage period but it was not significantly different ($p=0.01$) among storage conditions.