

## **Use of ambient conditions and sawdust in storage of sweet potato (*ipomoea batatas*) in Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

Sweet potato root storability and post-harvest resistance to pests and diseases depend on varietal and storage conditions. However little is known in regards to the storability of local Kenyan, sweetpotato cultivars after harvest. Storage experiments in ambient conditions and in sawdust using 31 sweetpotato clones were conducted in order to identify the most rustic local varieties under natural storage conditions and to take advantage of a natural tropical environment that resembles artificial conditions in sweetpotato storage. Visual examination of edible portions in stored roots showed that varieties KEMU 7, KEMU 9, KEMB 10, KEMB 20, KEMB24, KEMB37, KSP 20 and KSP 119 were acceptable and did not rot after five weeks of storage in ambient air conditions. Storage in sawdust permitted the storage of roots up to 14 weeks (100 days) for most varieties. Although stored-root edible portion and colour were acceptable or good, sprouting was noted for almost all varieties. Shrivelling for KSP-type sweetpotato roots was lower than the KEMB-type. Apparently, moisture loss is an important determinant of storability and acceptability of roots and should, therefore, be minimized. These simple storage methods would extend the shelf life of the perishable sweetpotato for marketing and post-harvest processing, and also help to release land for alternative utilization after harvest.