

THE PRIMARY GENEPOOL OF CASSAVA (*Manihot esculenta* CRANTZ)

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A crop gene pool comprises three distinct categories of gene suppliers, primary, secondary, and tertiary gene pools. The primary gene pool (GPI) is composed of gene reservoirs that cross easily with the domesticate and the crosses regularly produce fertile offspring. The secondary (GP2) and tertiary (GP3) gene pools of a crop comprise wild gene sources that cross with a certain degree of difficulty with the crop species or may not cross at all, the picture implying in less close genetic distances. The GPI is further subdivided into cultivated and wild gene pools. The cultivated gene pool comprises all commercial stocks of the crop besides all indigenous landraces and folk varieties of the domesticate. The wild primary gene pool of a crop comprises putative ancestors and closely related species that show a fair degree of fertile relationships with the domesticated varieties. In this context, we suggest the two South American wild subspecies of cassava (*M. flabellifolia* and *M. peruviana*) as the original wild stocks which cassava descends from. Another Brazilian species (*M. pruinosa*) is so close morphologically to the two wild subspecies of cassava that we think the species may become a natural member of the wild GPI of the indigen. The GP2 of cassava is more difficult to delimit as few species have been tested for fertility relationships. Biosystematic crosses carried out between the crop and the Brazilian wild species *M. glaziovii* and *M. dichotoma* suggest that both are among the established species of the GP2. Based on field experience, we guess that three untested Brazilian species are prospective candidates for the GP2 of cassava: *M. pilosa*, *M. triphylla*, and *M. brachyloba*. The inclusion of Mexican species in the GPI or GP2 of cassava will have to wait for specific trials since our knowledge of the fertile relationships between these species and the indigen lags well behind the information available for their South American relatives.