Sustainable seed system: experience sharing on opportunities and pitfalls

The current seed system for cassava is as old as the introduction of the crop to Africa

-Farmers plant stems and recycle the stems over year
- Stem quality issues are wrapped around age and segment on the plant

There was little attention on cassava seed systems until recently ....

- There was no significant stem scarcity and demand to warrant investment
- Production was basically for household food need
- Annual growth rate in production did not exceed what the multiplication ratio could offer

Some figures:

Production: 3.8 million ha
Av stem yield: 300 bundles/ha
Potential stem availability = 1.14 billion bundles
Annual requirement = 228 million bundles or 0.2 of total

Challenges:

Current seed system is saturated with old varieties and makes introduction/adoption of new varieties difficult or very slow

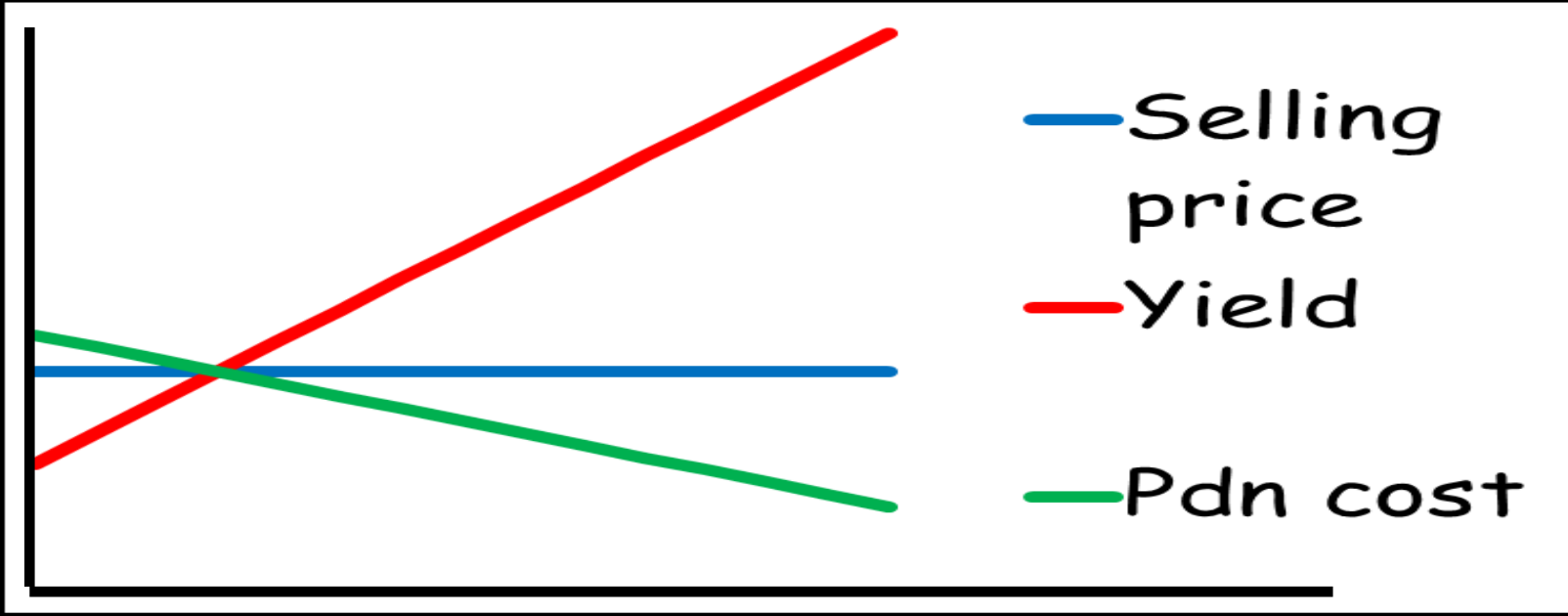
Quality of seeds is not guaranteed and transportation logistics are cumbersome

With increased commercialisation there is an increasing demand for stems of better performing varieties

Unfortunately, unlike maize, there is no demonstrated incentive or evidence for farmers to stop recycling stem

Variety release

- Three varieties of vitamin A cassava (01/1368, 01/1371 and 01/1412) with intermediate levels of pro-vitamin A were released and launched in 2011
- Three new varieties with >10 u/g of pro-vitamin A were released in June 2014



Salient lessons:

- Make interventions market driven
- Use a community-based commercial multiplication system
- Develop accessible marketing network
- Manage quality and transportation issues

Promotion and marketing strategy

Key activities

- Create value for each variety
- Effective demand and supply linkages (online)
- Industrial demand pulls
- Rural facilitators and bulking agents using EAs
- Champions

Pitfalls

- Rapid market saturation around multiplication centres
- The Cassava glut syndrome
- Lack of reliable demand estimates and linkages
- Differences in stem and tuber supply regimes