

Intercropping pineapples with bananas and beans

FACT SHEET

Forest land for growing pineapples is getting scarce

Many farmers grow pineapples to support their families. Because pineapples grow best in well-drained soils that are rich in organic matter, farmers once cleared forests to grow pineapples. But the organic matter soon disappears and yields drop after the second harvest. As land is getting scarcer, making new pineapple gardens has become difficult.



Beans between the double rows of pineapple

You can keep a pineapple garden for 6 years

By adding manure or other organic matter and providing some shade you can have a productive pineapple garden for at least 6 years. You can plant beans and bananas between the pineapple to improve the soil and have other crops to sell and to eat.

How to grow pineapples for 6 years or more

Near the end of the dry season, plant the pineapples in double rows. Make the lines across the slope to reduce water runoff. Leave 30 to 50 centimetres between suckers within and between the rows. Leave one to 1½ meters between the double rows.



Hilling up pineapple

In the wider space between the double rows, you can grow beans or groundnuts once the rains start. Beans and groundnuts help to make the soil fertile, and they cover it. You only need to weed once every two or three months instead of every month.

After three months, add manure, compost or coffee husks between the pineapple plants, as deep as the length of your hand. Coffee husks last about seven years, and they feed the crop.

After harvesting the legumes, earth up the double rows of pineapples to conserve soil moisture and prevent the organic matter and nutrients from washing away. You can plant more beans in the next rainy season, if there is enough space.

Without shade, your fruit may get sun-burned, while full shade leads to stunted plants and smaller fruits. After harvesting the beans, plant bananas every five meters between the double rows. The banana plants help keep the soil moist and protect earthworms that improve the soil. You can also plant a few timber or fruit trees. If you hire land, sign an agreement stating the size of the plot, number of years and how much rent you will pay. Prune shade plants regularly to avoid having too much shade.

Watch a full video on this topic at www.accessagriculture.org or contact one of the people below to get the video on DVD.

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