Producing healthy plantain and banana suckers

As planting bananas require suckers, a sucker is a small banana plant that grow at the base of the mother plant.

Farmers take suckers directly from mother plant however old mother plants are often infested by nematodes, fungi and weevils. Swollen bulbs of banana underground produce roots and central bud grow into the stem.

Sucker production

First, to multiply suckers, it requires a germinator, green house, shade and good quality suckers. Select a mother plant, take small sucker of 1m high with narrow spear shaped leaves and dont remove suckers positioned in direction of strong wind as they protect the mother plant from falling. Remove gently the suckers and cut them back to a length of 30 cm for easy handling followed by cleaning them while still in the field to avoid spreading diseases.

Similarly, peel off a layer 0f 3-5 cm around bulb until it is completely white and remove leaf sheaths at the base leaving only the central leaf sheath as it may emerge before bulb is disinfected. Soak bulb into a disinfectant or 10-15 minutes and dry for 2-3 days. Continue by putting bulb on a clean surface in shade free from sunlight and rainfall.

After drying, remove central leaf sheath and make cross shape deep cut in middle of bulb and place treated bulbs in a 50 cm deep germination box set in a well protected area while avoiding contact with soil by adding 10cm layer of gravels to bottom box. Add a layer of ash at bottom of box to disinfect soil and provide drainage hole on cement germination box. Fill box with sawdust, remove wood pieces, add clean water, mix

well, place bulbs upright into dust and cover them with 3cm layer od sawdust and finally cover the box with transparent plastic sheet to keep in humidity. Install a roof of palm leaves, water the next day and then twice a week followed by opening it for 5 minutes daily.

Furthermore, after 3-6, remove bulbs and remove any dead leaves and black spot from them. Water the soil potted pots and insert the suckers which are finally transplanted after 6-8 weeks.