



Pests and Diseases Management of Konjac (*Amorphophallus muelleri* Blume)

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ABSTRACT

Amorphophallus oncophyllus Prain ex Hook. f. synonym *A. muelleri* Blume is the main source of glucomannan that is used as a food additive and dietary supplement. The crop has become a favorite in several parts of Indonesia. The plant has been known to have several pests and diseases that can cause significant losses. This review aims to highlight the importance of pests and diseases of konjac and its control strategy. Several pests and diseases attacking the konjac plant have been identified, such as mealybug, scale insect, dry and soft root, collar rot, bacterial blight, leaf spot, and mosaic. The majority of them are seeds or soil born and could be carried from the field to storage. Understanding the causal agents and their ecology is critical in formulating integrated pest management (IPM). Cultivating healthy seeds and mixed cropping with nonhost food crops (maize and rice), or as a second crop under estates' and industrial forests' conditions, as well as biological control, are the most applicable IPM. No specific regulation has been formulated for minimizing pests and diseases of konjac; however, it could adopt general protocol from other crops, such as taro (*Colocasia esculenta*) in India.

INTRODUCTION

Konjac is known to be produced by *Amorphophallus* spp., including *A. konjac*, *A. companulatus* (Roxb.) (locally known "acung"), *A. variabilis* Blume ("suweg"), and *A. oncophyllus* Prain ex Hook. f. synonym *A. muelleri* Blume ("porang") (Jansen, van der Wilk, & Hettersheid, 1996; Supriati, 2016) (Fig. 1). *A. konjac* originates from southern and southeastern China, Vietnam, and possibly Laos. It is widely cultivated in China and Japan and Indochina, the Philippines, and Hawaii (Jansen, van der Wilk, & Hettersheid, 1996). Although *A. muelleri* is found in several places in Indonesia, the plant is occasionally cultivated only in Java (Jansen, van der Wilk, & Hettersheid, 1996). Indonesian konjac is generally exported to Japan with the volume of 1,000 tons per year (Afifah, Oktorina, & Setiono, 2014).

Nowadays, konjac is widely cultivated in Madiun, Ngawi, and Nganjuk East Java, Indonesia. In 2019, the planting area was recorded at 1602 hectares and yielded 9128 tons of tubers and 1553 tons of chips. Konjac's average productivity was 5.6

tons per hectare (Kuncoro, 2020). The Indonesian Government plans to increase the konjac cultivation areas in West Java, Central Java, East Java, Banten, East Nusa Tenggara, and South Sulawesi, up to 17,886 hectares in 2020. Meanwhile, the South Sulawesi government has started a 10 hectares cultivation pilot project and enlarged up to 564 hectares (Direktorat Jenderal Tanaman Pangan, 2020). Growing konjac is economical and could earn a net income of IDR 62,905,000/ha, with a B/C ratio of 1.818 (Mutmaidah & Rozi, 2015). Konjac is widely or limitedly cultivated under forest shade trees to optimize forest land (Rokhmah & Supriadi, 2015).

Konjac flour is extracted from the plant's tuber or corm. It can be processed into noodles (Faridah & Widjanarko, 2014), bread (Laignier et al., 2022), and jam (Ardiansyah, Hintono, & Pratama, 2019). Konjac is also used in the pharmaceutical industry as a nutraceutical for diabetes (Ariftiyana et al., 2022) and stroke (Alamsyah, 2019). Purified konjac flour, konjac glucomannan, is used as a food additive and dietary supplement in many Asian and European countries (Behera & Ray, 2017). In

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addition, glucomannan gel is used as food, drug carrier, tissue scaffold, absorption material, and sensing material (Yang *et al.*, 2017).

Indonesia's konjac market is estimated to absorb around 50 thousand tons of fresh tubers; if the plant's productivity is 4 t/ha, then the planting area to meet this supply is 12,000 ha (Santosa, 2014). From the cultivation aspect, the availability of seeds and land is a critical factor in increasing konjac production, so it needs policy support from Government for land provision (Santosa, 2014). The majority (84.8%) of lowland agricultural land ownership in East Java, West Java, West Sumatra, and South Sulawesi is controlled by almost half of the land households (49.0%) of around 0.5 hectares per family. In contrast, for upland land, 83.2% of agricultural land is controlled by 27.4% of households with an area of more than 0.5 ha (Yusdja, 1984). Therefore, farmers prioritize the use of their agricultural land to grow food crops for their daily needs. Thus, the opportunity for farmers to plant konjac on the available land area is limited. Therefore, the chance to expand konjac plantations can only be done on industrial plantation forest land. Santosa (2014) showed that the Government owns industrial forest areas that were used as konjac planting areas could benefit farmers' income by around US\$ 3.000 for every 2-3 ha. This cultivating system is also helpful for preventing illegal logging and forest encroachment (Santosa, 2014).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The review analyzed published literature on the cultivation and pest management of konjac in Indonesia and abroad from 1996 to 2021. The first book of konjac was published in the Plant Resources of South-East Asia 9 "Plants Yielding Non-Seed Carbohydrates" edited by M. Flach, & F. Rumawas (Backhuys Publisher). Since then, many publications are electronically available in local and international scientific journals. Pests and diseases of konjac are intensively studied in China.

DISCUSSION

Pests and Diseases of Konjac

Information on the pests and diseases of Indonesian konjac is limited. Still, in other countries, such as China, India, and Japan, few pests and diseases of *Amorphophallus* spp. have been reported to cause significant losses (Table 1). Amongst pests, mealybug (*Rhizoecus amorphophalli* (Hemiptera: Pseudococcidae), a scale insect of *Aspidiella hartii* (Hemiptera: Diaprididae), and root-knot (*Meloidogyne incognita* and *M. javanica*) (Ray, 2015; Reddy, 2015) are found in the field and could be carried in the harvested tubers to the storage and could interfere plant growth and reduce yield loss. Other pests reported are *Galerucida bicolor* (Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae), *Araecerus fasciculatus* (Coleoptera: Anthribidae), caterpillars, and nematodes (Jansen, van der Wilk, & Hetttersheid, 1996).



Fig. 1. Konjac cultivation on the multi-cropping system (a); konjac plant (b); bulbil type of konjac for propagation (c); and konjac tubers (d) (Source: Ika Roostika Tambunan).

In contrast, diseases of konjac are mainly affected tubers and cause rotting that could affect plant growth and yield losses. Important diseases are caused by fungi, such as *Fusarium solani*, *F. oxysporum*, *Botrytis cinerea*, *Pythium helicoides*, and *Sclerotium rolfsii* (Lui & Kushalappa, 2002; Roy & Hong, 2008; Tajuddin, Santosa, Sopandie & Lontoh, 2020; Wu et al., 2020; Yu et al. 2015). Several bacterial diseases are identified, such as *Pectobacterium carotovorum* subsp. *carotovorum*, *P. chrysanthemi*, and *Pseudomonas pseudoalcaligenens* subsp. *conjact* (Wu, Diao, Gu, & Hu, 2010). Another disease is Dasheen Mosaic Virus (Babu, Hegde, Makesh Kumar, & Jeeva, 2011). Amongst the diseases, soft rot caused by *Pectobacterium carotovorum* subsp. *carotovorum* and *P. chrysanthemi* is the most destructive (Wu, Diao, Gu, & Hu, 2010) (Fig. 2; Table 2).

The majority of konjac pests and diseases are seed-borne; which means tuber planting materials can carry them to new areas. Insect pests, such as *A. hartii* and pathogens (*Fusarium* sp., *Pythium* sp., and *Sclerotium* sp.) have broad host plants. *A. hartii* infection on yam tuber could reach up to 20%. The female is often concealed in crevices and partially hidden underplant or soil (Salerno et al.,

2018). Plant disease, *Fusarium* spp. are soil-borne pathogens and have many host plants, and survive as resistant spores free in the ground for a very long period. *Pythium* zoospores swim in the water in search of host tissues. *B. cinerea* can be carried out from the field and remains latent in the storage. It develops well during higher relative humidity and low temperature storage. The temperature range is 20-30°C. The fungus survives long in the sclerotia forms in the dead infected host tissues or tuber seeds (Romanazzi & Feliziani, 2014). The sclerotia and mycelium of *B. cinerea* could survive on plant debris, weeds, or soil surface (Elad, Williamson, Tudzynski, & Delen, 2007). The sclerotia of *S. rolfsii* could be spread through tools used in field works and water splashing (Punja, 1985). Dasheen Mosaic Virus has many host plants, including Araceae and ornamental (Nelson, 2008), transmitted by aphids or plant sap through mechanical injuries and vegetative propagation (Gollifer, Jackson, Dabek, Plumb, & May, 1977; Nelson, 2008). The pathogen has many plant hosts (Malvaceae, Cruciferae, Brassicaceae, Solanaceae, Cucurbitaceae, Apiaceae, Fabaceae, Chenopodiaceae, and Leguminosae) (Anwar, Zia, Hussain, & Kamran, 2007) and weeds worldwide (Rich, Brito, Kaur & Ferrell, 2009).

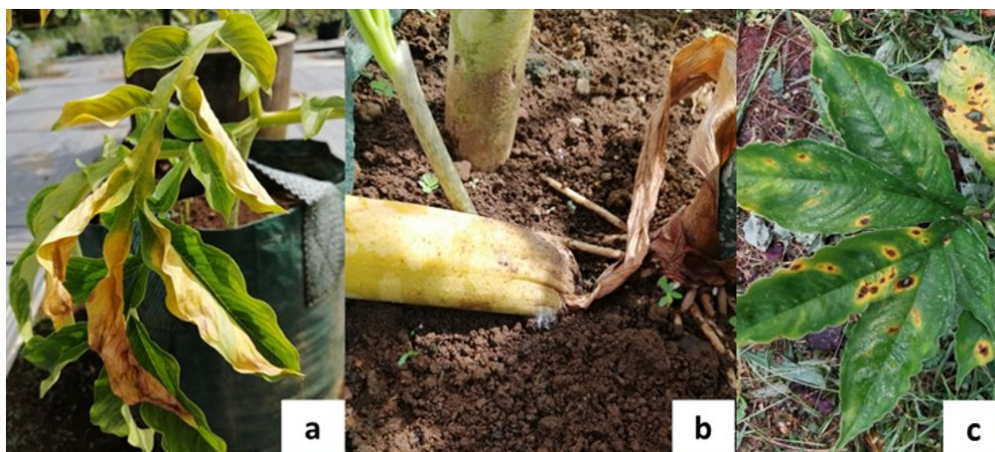


Fig. 2. Diseases on the konjac plant: leaf blight (a); stem rot caused by soil-borne disease (b); and leaf spot (c)

Table 1. Yield losses due to pest and disease of konjac

Pest and Disease	Yield Losses (%)	Reference
Leaf blight	88	Soedarjo & Djufry (2021)
Viral disease	87	Soedarjo & Djufry (2021)
Dry rot	20-30	Wu, Zhou, Jiao, Fu, & Guo (2019)
Soft rot	30-50	Jiang et al. (2021)
Whiteflies	87	Soedarjo (2020)

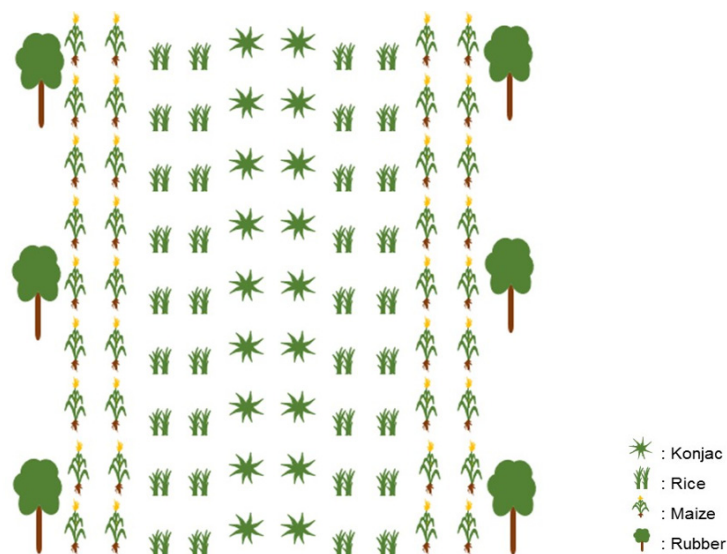


Fig. 3. Cropping system of konjac-rice-maize on a young rubber plantation.

Table 2. Important pests and diseases of konjac

Name	Causal agent	Occurrence	Losses	Reference
Pests				
Mealybug	<i>Rhizoecus amorphophalli</i>	Field and storage	Delay sprouting and growing; reduce yield and quality	Reddy (2015)
Scale Insect	<i>Aspidiella hartii</i>	Field and storage	Reduce yield and quality	Ray (2015)
Root-knot	<i>Meloidogyne incognita</i> and <i>M. javanica</i> .	Field and storage	Plant growth and yield loss	Brito et al. (2010)
Diseases				
Dry tuber rot	<i>Fusarium solani</i> , <i>Fusarium oxysporum</i> , and <i>Botrytis cinerea</i>	Field and storage	Reduce yield and quality (aflatoxin)	Lui & Kushalappa (2002) Yu et al. (2015)
Soft rot	<i>Pectobacterium carotovorum</i> subsp. <i>carotovorum</i> and <i>Pectobacterium chrysanthemi</i> .	Field and storage	Plant death	Wu, Diao, Gu, & Hu (2010)
Root rot	<i>Pythium helicoides</i>	Field and storage	Plant growth and tuber rot	Roy & Hong (2008)
Collar rot	<i>Sclerotium rolfsii</i>	Field and storage	Plant growth and tuber rot	Pravi, Jeeva, & Archana (2014)
Leaf blight	<i>Pseudomonas pseudoalcaligenens</i> subsp. <i>conjaci</i>	Field	Plant growth	Goto (1983)
Anthraxnose	<i>Colletotrichum siamense</i>	Field	Plant growth	Wu et al. (2020)
Mosaic	Dasheen Mosaic Virus	Field and storage	Plant growth and tuber loss	Babu, Hegde, Makesh Kumar, & Jeeva (2011)

Control Strategy of Konjac Pest and Disease Seed Treatment

As the pests and diseases of konjac are carried out by propagating seed tubers; therefore, seed treatment is critical. Seed treatment is an application of pesticides to seeds before planting to reduce the source inoculum of pests and pathogens. The tuber seeds of konjac should be disinfected with 72% streptomycin (1g/l), fludioxonil, and boscalid for 3 minutes (Yu *et al.*, 2015). Soaking tubers before planting using hot water at 55°C for 10 minutes reduces mosaic disease incidence and increases tuber production (Reddy, 2015). Imidacloprid and thiamethoxam have been used for seed treatment and significantly affected on cumulative germination rate (Huang *et al.*, 2015).

Mix Cropping with Non-Hosted Plants

The cultivation of konjac in mixed cropping systems with corn for 1-3 years altered the soil bacterial community structure and composition, which led to a relative balance of beneficial bacteria (Wu *et al.*, 2018). The relative proportion of beneficial bacteria helps reduce the incidence of soft rot (*Pectobacterium* spp.). Konjac could be intercropped with maize and rice under young rubber plants for up to two-year-old, in a standard single-row spacing of rubber of 6-7 m x 3 m (or 475-550 trees/ha), which has a light intensity of around 55% (Sahuri, 2019) (Fig. 3).

After maize and rice crops are harvested, the straw is left as mulch to increase beneficial soil microbes colonizing konjac rooting systems further to reduce plant pathogenic microbial population in the soil and increase crop yields. Rice straw is high in silica, a nutrient element involved in plants' major roles (Van Soest, 2006). Rice straw application was correlated to soil/water-extractable carbon content that can induce the microbial community (Pan, Li, Chapman, & Yao, 2016). The relative proportion of beneficial bacteria helps reduce the incidence of soft rot (*Pectobacterium* spp.). Continuously cultivated konjac for three consecutive years is not recommended because of the risk of building up soil-borne pathogens (Wu *et al.*, 2017). Besides, composted agro-waste plant products could also be amended into the soil to inhibit soil-borne pathogens, such as *M. incognita* (Pandey & Kalra, 2010). Balanced N and K fertilizers can suppress plant disease development; however, excessive N fertilizer is not recommended (Sudir, Nuryanto

& Kadir, 2015). Increasing soil temperature by polyethylene mulching sheet for two weeks in hot summer effectively reduces soil population densities of sclerotia of *S. rolfsii* and controls pathogen infection (Yaqub & Shahzad, 2009).

With the available information on the crucial pests and diseases and lessons learned in controlling them, it seems that pest and disease studies are required for sustainable konjac production. Adopting a suitable mix cropping system of konjac with other nonhost food crops, estate crops, and medicinal crops is essential. A mixed cropping system is critical for small-scale farmers since they can rely on the cropped plant's yield before the konjac.

Physical and Mechanical Controls

Removing and burying diseased and damaged crops needs to be adopted as a regular practice since these could become a source of a new infection. Therefore, the practices could prevent their spread in the field. Plant debris removal could be done while fielding activities for manuring, weeding, and inspection that is made 60 and 90 days after planting and before harvesting or at the appropriate growth stage depending on the crop condition (Trivedi & Gunasekaran, 2013). After harvest, this practice must be continued while inspecting for the presence of storage pests and diseases.

Biological Control

Biological control using *Trichoderma harzianum* combined with manure could reduce disease incidence caused by *S. rolfsii* by 85.33%. The effectiveness of *T. harzianum* is associated with various enzymes, such as peroxidase, polyphenol oxidase, phenylalanine ammonia-lyase, chitinase, and glucanase (Kamel, Farag, Arafa, & Essa, 2020). The scale insect of *Aspidiella hartii* has several insect parasitoids, such as *Physcus comperi*, *Adelencyrtus moderatus*, *Coccobius (Physua) comperi*, and *Adelencyrtus moderatus* that can infect the pest in field and storage (Reddy, 2015). More research is needed to evaluate the potential of biological control agents in minimizing the scale insect on konjac.

Regulation

There is no regulation formulated for konjac production. Therefore, it can follow that proposed for taro (*Colocasia esculenta*) as described by Trivedi & Gunasekaran (2013). Aspects need to be

regulated including land preparation, corm seeds production, pest and diseases control, postharvest, and certification. The land used for cultivation must be free from volunteer plants and plant residues from the previous crop and has good drainage. Planting materials must be true-types, uniform or max 5% in size variations, and free from fungi, bacteria, viruses, and scale insects that can damage the plant. In the field, disease symptoms must be free or max 1% for dasheen mosaic virus's incidence. Harvested corm seeds must be minimized from damages, such as cut, bruised, cracked, and damaged by insects (other than scale insects and mealybugs), slugs, or worms. Field inspections for pests and disease monitoring need to be regularly checked or at least two times after planting and before harvest.

Chemical Control

No registered chemical pesticides are available for controlling pests and diseases of konjac. However, several studies revealed that sodium salt solution effectively controls mealybugs and maintains tuber quality (Nedunchezhiyan, Jata, Ray, & Misra, 2011). Spraying mancozeb (0.2%) or metalaxyl (0.05%) fungicide can control *A. paeoniifolius* leaf spot (Reddy, 2015). Fludioxonil or thiabendazole fungicides effectively control dry rot tubers of *Fusarium* (Gachango, Hanson, Rojas, Hao, & Kirk, 2012). β -aminobutyric acid treatment (100 mmol/l) on tubers can induce resistance against dry rot of *F. sulphureum* (Yin et al., 2010). The crude extract of *Bacillus subtilis* can inhibit *Erwinia carotovora* subsp. *carotovora* (Deng et al., 2011). Dipping tubers in strong lime+ sulfur solution (1:10 in water) could reduce the scale insect of *A. hartii* (Salerno et al., 2018).

CONCLUSION

Some pests and diseases are serious problems in the cultivation of konjac. They can reduce the yields and the quality of tuber seeds. Pests and diseases management is required, through cultural methods, biological, and chemical approaches.

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