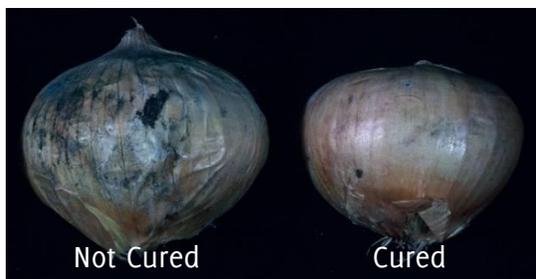


Curing is a post-harvest treatment in which certain products (onions, garlic, potatoes, sweet potatoes, or mandioca) are exposed to heat in a way that strengthens the skin, greatly **increasing shelf life**.

For example, onions normally decay after 1-2 months, but **can be stored for 6 to 9 months** with little loss of quality after being cured.



By extending the post-harvest life of your produce, you expand your opportunity in the market. For example, curing allows you to sell potatoes several months after the end of the growing season, when other farmers have run out of their supply and prices are high.

Curing is easy. You **don't need special materials** – just a warm, shaded, well-ventilated place for your produce, and a few weeks of patience.



Millennium Challenge Account
Cape Verde



Ministry of the Environment,
Rural Development and
Marine Resources



Agland Investment Services, Inc.

TECHNICAL TEAM

Coordination:

Lizanne E. Wheeler

Editor, Designer, Layout Artist: Chase DuBois

Technical Collaboration:

Dr. Farbod Youssefi, Dr. Lisa Kitinoja,
Chase DuBois, Lizanne E. Wheeler

Curing



Monte Negro, Santiago

Onions curing in sacks on wooden pallets under the shade.

ONE IN A SERIES OF 5

Postharvest

www.mca.cv/pt/formacao/documentos-formacao/

Onions and garlic

Curing onions or garlic allows outer layers of skin and neck tissue to dry out, sealing the bulb and protecting it from disease during cold storage.

If the weather is warm enough, curing can be done in the field. Use the dried tops of the plants to cover and shade the bulbs, protecting the produce from excess heat and sunburn.



To dry out, the product must be kept at **low relative humidity**. If possible, leave space between bulbs. More exposure to dry air means faster, more even drying. Just be sure to **avoid direct sunlight**.

Curing should begin as soon as possible after harvest, ideally within 6 to 12 hours after digging.

Properly cured produce lasts longer even at ambient temperature, but to achieve the *maximum* shelf life, your produce should be cooled.



Sweet potatoes curing in a greenhouse.

Onions and garlic can also be cured in **breathable** sacks (jute, burlap, or similar – but **not plastic**). Cover with grass to provide shade.



Curing is done and bulbs are ready for storage when the skins rattle and the roots are dry and wiry.

Maximum shelf life after curing:

- **Onion and Garlic:** 6-9 months at 0°C
- **English potato:** 3-4 months at 5°C
- **Sweet potato:** 6-10 months at 15°C
- **Cassava:** 1-2 weeks at 20°C



Remember, long shelf life means you can wait for a better price.

English potatoes, sweet potatoes, and mandioca

Curing root crops like potatoes allows a new outer layer of cork cells to grow, which heals harvesting wounds and provides protection from disease and water loss during cold storage.

Root crops need **high relative humidity (RH)** to cure properly. Unlike the simple drying process for onions/garlic, root curing involves cell growth, and the **cells under the peel will not grow to heal any cuts and wounds if the air is too dry**.

Recommended curing conditions:

| Product | Temp. | RH | Days |
|----------------|---------|--------|------|
| English potato | 15-20°C | 90-95% | 5-10 |
| Sweet potato | 30-32°C | 85-90% | 4-7 |
| Cassava | 30-40°C | 90-95% | 2-5 |

Also important:

- **Don't let water rest on the surface.** Water encourages rotting.
- **Keep the temperature stable.** A drop in temperature can cause water to condense on the surface.
- **Provide moderate ventilation.** Too much air flow can cause drying.