



CULTIVATION OF GROUNDNUTS

—*Matongkomane (Setswana)*—

This is a rotational crop which should only be planted on the same soil once every 4 years

Groundnuts are rich in protein and can be eaten raw, cooked or roasted. The upright types are mostly cultivated under drier conditions while the runner types are often irrigated. Specific types to suit certain conditions are available.

Groundnuts are more drought tolerant than maize and can be cultivated for home consumption or as a cash crop. Crop residue makes good-quality hay for animals.

Soil and climatic requirements

- ◆ Groundnuts must be cultivated in light sandy soils of at least 1 m in depth. Heavy, clayey soils are not suitable because lifting the groundnuts becomes too difficult, resulting in crop loss.
- ◆ A minimum rainfall of 500 mm per year is needed for dryland production. Groundnuts are very sensitive to low temperatures and seeds should only be planted when the minimum temperature stabilises above 18 °C. Higher altitudes with cooler climates are not suitable for groundnut production.



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Planting

- ◆ Various cultivars are available, some of which are more resistant to nematodes.
- ◆ Planting can commence as soon as enough rain has fallen and minimum temperature requirements are met (usually from middle October to middle November). Late planting (from December onwards) results in lower yields.
- ◆ Do not ridge groundnuts.
- ◆ The plants usually do not react well to direct fertilisation but utilise nutrients left by the previous crop.
- ◆ Groundnuts must be planted in rows 90 cm apart. Space the plants approximately 4 to 7 cm apart in the row. The planting depth should be 5 to 7,5 cm.
- ◆ Groundnuts can be planted mechanically or by hand. Do not compact the soil after planting, only firm it down to ensure good seed/soil contact.

Pest control

- ◆ It is best to treat the seed with a fungicide as well as with a Rhizobium-inoculant.

- ◆ Weeds can be controlled chemically or by hand hoeing.
- ◆ Insect pests are seldom a problem and groundnuts can tolerate considerable leaf loss without any influence on yield.
- ◆ In sparse stands aphids can transmit diseases.
- ◆ Leaf spot diseases have to be controlled chemically as soon as these occur.

Harvesting

- ◆ Groundnuts must be pulled up as soon as substantial leaf loss occurs as a result of diseases, frost or drought or as soon as 75 % of the pods have ripened.
- ◆ Plants must be stacked with pods inside and leaves to the outside of the stack and left to cure and dry.
- ◆ Pods can be removed mechanically, picked by hand and by rubbing the plants with the pods against wire mesh.

Marketing

- ◆ Groundnuts can be marketed in shelled or unshelled form on both formal and informal markets. Formal markets require larger quantities.



For further information on groundnut production, contact:
Directorate Technical Support Services
Private Bag X804, Potchefstroom 2520
Tel: 018 299 6504

or

Resource Centre, Department of Agriculture
Tel: 012 3197141/7085

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