Cowpea Growers' Guide

Revised Edition

National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO)

1996

Introduction

Cowpea is mainly grown in Northern and Eastern Uganda. It is consumed as a pulse as wet as in leaf form as a green vegetable. Cowpea provides cheap and important vitamin and plant protein which complement the cereal tuber staples consumed in those regions.

Varieties

At the moment only local varieties are mostly grown. There are a few promising lines now under multiplication. These yield above 1500 kg/ha.

Land Preparation

A relatively good seedbed is required

Seed Rate

20 kg/ha as a pure standing crop.

Planting

Cowpea is mostly planted as a second rains crop but can also do relatively well in the first rains if pest control is carried out. It often follows cereals (particularly millet) in rotation.

Cowpea can be planted in rows with spacing of 60 cm between rows and 30 cm between plants or broadcast as a sole crop. It is also a common practice to interplant cowpea with cassava or maize.

Weeding

In a well prepared seedbed weeding should be done 3-4 weeks after planting. A second weeding at flowering is sometimes required.

Thinning is done during weeding leaving one plant per hill/hole in the row crop. This continues up to flowering in the broadcast crop, where the thinning is used as green vegetable.

Maturity

The crop mature unevenly and it takes about 90 days.

Yields

Yields are variable up to about 600 kg/ha but can yield as high as 1,500 kg/ha on well managed plots.

Harvesting and Drying

Only dry brown pods should be packed and further dried in the sun before storage. Repeat the picking when necessary

Storage

Sun-dry thoroughly before storage. In the absence of chemical treatment, store in the pod form. If stored in the seed form it should be dressed with Actellic 2% or Lindane 0.1% dust.

The Bruchid beetles, *Callosotrunchus* and rats are major storage problems. Rat damage can be avoided by use of rat proof storage structures, while Actellic controls the Bruchids and other storage insect pests.

Pests

The major pests of cowpea include the Cowpea Pod borer, *Maruca testulasis,*
Aphids. Thrips, Flower beetles, Fire flies and a host of sucking bugs.

Control is by using Fenitrothion 50%, Decis or Salut. Spraying is done before flowering to control leaf eating insects if the damage is heavy. It should also be done during flower formation and at podding.

Diseases

Aschochyta Leaf Spot is common in wet weather. Others include Powdery Mildew, Scab, True and False Rusts.

It may not be economic to control these diseases with Fungicides for a subsistence crop.

Growing Cowpea in the second rains, timely planting and dressing the seed with Fernasan D before planting can minimize disease incidence.

Printed by
Agricultural Communications Centre
Entebbe