



Butternut (*Cucurbita moschata*)

Introduction

Butternuts belong to the cucurbitaceae (vine) family. It has yellow skin and orange fleshy pulp. The plant is thought to have originated from America. It is a warm season crop which is susceptible to frost damage.

Ideal growing conditions

- Ideal growing temperatures should not exceed 29°C during the day and a range of 18 – 21°C at night
- Clay loam well drained soils are most ideal for growing crop but can be grown in other soils. Soil pH of 5.5 –6.5 is suitable for plant growth and production

Planting

- Planting in the Highveld is recommended from mid-August when frost is over and temperatures are warm. In the Lowveld crop can be established year round
- Seeds are planted in furrows or on basins 2 seeds/station later thinned to 1 plant/station
- Plants spaced 1.2m inter-row & 1m in row
- Butternuts do not tolerate waterlogging and are very sensitive to frost. Adequate soil drainage and timing of planting time is critical to successful production.

Fertilization

- Basal application of 10-15t/ha manure or Compound D at the rate of 600kg/ha is recommended. Fertilizer is applied per basin or into furrow
- Topdressing is done at three weeks after emergence at a rate of 100kg/ha

Watering

- Surface irrigation is recommended i.e. drip to minimize leaf diseases
- Water stress during flowering can result in poor setting

Weed control

Control weeds early to allow rapid canopy cover and suppression of weeds

Pests and control

- Cutworms, white grubs (Pyrinex, Chlopyriphos)
- Pumpkin/Fruit fly (GF-120, Malathion 85%)

Diseases and control

- Fusarium wilt (Thiram seed dressing)
- Powdery & Downy mildews (Copper-oxychloride, Ridomil, Bravo, Mancozeb)

Harvesting

- Ready when the fruits colour turns to pale orange colour and greenish stripes the point of fruit attachment are no longer visible
- Cure at room temperature 20°C for safe & longer storage
- Storage 2-3 months at 10°C & 50-75% RH

Yield: 18-22t/ha