**Harvesting**

Mollucella takes 80 – 90 days from planting to harvesting. This is when stems are 50 – 80cm long.

- Harvesting is preferably done using a sharp knife in the morning or evening to increase shelf life.
- Put harvested stems in a bucket of water.
- Yield is estimated at 2-3 stems per plant.

**Grading**

Sorting and cleaning has to be done before grading.

- Stems are cleaned by removing the leaves between the calyces to make flowers visible.
- All short and damaged stems are discarded and the rest are put in silver disulphide solution (STS) to improve vase life.

**Packaging**

- Stems are packed in boxes according to grade sizes, number of bunches and packing pattern.
- The flower heads should be 10cm away from the end of the box to protect petals from damage or bruises.
Introduction

Molucella or ‘Bells of Ireland’ is an annual plant that is characterised by pale green funnel shaped calyxes. It is a popular flower in the International cut flower trade.

Ecological requirements

- Molucella performs best between 1,500 and 1,800 meters above sea level where temperatures range between 15°C-20°C.
- It requires adequate rainfall but irrigation produces best quality
- Its production is favoured by deep, well drained fertile soils that are rich in organic matter.

Cultural practices

Propagation

Seeds are either sown directly into the field or seedlings may be raised in a nursery.

Land preparation

The land should be deeply ploughed and harrowed to a fine tilth.
- Prepare 100cm wide beds, with a 50cm separation path. The beds should be raised 10-15cm to allow for good drainage.
- Well rotted manure should be incorporated into the soil at the rate of 20 tons/ha.

Planting

- The ideal germination temperature is 20°C for 3 weeks
- To improve on the germination, seeds may be pre-chilled for 5 days at 10°C.
- Transplanting can be done at 4-6 weeks when the seedlings are about 4-5 cm high. Direct sown seeds should not be buried deep as light is required for germination.

Weed control

- Weeding should be regular and shallow to keep the field weed free.

Irrigation

- Drip irrigation or any other surface irrigation is ideal to keep soil moist. Water used for irrigation should be analyzed for quality.

Pinching

- Pinch to promote lateral shoot development at 4-6 weeks old to increase number of sellable stems.

Diseases Control

- Botrytis is a serious disease characterised by die back of the leaf tips and yellowing of the stems. Control is by use of fungicides such as Bayleton.

Pest control

- Cut worms, thrips and aphids are common pests of Molucella. Insecticides such as Brigade, Karate and Confinor control the pests.