

Harvesting

Harvesting is done when the heads turn deep yellow.

- Cut the heads and peg them upside on the stocks until they are completely dry or
- Thresh the yellow heads then dry the seeds in the sun

Drying

Spread the seeds on a clean canvas and leave to dry for 3-5 days or until the seeds become light.

Storage

Keep dried seed in well aerated stores. Sell seeds to milling merchants to minimise post harvest damage losses (insects and fungal attack).

Yield

Under the recommended management practices the farmer can obtain 8 - 10 (50 kg bags) of sunflower per acre 20 – 25 (90 kg bags) of maize per acre.

This yield can fetch a farmer an income of Ksh. 49,230 (according to year 2008 prices).



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Increase sunflower yield through intercropping



Introduction

Sunflower is a widely adapted oil crop grown in Southwest Kenya. It is a high value cash crop and a source of high quality edible vegetable oil in Kenya.

However, its production is low due to use of non certified seeds, poor crop management practices and high bird damage.

Most farmers in the region, own small parcels of land (1– 3 acres) and practise Intercropping with maize for household use and sunflower as a cash crop.

Benefits of maize-sunflower intercrop

- Reduces bird damage
- Reduces dependency on maize only
- Improves soil fertility increases household income due to higher yield
- Provides feed for livestock (dairy and poultry)
- Supports bee keeping
- Maximizes utilization of small parcels of land.

Land preparation

Prepare land early in mid February for early planting between mid March and April long rains and in mid July for planting between Mid August and September.

Spacing

Single and double row methods of sunflower maize intercrop are planted at a spacing of 75 cm x 30 cm.



Double row Sunflower inter crop

Fertilizer application

Apply farmyard manure FYM (two handful per hole) plus (DAP) two bottle tops at planting.

Planting

- Plant 3 sunflower seeds per hole and one maize seed per hole.
- Thin sunflower to one plant per hole at 4 true leaf stage.
- Plant 4 rows of sorghum at the edge as guard rows for distraction of birds.

Weeding

Weed 2 to 3 weeks after germination and repeat after 4 to 5 weeks.

This is done to increase plant vigour and crop yield.

Thinning

Thin out weak sunflower seedlings after first weeding when they are 15 cm tall.

Top dressing

Apply 2 bottle tops of Calcium Ammonium Nitrate (CAN) fertilizer around the stems of maize and sunflower when they are 40 cm tall (avoid contact with the plant).

Major Pests

Birds and the African bollworm are the major pests of sunflower. African boll worm eats up the green leaves and seed and can cause total crop loss.

Control measures

Bird damage may be reduced through scaring while bollworm control is through applying recommended insecticide such as diazinon.

Major diseases

Yellow blotch disease and Sclerotinia wilt are the major diseases. Yellow blotch causes yellowing and distortion of leaves and flowers while Sclerotinia causes rotting of the plant (stems, leaves and head rot).

Control

Yellow blotch is managed through uprooting and burning of affected plants and also applying insecticide (diazinon) to control aphids that spread it. Use of 5 year rotation controls sclerotinia wilt.