**Ground Nuts**

**Soils and climate**

Best results are obtained from deep, well-drained soils in good condition. Suitable soils include sands and sandy loams. Groundnuts will not grow well on acid soils and thus liming may be necessary for good production (the ideal pH is 5,3 to 6,8). Groundnuts must not be grown on the same land more than once in every four years. Groundnuts are a good crop to grow before maize.

**Fertilisation**

Groundnuts respond well to manure, because the manure not only supplies nutrients, but also helps to ameliorate soil acidity.Groundnuts have a high requirement for calcium, especially during the pegging stage. Low availability of calcium at this stage will result in a large proportion of empty shells. Calcium may be supplied with Gypsum (calcium sulphate) at a rate of 250 kg per ha broadcast over the plants at flowering (7 to 8 weeks after planting).

**Crop establishment**

Groundnuts should be planted as early as possible, at least before the end of November, but care must be taken not to plant too early otherwise they will be ready for lifting while the rains are still around, which will cause problems. Suitable short-season varieties include Nyanda and Mwenje. Nyanda has proven to be the best short season cultivar in trials throughout the drier regions. Plant groundnuts at a spacing of 35 to 45 cm between rows and 5 to 10 cm between seeds in the row. Seed requirements are about 100 kg per ha. Depth of planting is 5 cm

**Harvesting**

This is a critical aspect of groundnut production, because of the potential losses and disease infection that may occur at this time. Here are some points to consider: 1. Begin lifting groundnuts when 40 to 50 % of the pods are mature. Pod maturity may be determined by counting out 100 pods from a number of plants and shelling these to separate the mature and immature kernels (seeds). Mature seeds have a seed skin (testa) that does not easily rub off, and which has a thin papery texture and has developed the colour of the variety. An immature seed has a thick, fleshy skin with a pale colour and which rubs off easily. Lifting should be complete by the time 70 to 80 % of the seeds are mature or before plants are 90 % defoliated. 2. The harvesting process includes loosening, lifting, wilting, cocking (curing), picking and finally shelling. It is important that once the plants are lifted they be allowed to wilt for a few days with the pods exposed to the air before cocking. When cocking the groundnuts, keep the plants off the ground, ensure the cock is constructed to allow free flow of air through the cock, to facilitate rapid drying, and construct the cock so that water cannot penetrate during rainy spells. Curing and drying may take from 2 to 4 weeks. Begin picking when the kernels rattle in the pods. It is possible to pick one to two bags per person per day.