



How to determine which maturity group of soya beans to plant in South Africa

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Soya bean varieties are categorised into maturity groups (MGs). MGs are based on the time frame from when the seed is sown to when the plant is ready to flower. These MGs are classified according to a scale from one to ten, with one being the MG that takes the least time to reach maturity and ten being the MG that takes the longest time to reach maturity in optimal conditions.

Maturity group, area and climate

Over the past few years, through the use of trials, we have been able to conclude that we can use an MG range from 4,8 to 6,8 in South Africa.

To determine which MG would be suitable for planting season, we must first identify the area. By identifying the area, we gain an understanding of the climatic conditions and thereafter we can determine the appropriate planting time for soya beans. Should soya beans be planted at the wrong time, the conditions will not be favourable during the growing season.

Rainfall is the main determining factor for soya bean planting time. Soya beans generally have a very high tolerance to drought conditions up to and including the R1 stage; in other words, the reproductive stage when the plant enters the flowering and reproduction phases. In this specific period up to and including physiological maturity, the plant needs sufficient rain and dark hours to ensure optimal yield.

Know when and which MG to plant

The optimal planting time for soya beans is from mid-October to as late as the first week in January in certain parts of South Africa. Should there be good early summer rainfall, producers can start planting in mid-October with an MG of 4,8 to 5,6. During the early season planting slots, MGs of 4,8 to 5,6 will reach the optimal plant size, resulting in optimal yield. During the later season planting slots, MGs from this range will reach the reproductive stage much sooner. The result is a smaller plant with potentially fewer internodes and fewer pods per plant, ultimately resulting in suboptimal yield.

In regions with later rainfall, planting will only be able to take place from November with an MG of 5,8 up to and including an MG of 6,8.

During the early season, the higher MG plants will reach their reproductive stage later, resulting in a larger plant prone to lodging and, subsequently, suboptimal yield. During the later season, the plant will reach its optimal size with more internodes. That means more pods and ultimately more kernels.

To determine the right variety and planting time for your optimal soya bean crop, you need a knowledgeable partner in the field.

Inteliseed not only supplies high-quality soya bean variety seeds but assists producers nationwide with technical knowledge.

To find your nearest seed specialist, contact IntelliSeed at info@intelseed.co.za or 011 660 7481, or visit www.intelseed.co.za.