

Try 'money' beans this summer

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Mungbeans are shaping up as one of the most profitable crop options this summer, with contracts currently being offered for No. 1 Processing beans at over \$650 per tonne (around \$550 on-farm after grading, bagging, and freight). Growers should consider including them in their summer cropping program this year, particularly when their farming systems benefits are also considered.

Mungbeans are a very quick crop, only taking about 90 days from planting to harvest, they require minimal water and being a legume, will fix nitrogen so have low fertiliser requirements.

Mungbeans require very careful planning and management for a successful crop (see article footnote). Below is a checklist to consider when planning and growing a mungbean crop.

Management checklist

- Discuss variety choice and marketing strategy with a mungbean marketer.

Two new varieties were released last season, Crystal and Satin II. Both of these varieties performed very well last season. Crystal is a shiny green mungbean variety, which is suitable for a wide variety of markets, whereas Satin II is a dull seeded mungbean with only a niche market currently available.

- Purchase Australian Mungbean Association approved seed or, if using grower-retained seed, test before planting and replace every three years.

It is important to only plant good quality seed with high germination that will produce high rates of emergence. As seed quality deteriorates over time, ensure seed tests are performed yearly and seed is turned over every three years with AMA approved seed. A fact sheet is available at www.mungbean.org.au.

- Avoid paddocks with major variations in soil type or unevenness.

As mungbeans are such a quick crop, the crop needs to be as even as possible to aid in insect management and harvest.

- Assess weed status of the paddock.

As broadleaf weed control options are limited ensure mungbeans are not planted into a problem paddock. But mungbeans do offer an excellent opportunity to switch chemical groups and allow the very effective control of summer grasses in-crop.

- Be aware of any residual herbicide risks.

The risk of herbicide residues can be a significant problem in mungbeans, as many growers treat the crop opportunistically and will either double-crop after winter cereals, or short fallow through from summer crops such as sorghum or cotton. In both cases, herbicide residues can pose a risk, particularly after dry or cold winter conditions. Chemicals of particular concern include Tordon, Glean or atrazine when used in the preceding crop.

- Stay within recommended planting windows (see chart below).
- Fertilise according to paddock history (especially after a long fallow) and soil test analysis.

Particularly consider phosphorus and zinc fertiliser when planting after a long fallow (longer than 12 months) as mungbeans are highly dependant on VAM. Sulphur may be required after a double crop situation.

- Effective inoculation.

Effective inoculation is essential if good nodulation is to be achieved. Low yields may occur under poor inoculation and low soil nitrogen levels. Only inoculate seed that you can plant that day. Seed should be planted into moisture immediately after inoculation to maximise nodulation.

- Ensure good, even plant establishment with adequate plant populations.

To maximise yield, adequate plant populations have to be achieved. As the newer varieties being released have much larger seed size, growers have to calculate their planting rate each year.

- Monitor disease status in the crop.

As new varieties are released greater levels of resistance to diseases are being achieved. The three most significant mungbean diseases are powdery mildew, tan spot and halo blight. There is very little growers can do about tan spot or halo blight except ensure clean seed is planted.

But powdery mildew may infect crop under cooler conditions, particularly in late crops. A foliar spray of Headland Sulphur™ may be warranted.

- Timely insect control, check crops every week during vegetative stages and at least twice weekly from budding through to pod fill.

The insects of greatest impact on mungbean are Heliocoverpa and mirids but there are other pests that also attack mungbeans. Good insect control is imperative to maximise yield and quality.

- Timely, effective desiccation.

Mungbeans have an indeterminate flowering habit, so desiccation is a useful management tool. The ideal stage for harvest is when the majority of pods are physiologically mature, and 90 per cent of the pods have either turned yellow or black.

Consider desiccant, plant vigour, variety, water quality and pH, spray application technique and time to harvest.

As mungbeans are quite different to grow than a crop like sorghum, some help with the management of the crop is recommended such as using a Mungbean Accredited Agronomist. A list is available at www.mungbean.org.au.

The Mungbean Management Guide is a comprehensive publication and is available from Jayne Gentry on Ph: 07 4688 1524. ■

STAY WITHIN RECOMMENDED PLANTING WINDOWS

Region	Range	Preferred
QUEENSLAND		
Darling Downs	early Oct–late Jan	early Nov–late Jan
Western Downs	late Sept–early Feb	early Jan–early Feb
Central Queensland	early Sept–early Mar	mid Sept–late Feb
North Queensland	June–early Aug	mid-June–mid-July
NEW SOUTH WALES		
NW Slopes and Plains	mid-Sept–late Jan	early Oct–mid Jan
Liverpool Plains	mid-Sept–mid Jan	early Oct–early Jan