



**STARKE
AYRES®**



ONION

PRODUCTION GUIDELINE

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SEEDS OF SUCCESS

ONIONS

1.1 HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Onions are part of the Allium family which also includes garlic and shallots. They are grown world-wide and form an important part of many national diets. Onions have been cultivated since ancient times and are a commercially significant crop on all continents.

2. ADAPTABILITY

2.1 CLIMATIC REQUIREMENTS

Although onions are essentially a cool season crop, in South Africa they are planted virtually all year round. In the Northern regions of the country sowing is normally from February to April, in the central region from April to July and in the Southern regions transplanted from July to October. Bulb formation is largely dependant on day length and very specific varieties are needed for each area.

Ideal soil temperature for germination : 11-25 c
Ideal temperature for growth : 22 – 28 C

2.2 SOIL REQUIREMENTS

pH 6 – 6.8
Onions grow on a wide range of soils but good drainage is important.

3. CULTIVATION PRACTICES

3.1 SOIL PREPERATION

It is essential that soil is well-prepared for an onion crop. It should be loose to a depth of at least 75cm and if heavy rain is expected in the early stages of growth, raised beds will reduce the effect of any waterlogging. Where seed is to be direct-sown a fine, even seed bed is vital in order to produce an acceptable stand.

3.2 SOWING DATES

Optimal sowing dates vary with locality, soil type and variety. Short day varieties are used in the Northern and central areas of South Africa with Intermediate day-length varieties used in both central and Southern regions. Guidelines are available from suppliers as to which varieties should be used at which time.

3.3 PLANT POPULATION AND SPACING.

A final population of **700-800,000 plants per hectare** gives the highest proportion of medium-sized bulbs which are preferred by the South African market. Seed is sown at a depth of 1 – 2cm.

3.4 FERTILIZATION GUIDELINE

N – 180 Kg/ha. 60 Kg pre-plant, 60Kg at 2 leaf stage 60Kg at 4 weeks.
P – 100Kg. All applied pre-plant.
K – 170 Kg. 110Kg pre-plant, 60Kg 7-8 weeks prior to harvest.
A soil analysis is required for formulation of a detailed programme.

