

Baby corn : A remunerative crop

Ajay Kumar, A.P. Singh, Berjesh Ajrawat and Vijay Kumar¹

Krishi Vigyan Kendra, KATHUA (J&K) INDIA

¹Rainfed Research Sub-Station for Sub-tropical Fruits (S.K.U.A.S.T.), RAYA (J&K) INDIA

(Email : kumaajay_19802008@rediffmail.com)

Baby Corn Cultivation is a recent development in India, which has generated much interest in consumers as well as growers. It has huge export potentials as it is extensively consumed in developed countries. Baby



corn is a money-making crop and farmers can boost their income in a short period. Because of its high nutritive value, it is used as salad, soups, pickle, pakora and culinary vegetable. Baby corn soup and salad is a delicacy in hotels, air lines and shipping companies. It has a great potential for cooking and for processing as canned product. Baby

corn is a sixty days crop with assured high remuneration per unit area, and the rest of plant can be used for feeding cattle. Fresh baby corn ear, which is immaturely harvested from specially developed cultivars of maize, has a crisp texture, subtle, slightly sweet and typically corn flavor. The residual

stalk and leaves of baby corn is mainly used as main source of calories in green fodder, live stock feed formulation and in making silage. The corn gives the highest conversion of dry substance to meat, milk and eggs as compared to other cereals. To grown this crop successfully, it is necessary to acquire the latest cultivation technology of this crop.

Most of the farmers are taking up contract farming of taking up contract farming of baby corn on behalf of food. Processing companies. The companies supply the farmers with high quality inputs- including hybrid seeds besides cultivation knowhow. The harvested crop is then bought from the farmers at a predetermined price. This crop is

processed and then mainly exported to the overseas market. With a market for their produce assured and an estimated income of Rs 15,500 per acre farmers are finding baby corn an attractive crop to cultivate.

Soil and climate: The best soil for growing baby corn is well-drained with a texture of sandy loam to silty loam or loam type. It can also be grown in well drained black soils. It should have efficient moisture holding capacity and high amount of organic matter. The optimum pH range of soil for better corn growth is between 5.8 and 7.0. It requires a temperature of more than 10⁰ C to flower. In case of moisture deficiency irrigation is necessary.

Season : Baby corn could be sown in North Indian conditions mainly in two seasons- spring and autumn. Spring corn can be planted between the first week of



Fig. : Baby corn crop in field

February and first week or March, which sowing time for the autumn crop starts from the last week of July and ends by mid of August. Under assured irrigation, baby corn can be sown in June – July, October – November and January- February depending upon

region. Temperature more than 35⁰C during growth id detrimental and cause a disorder called flowering.

Varietal choice and seed rate: For commercial production the variety should have certain additional attributes. In baby corn ideal plant should bear at least three cobs with good quality, proper size and shape. Dent corn cultivars can be used for baby corn production. Yellow types are preferred over with types. 15-16 kg seeds were used as seed rate per acre (Hybrid /Composite/Good varieties were used for better yield)

Land preparation : The land must be deep ploughed once and the soil must be worked up with a harrow and then a cultivator to bring it to a fine filth and to minimize

weed problem. Apply the well decomposed FYM and mix it well with soil by running a cultivator. Land must then be laid out into ridges 40-45 cm apart.

Sowing : Seeds must be sown as 15-17.5 cm distance on one side of the ridge. Plant 2 seeds per hill and then there would be approximately 90,000 - 100,000 established plants per acre.

Fertilizer application : 4 MT of FYM (Farm Yard Manure) per acre should be applied 30 days before sowing. A basal dose of 20 kg per acre of Nitrogen, 30 kg per acre of Phosphorous and 30 kg per acre of Potash should be applied. Subsequently, 20 kg per acre of Nitrogen should be applied between 25 and 30 days and another 20 kg per acre of Nitrogen should be applied 45 days of sowing. The above fertilizer recommendation would vary depending on rainfall and local agro-climatic conditions.

Weed control: Spraying Simazine Atrazine at the rate of 2.5 kg (for sandy loam) to 3 kg (for black soil) dissolved in 750 litres of water on the soil on the day of sowing or the next day after irrigation.

Plant protection: Baby Corn is a 60 days crops and thus chances of being infested by pests and diseases is less but any attack by pest and disease would reduce the plant's ability to grow and hence reduce yield. Thus preventive measures are always recommended.

Detasseling: Detasseling is an essential operation in the cultivation of baby corn. It is done by removing the tassel of the plant as soon as it emerges from the flag leaf and

before it starts shedding pollen grains. Detasseling increases the number of cobs per plant, facilitates better cob development and quality by avoiding pollination and fertilization deteriorate the cob quality.

Harvesting: For better quality baby cobs harvesting is done when the cobs are 8-10 cm long, 1-1.5 cm in diameter and weigh 7-8g. Harvesting can begin when the first silk has emerged about 0.5-1cm. Subsequently second and third harvest can be done. If silk grows older and longer the quality of the cob deteriorates. First picking of the cob can be done 45-50 days after plating baby corn is hand harvested one to two days after silk emergence, while the ears are still immature. Because ears can quickly become too large and tough to be sold as baby corn and it requires daily harvesting. Young cobs should be picked in the morning or evening. The harvest period can last two to four weeks depending on the variety, following by further 3-4 picking on alternate days. The fresh cobs with husks must be send to the market immediately to avoid weight loss.

Yield: By the best production practices, a hybrid variety of baby corn can give 2.5 to 3.0 tones per acre of husked cobs with 7-10 per cent recovery of de-husked tender cobs. Besides cob yield, 4-6 tones per acre of green fodder can also be obtained which can be used as for cattle and green manuring and may result in good profit to farmers.

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