



Baby Corn

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INTRODUCTION

Baby corn also known as mini corn or candle corn is the ear of maize (*Zea mays* L.) plant harvested, when the silks have either not emerged or just emerged and no fertilization has taken place (Rani *et al.* 2017) Maize is used for human food as well as animal feed, and it is also widely used in starch industry. Towards diversification and value addition through cultivation of Baby corn for vegetable purpose is emerging as a highly profitable activity. Farmers can grow four crops in a year, and the production of baby corn generates employment amongst the rural poor's, from children to the elderly persons. The demand for baby corn is rapidly increasing in urban areas of India. Keeping in view the importance of baby corn from nutritional point of view and its vast potential in increasing the income of farmers and diversification of the cropping system, the present study was carried out with the objectives, viz. to study the cost and returns of baby corn cultivation and to identify the constraints in production. Baby corn is one of the most essential, dual-purpose crops grown round the year in India (Singh *et al.*2015). Baby corn is young finger-like unfertilized cobs of maize (*Zea mays* L.) with one to three centimetre (cm) emerged silk preferably harvested within 1-3 days of silk emergence depending upon the growing season(Yadav *et al.* 2014). The de-husked young ear of baby corn can be eaten as vegetable, whose delicate sweet flavor and crispiness are much in demand (Bairagi et al. 2015). In India ,recently baby corn has gained popularity as valuable vegetable in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Meghalaya states (Govt. of India, 2011).

Important cultivation details

Soils

All soils suitable for grain corn cultivation are suitable for this crop also.

Varieties

- From any variety, cobs can be harvested within 3 to 5 days of their emergency. Varieties that bear more than one cob, with more sugars and nutrients are preferred. Cultivars like Madhuri, Amber popcorn, are better for baby corn also.
- Special varieties for baby corn purpose are VL-42, HAM-129, Golden Baby (Proagro), early composite (Almond) are suitable for entire country.

Time of sowing

Northern States February-September, Eastern States January-September and Western States throughout the year. As there is no necessity for pollination and seed setting this crop can be sown in any time round the year under irrigation in Karnataka. Staggerd springs are preferred to meet the market needs.

- Results of research indicated a requirement of 70% extra population (44,000/acre) than for normal maize is (26,000/acre) for baby corn. Required population can be obtained by adopting a spacing of either 45 X 20 or 60 X 15 cm.
- Two seeds are sown at each hill and thinned to single plant gives the required population.

Fertilizers

- Even if the population is more adopt only fertilizer schedule as recommended for grain crop. There is no need of additional fertilizers.
- Other cultivation practices are as in case of grain maize crop.

Detasseling

- Baby corn is an unfertilized small cob. So to avoid pollination removal of

male inflorescence soon after its emergence is a very important and crucial operation.

- The crop should be under close observation for removal of male inflorescence (tassel) as soon as it emerges. It should be removed in such a way that it should not cause any damage to plant.
- The male inflorescence can be fed to cattle, as it is more in nutrient status.

Harvesting of cobs

- Small cobs are to be harvested at 3 to 5 days after their emergence without damaging the plant. In special varieties meant for baby corn like VL-42, HAM-129, Golden baby and early composite first cob will be ready for harvest at about 47 to 50 days after sowing.
- After 8 or 10 days of first harvest, second and third cobs will be ready for harvesting. The cobs are 8 to 10 cm long with golden yellow colour.

Yield

- cobs : 4-8 q/acre
- Quality stover: 15-20 q/acre.

Important points in baby corn cultivation

- Good ear quality is the principal factor determining the marketability of baby corn. Ear quality and appearance are more important than yield in choosing a corn variety for baby corn production. Each variety should be evaluated to determine if it produces a high quality baby corn ear.
- Most corn varieties produced ears of baby corn which met the market criteria for ear length and width, 5-10 cm and 10-20 mm, respectively. However it seems unlikely that ears which are slightly wider (0.01 inches more) would be rejected.
- It is necessary to harvest the corn crop very 2-3 days. If ears are not harvested for 4 days, they can grow too big to be marketed as baby corn.

- A planting can be harvested many times. Most varieties produce marketable ears for 3-4 weeks, and if they are harvested every 2-3 days during this period, they amount to 9-12 harvests.
- By knowing harvest dates and how long a variety can be harvested, farmers can choose varieties to extend the harvest season.
- This is important because buyers want fresh baby corn throughout the growing season, not just once or twice.
- On average, the weight of the edible ear was 13% the weight of the ear with the husk.
- Just as with sweet corn, we recommend marketing baby corn in the husk to maintain ear freshness. The small ears are very tender and risk in damage, discoloration, and dehydration if the husks are removed prior to use.
- Harvest in the morning when temperatures are cooler and place unhusked ears in refrigerated storage.