

Harvesting and storing sesame

Sesame is easy to grow but poor harvesting, threshing and storage can reduce its quality. Stones, sand and other impurities can mix with sesame seeds affecting its price.

When sesame gets too ripe in the field, the seed capsule splits open and release their seeds. Sesame is ready for harvest when the stalks become yellowish, leaves start to fall and the lower capsules turn brown.

Stock preparation

A few days before harvesting, prepare a drying area in the field or nearby. It must be clean, dry and protected from insect pests and wondering animals. The drying area can be made by mixing cow dung, mud, earth, salt and water. The cow dung and mud make the ground compact while salt prevents ants and termites from attacking sesame. Sesame bundles can also be dried on roofs of houses to prevent animals from damaging the seed.

Harvest

Before harvesting, sharpen the sickles/ knives to make harvesting easy. During harvesting, cut the sesame stalks 10cm above the ground but do not shake the stalks as this makes the seeds to fall on the ground and after harvesting, leave the stalks dry for a few hours by leaving them where they have been cut.

Collect the stalks and take them to the drying area and make bundles by placing them vertically with the pods facing up.

Threshing and cleaning

Thresh your sesame at most 15 days after drying on a tarpaulin / plastic sheet. This is done by gently shaking the sesame

bundles with hands or using a stick.

Sieve the seeds through two different sieves to remove stones, plant debris and dust after which you winnow the seed and pack them in well sown clean bags.

Store the seeds in a leak proof well ventilated clean storage area off the ground to protect them from moisture.