Harvesting
Most of the seed pods are picked by hand, although mechanical harvesting can be used. The mature crop is harvested by cutting the entire plant with a sickle. The pods may be hand picked at maturity when a second ratoon crop is needed.

Uses
Human uses
It is used primarily as a vegetable food crop that serves as a source of protein, carbohydrates and other minerals. The flavoursome seeds are eaten both in fresh, shelled, dried and flour form.

Animal consumption
Pigeon peas are an excellent form of fodder that can be used for animal feed.

Other uses
Pigeon peas are essential to nitrogen fixation and good for intercropping and crop rotation. The branches and stems can be used for baskets and fuel. It can also be used as a shadow crop, windbreak, cover crop, traditional medicine and green manure for vegetables.

Acknowledgement
Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and Land Administration (Lowveld research Unit), Mpumalanga Province
**Background**

Pigeon peas originated in India and appeared about 2000 BC in West Africa, which is considered their second major centre of origin. Pigeon peas are currently widely spread throughout the tropics and subtropics. They are cultivated in India, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Caribbean, East and West Africa.

**Production areas**

Limpopo Bohlabela district, Mopani district Mpumalanga Gert Sibande, Enkangala, Ehlanzeni

**Agronomic requirements**

**Climatic requirements**

Pigeon peas grow well in temperatures of between 18 and 29 °C. The plants are sensitive to waterlogging and frost.

**Soil requirements**

The crop grows well in all types of soils, varying from sandy to heavy loams, with well-drained, medium heavy loams being best. It requires a pH ranging from 5.0 to 7.0.

**Rainfall**

It is one of the most drought tolerant and frost intolerant legume crops, with a wide range of rainfall tolerance, but prefers optimal rainfall ranging between 400 and 750 mm per annum. In dry areas with less than 600 mm annual rainfall, it even produces seed abundantly, as the crop matures early and the incidence of pest damage is low. Pigeon pea prefers moist conditions for the first two growing months, drier conditions during flowering and harvesting.

**Cultural practices**

**Propagation**

It is best established by direct seeding in a well-prepared field. Seed inoculation is not usually needed but if inoculating, a cowpea group strain of *Rhizobium* can be used.

**Soil preparation**

It thrives best in seed bed prepared by deep tillage to reduce weeds. Primary tillage in the autumn assists the soil to dry and warm up faster in spring and makes earlier seeding possible.

**Planting**

Seeds can be sown from 2.5 to 10 cm deep, the deeper figure being in hand dibbling. Seeds can be broadcasted at a seed rate of 45 to 67 kg/ha or at least a maize planter can be used for seeding.

**Fertilisation**

A plant shows little response to nitrogen fertilisers and usually to phosphorus and requires enough calcium, potash and magnesium. The plant has to be inoculated with *Rhizobium* to enhance nitrogen fixation. Pigeon pea can be used as a green manure crop.

**Irrigation**

It is one of the most drought tolerant legume crops, with a wide rainfall tolerance. In dry areas with less than 400 mm annual rainfall, water can be supplemented by irrigation for the first two growing months, and during flowering to harvest-

**Weed control**

Pigeon pea is very sensitive to weed competition in the first 45 to 60 days of growth because of its slow initial growth rate. Effective weed control at the early growth stages of the crop is one of the most important factors contributing to high yields, especially during the first 4 to 8 weeks.

**Pest and disease control**

Insect pests and diseases have negative impact on pigeon pea productivity; also leading to poor quality seed. Pests and diseases reduce the plant stand; however, these can be controlled by the use of pest resistant cultivars, crop rotations, weed removal, inoculation with the cow pea group strain of *Rhizobium* and intercropping with cereals.

**Scientific name:** *Cajanus cajan*

**Common names:** Lothlodi, Ndozi, Duifert, Udali, Dithlodi