

GUIDELINES FOR EL NIÑO PREPAREDNESS

MATCH THE MATURITY
TO THE SEASON

Varietal selection and agronomic advisory for Uganda's second rains, August - December 2026.

SEED CO UGANDA
AGRONOMYSOURCE: UNMA & REGIONAL CLIMATE
OUTLOOKSSECOND SEASON • AUGUST - DECEMBER
2026

Multiple seasonal outlooks confirm that a moderate to strong El Niño is developing in the equatorial Pacific and is already suppressing 2026 rainfall over Uganda. Most of the country experiences a bi-modal rainfall pattern, with the second season expected to run from August to December. The Uganda National Meteorological Authority forecasts normal to below-normal, lower-than-average conditions through August, with the dry peak concentrated in July.

Seed Co Uganda's absolute advantage is a climate-smart, drought-tolerant portfolio spanning early, mid and late maturity; a hybrid for every farmer, whatever their location and whatever the forecast does next.

Our single most effective lever is **deliberate maturity diversification** — spreading drought risk instead of concentrating it in one maturity group.

What El Niño Means Here

Equatorial Pacific warming • Greater Horn of Africa

El Niño refers to the periodic warming of sea-surface temperatures in the equatorial central and eastern Pacific. It alters global atmospheric circulation and typically **suppresses rainfall** over Uganda and much of the Greater Horn of Africa during the August–December second rainy season.

The second season is still expected to **begin in August**, but with high variability. The onset will be patchy, with dry spells between rainfall events, especially in the first half of the month. Temperatures will run **above average countrywide**, raising evapotranspiration and moisture stress even where rainfall is close to normal.

Aug

Second season onset patchy, with dry spells between events

Jul

Dry peak concentrated in July, ahead of the season

Hot

Above-average temperatures countrywide raise moisture stress

The Outlook, Region by Region

Rainfall relative to the long-term normal

Western, Southwestern & Central

Incl. Lake Victoria basin

BELOW

NEAR

ABOVE

Below normal rainfall and an early, deeper dry spell through July into August. The early corridor is the first to dry out, the earliest-maturing genotypes belong here.

Eastern & Northern

BELOW

NEAR

ABOVE

Near normal tending to below normal, with on and off showers weakening progressively toward the end of the season.

Mbale EASTERN

BELOW

NEAR

ABOVE

Isolated showers with intermittent dry spells in early August; rainfall increases mid-to-late August, supporting planting. Watch for localised heavy storms later in the season.

Masindi MID-WEST

BELOW

NEAR

ABOVE

Near-normal rainfall overall but planting rains may not be consistent at the beginning of August. Confirm the onset before committing seed.

Read the dial, not the calendar. Some areas may receive above normal rainfall later in the season. It is the **onset and the gaps between events**; not the seasonal total, that will decide whether your crop reaches maturity.

Diversify by Maturity

Match the hybrid to the length of your planting window

Given the uneven rainfall risk across Uganda's agro-ecologies, the single most effective mitigation is deliberate diversification across maturity classes, matched to each zone's expected planting-window length. Plant **at least two Seed Co varieties from different maturity groups** — the weather is unpredictable, and your portfolio should be too.

	SHORT WINDOW	LONG WINDOW	
SC419			Priority for greater Uganda. An absolute advantage in escaping an early-season cut-off — reaches physiological maturity before moisture runs out. Anchor variety for the earliest-drying cattle corridors.
	VERY EARLY MATURING		
SC555			Performs across all regions of Uganda. Drought tolerant and early maturing, with a deep stay-green characteristic that holds yield through late-season stress.
	EARLY MATURING		
SC657			Mid to high altitude - Kapchorwa and eastern Uganda. Drought tolerant, with the same deep stay-green characteristic
	MEDIUM MATURING		
SC719			Kapchorwa and northern Uganda , mid and high-altitude areas. Combines drought tolerance with drought-escape characteristics where effective rains run longer.
	LONG MATURING		

The pairing rule - a very early hybrid (SC419) alongside an early or medium one (SC555, SC657), or a medium alongside a late (SC657 with SC719). Two maturity groups in the same season means one of them is always suited to how the rains actually behave.

Seven Actions Before the Rains

Mitigation and business continuity

- 1 Plant on first effective rainfall**
Defined as 30mm of rainfall over three consecutive days. Not the first shower — the first effective one.
- 2 Plant two maturity groups**
Very early SC419 with early SC555, or medium SC657 with late SC719. Be deliberately risk-averse.
- 3 Rip wet or dry**
Harness as much moisture as the profile will hold before the season starts.
- 4 Practise conservation farming**
Pot-holing, mulching and permanent ground cover particularly valuable for small scale farmers.
- 5 Hold optimum plant population**
Above 55,000 plants per hectare, competition for moisture rises sharply and the crop reaches permanent wilting point far earlier than a crop at optimum population.
- 6 Buy inputs early, prepare land early**
Complete land preparation before the onset of rainfall so nothing stands between effective rain and seed in the ground.
- 7 Invest in irrigation where you can**
Farmers with water bodies near their fields should treat irrigation as this season's highest return investment.



The 2026 El Niño is **not forecast to be uniform or catastrophic** but it does raise the risk of a shortened, hotter season in the west, southwest and central belt.

Prospects are somewhat better, though still uncertain, in the east and north. Seed Co's most direct lever is deliberate maturity diversification: **SC419** in the earliest-drying zones, **SC555** and **SC657** for greater Uganda, and **SC719** where effective rains run longer. Plant early, and take monthly monitoring of updated forecasts seriously.

SEED CO UGANDA - A Hybrid for Every Window

Speak to your nearest Seed Co agent or stockist about matching maturity classes to your district's expected planting window before you buy this season's seed.

Compiled by **Philp Matombo** · Seed Co Uganda