PLANTING DATE
Peanuts are planted manually in Africa and in rainfed areas. Labor availability early in the rainy season is a limiting factor on timely planting.

Data suggests that planting prior to the rain (dry planting) may be a viable option to optimize labor without sacrificing yield. In trials in Malawi, dry planting resulted in 10-25% higher yield than planting after rain.

PLANTING DENSITY
Peanut is a low-input crop and seed costs represent a large portion of production costs, leading farmers to reduce plant populations. Data suggests yields will increase under denser plant stands; however, environmental conditions, like rainfall led to variability of yield response relative to costs. (Lydia Mkandawire, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources)

Harvest labor is limited by the fact that other crops may be mature at the same time, completing for a farmer’s time and limited ability to hire outside labor. Many farmers opt to harvest high-value crops first, leaving mature peanuts in the ground for some time, but research shows that untimely harvest costs farmers in yield potential and quality.

Study results from Mozambique indicate that harvesting at physiological maturity gave the highest groundnut pod and kernel yield than harvesting 10 days before and 10 days after physiological maturity. Indicating that harvesting at physiological maturity, especially when the soil still contains little moisture, will help minimize pod yield losses in groundnut. (Emmanuel Zuza, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane)

In Africa, farmers have little to no available capital for inputs. Demonstrating the ROI for inputs (including the cost of additional labor) is necessary to encourage adoption.

Interventions such as herbicides, extra weeding and fungicide can greatly increase yields, but timing, number of applications and rates must be tied to yield improvements to ensure the value chain projects in Haiti, Ghana and southern Africa have shown the impact of certain pre-harvest interventions will have on yield and aflatoxin contamination under certain weather conditions. The findings of that research are the basis for interventions introduced to smallholders and on-going analysis of the effectiveness of those interventions in real-world circumstances.

Herbicide application evaluations in Ghana reduced weed control labour time by 96-100% and an herbicide – manual weeding integration, by 55-70% over manual weeding (64-67 man-days/hec/season). Cost of manual weeding was $180-$375 depending on farmer practice, while herbicide-manual weeding integration reduced manual weed control cost by 26-66%. (Stephen Arthur, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology)