

PLANT ON DATA, NOT ON FAITH

Preparing for Nigeria's 2026 rainy season; a state-by-state guide to a year that will be uneven from Bayelsa to Borno.

SEED CO NIGERIA • AGRONOMY
TEAM

SOURCE: NIMET 2026 SEASONAL CLIMATE
PREDICTION

RAINY SEASON • FEBRUARY – NOVEMBER
2026

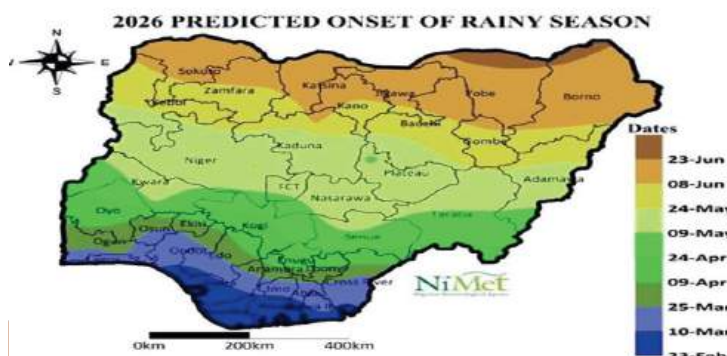
Every planting season begins with the same question: when will the rains come, and will they be enough? For 2026, the Nigerian Meteorological Agency has answered with a note of caution. NiMet's Seasonal Climate Prediction, released in Abuja, describes a season of variable rainfall, prolonged dry spells and warmer-than-average temperatures across large parts of the country — even as the broader El Niño–Southern Oscillation pattern sits in a near-neutral phase.

For Nigeria's farmers the message is clear. This is not a season to plant on faith. It is a season to plant on data. Seed Co Nigeria has developed this guide to help farmers across the country's growing zones prepare early, plant correctly and protect their yields.

Rainfall this year will **not behave the same way** in every state. Plant to your local onset date, not to what neighbouring states or early rains suggest.

A Country Divided by Timing

NiMet 2026 predicted onset of rainy season



NiMet's 2026 onset map. Onset dates run from 23 February in the far south-east delta to 23 June in the north-east; the same calendar date means a different thing in every band.

EARLY ONSET EXPECTED

Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Benue, Kogi, Nasarawa and Oyo — plus parts of Kebbi, Niger, Jigawa, Katsina, Kano, Adamawa and Taraba.

CENTRAL STATES

Onset between 21 April and 15 May.

NORTHERN STATES

No established rains until 18–23 June. Borno should plan for a late start.

Heavy January–February rain and flash flooding in Lagos, Ogun, Kogi, Anambra and Ebonyi were not the start of the planting season. Do not use them to set planting dates.

Three Risks to Plan For Now

Beyond onset

Prolonged dry spells

Parts of **Oyo** and **Ogun** face severe dry spells exceeding 15 days between March and May. **Katsina**, **Zamfara**, **Kwara**, **Oyo** and **Ogun** may see below-normal rainfall overall.

Waterlogging, south & centre

A delayed end to the season is expected in **Lagos**, **Ogun**, **Anambra**, **Enugu**, **Cross River**, **Benue**, **Nasarawa** and **Kaduna** — raising waterlogging and late disease pressure.

Heat stress & pest pressure

Day and night temperatures run warmer than the long-term average in January, February, March and May — conditions that favour **Fall Armyworm** outbreaks and heat stress at flowering.

The boom line: Rainfall this year will not behave the same way in every state. Plant according to your local NiMet onset date and Seed Co agronomist guidance, not according to what neighbouring states or early rains suggest.

Five Agronomic Recommendations

The season ahead, in order of action

- 1 Prepare land early**
Plough and harrow **before** the rains arrive so planning can begin the moment effective rain falls. Waiting to prepare land after the rains start costs 7–14 days of growing time you cannot recover in a shortened season.
- 2 Plant on effective rain, not first rain**
Plant only after **30–35mm within two consecutive days**, and confirm your local onset date with your Seed Co agronomist or NiMet. Where early onset is forecast, stagger planting across a 1–2 week window to spread the risk of a dry spell.
- 3 Conserve moisture from day one**
Mulching, minimum tillage and water harvesting tied ridges and basins, particularly in **Oyo, Ogun, Katsina, Zamfara and Kwara**. Maintain permanent ground cover and practise crop rotation.

- 4 Match fertility and spacing to the hybrid**
Use recommended plant populations and split your nitrogen top-dress at knee height rather than applying it all basal, so nutrients are not lost if early rains are followed by a dry spell.

≈53,333 plants / ha

75cm × 25cm

1 plant per stand

- 5 Scout for Fall Armyworm weekly**
Warmer day and night temperatures from January through March and in May raise Fall Armyworm and foliar disease pressure. Scout every **2–3 days from emergence** and apply integrated pest management at the **first sign of damage**, not once infestation is visible.



Varieties Suited to This Season

Climate-smart traits • proven yield • maturity diversity

SC 651

Climate smart hybrid with good tolerance to drought and resistance to striga. For farmers seeking dependable performance in variable rainfall conditions.

SC 719

Strong yielder; up to 12 mt/ha with good standability. Well suited to areas with a longer, more stable growing window.

SC 419

Early maturing, around 90 days. Well adapted to the Guinea Savannah. Reaches maturity within the available rainfall window in late-onset areas such as Borno.

Select varieties on your state's expected onset date, length of season and dry-spell risk. Always confirm the right hybrid for your agro-ecological zone with your nearest Seed Co agent.

What Farmers Should Do Now

Six actions before the rains

- ☐ **Purchase certified Seed Co seed early**, guided by the recommended variety for your agro-ecological zone.
- ☐ **Complete land preparation** before the rains are fully established.
- ☐ **Plant only after effective, established rainfall** – not the first shower.
- ☐ **Follow recommended fertilizer, spacing** and top-dressing practices.
- ☐ **Consult your local Seed Co agronomist** for state specific advice.
- ☐ **Adopt climate-smart practices** mulching, minimum tillage, moisture conservation.

Nigeria's 2026 season will reward **preparation over improvisation**.

Onset, dry spells and season length will vary sharply by state. Farmers who prepare land early, choose the right hybrid, conserve moisture and scout consistently will be best placed to protect their yields. This is not a season for alarm — it is a season for anticipatory action.

SEED CO NIGERIA - Farm the Forecast

Seed Co agents and agronomists are available across the country to help translate this outlook into a planting plan for your specific location. Visit your nearest Seed Co outlet or the Seed Co Nigeria website for further guidance.