



MAGUIRES TOBACCO GROWERS GUIDE

As Recommended by the Tobacco Research Board

Please remember to always read the label before using any chemical



PRIMING DRY LAND CROP

Percentage Leaf (L) grades may be increased by correct management of plant population, nitrogen and in particular, topping. Priming on the other hand, will not influence leaf percentage significantly, what it will do is virtually eliminate the dry natured, shatter primings. Many growers who primed last season found the P grade eliminated from their Sales sheets.

Removal of the lower leaves when the plant is at a specific stage of growth has been referred to as priming, pruning, stripping etc. Experience has suggested that it has a number of advantages:

- The value of the first reaping from a primed crop is a significant improvement on an unprimed crop. It seems that as long as the filler grade is clean, good sized, unblemished cured leaf it does have reasonable value
- Priming significantly delays the first reaping of that crop, increasing the gap between the irrigated and dryland crops. Often the top of the irrigated crop is reaped immature in an effort to avoid losing too much on the bottom of the dryland and this leads to quality problems. Delaying the onset of ripening of the dryland crop will permit reaping the irrigated crop at the correct stage. Similarly, by removing 6 to 8 reapeable leaves from the dryland crop, losses from over ripening are virtually eliminated.
- The fact that the dryland crop will not have overripe leaf on the bottom appears to reduce the risk of disease in that crop. Fungal diseases like Frogeye and Alternaria are diseases of senescence. In other words, the diseases are more prone to attack the overripe leaf. This means that by removing the leaf earlier, the reservoir of disease spores that overripe leaf contains is much less. (Note: that this does not preclude the need for a timely, efficient spray programme to reduce these diseases in susceptible areas.)

It is clear therefore, that priming has a number of advantages. The following guidelines are recommended for those who wish to prime their crops:

- Confine the practice to the early dryland crop. (October and early November crops). Growers who have primed crops planted late have experienced variable and disappointing
- Prime early in the crop's life. When the plant reaches the 8 to 10 reapeable leaf stage it should be primed. Experience suggests that it is better to prime when the plant is fresh i.e. following irrigation or rain as it is easier to remove the leaves when the plant is turgid. Remove seedbed leaves plus 6 to 8 reapeable leaves. Suggest leave the bud plus 1 or 2 leaves on the plant and remove the rest.



- The leaves that have been removed will have used some nutrients. Most probably these leaves will have taken up no more than 40 to 50% of their N requirement suggesting that around 8 to 10kg/ha of N will need replacing. This indicates that a 2 cup AN or 5 cup Calcium Nitrate will be sufficient.

As indicated above, priming will not play a significant role in altering the grade spread on the floors, this is influenced more by topping. It is therefore very important that the primed crop is bud topped at 18 leaves. The priming will help to improve crop uniformity and therefore topping should be completed in as short a time as practical.