



## Proverb "Qingming should be bright, Guyu should be rain", Guyu Festival rain on agriculture has what benefits?

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*In this week's article, we share a text by Lǎo Nóng Tán Sān Nóng about the 24 solar terms, one of the oldest astronomical calendars in the world, which has guided Chinese agriculture for millennia. Among these periods, Qingming stands out, which occurs on April 4 or 5 and marks the transition to late spring, making it ideal for planting. With over 2,500 years of history, this festival integrates traditions such as the consumption of cold foods and the veneration of ancestors. In addition to its cultural importance, Qingming remains essential to modern agriculture, reinforcing the relationship between natural cycles and agricultural production.*

The farming proverb says, 'Qingming should be sunny, Guyu (Grain Rain) should bring rain.' What are the agricultural benefits of rainfall during the Guyu (Grain Rain) solar term?

In rural areas, the twenty-four solar terms serve as an important, traditional, scientific, and practical guide for agricultural production. Farmers follow these solar terms to



determine the appropriate agricultural activities: What crops should be planted at what time? When should agricultural products be harvested? When do they need sunny days? When is rainfall beneficial? All of these aspects can be revealed through the twenty-four solar terms, making them highly instructive guides for agricultural production.

As the farming proverb goes, 'Qingming should be sunny, Guyu (Grain Rain) should bring rain' raises some interesting questions: why does Qingming need to be "bright", with sunny weather and no rain? Why does the Guyu (Grain Rain) solar term require rainfall instead of sunny weather? What is the reasoning behind this? Does it align with scientific principles? Is it really beneficial for agriculture? These questions will be discussed below.



The farming proverb 'Qingming should be sunny', meaning that the Qingming Festival should have sunny weather. Qingming is the fifth solar term of spring and a key period for rising temperatures. As the soil temperature rapidly increases, various root-shrinking weeds begin to sprout and turn green. Deciduous and evergreen trees start to produce new buds and leaves. Fruit trees flower and enter their peak bloom period while wheat is in the tillering, booting, and flowering stages and rapeseed is in full bloom.



Therefore, it is best for the weather to be sunny during Qingming Festival. Firstly, it supports the flowering and pollination of fruit trees and the formation of new fruits. It also benefits the flowering and pollination of grain and oil crops such as wheat and rapeseed. If it rains during this period, pollination of flowering crops will be severely affected, ultimately leading to reduced yields.

Secondly, the soil temperature of farmland awaiting sowing is in a rising phase, which is a crucial condition for crop seed germination. If the weather is sunny during the Qingming Festival, it helps the soil temperature rise quickly to meet the germination requirements, ensuring a smooth spring sowing process. However, if it rains, the absence of solar radiation will not only prevent the soil temperature from increasing but may even cause it to drop. This would inevitably affect seed germination, lower the germination rate, and disrupt the planting of spring crops.



Therefore, the Qingming Festival is an important time for peasants to carry out spring sowing and a critical period for the pollination of various flowering crops. Sunny weather is needed rather than rain, as it enhances pollination efficiency, helps increase



yields, and ensures a smooth spring planting process. This is why the farming proverb says, 'Qingming should be sunny'.

So, why does the proverb say 'Guyu (Grain Rain) should bring rain'? As the name suggests, 'Guyu' marks the time when rice is transplanted in the vast areas south of the Yangtze and Huai Rivers. Rice cultivation requires an ample supply of water. Without sufficient rainfall, rice cannot be planted properly, and its growth and development will be adversely affected. This is the first reason behind the saying 'Guyu should bring rain'. The second reason is that overwintering crops such as wheat, rapeseed, barley, peas, and broad beans are in their grain-filling stage during this period. Adequate soil moisture is essential for proper grain filling, which directly impacts crop yields. Additionally, the formation of young fruit trees during this time requires sufficient rainfall to help improve both yield and quality.

The third reason is that during the Qingming Festival, a long period of sunny weather makes temperatures to rise quickly, and excessive solar radiation increases soil moisture evaporation. As a result, soil moisture levels decline significantly. Rainfall during the Guyu period helps replenish soil moisture effectively.

The fourth reason is that spring-sown crops, such as corn, melons, and various vegetables, require sufficient moisture for germination and growth. After Qingming, continued sunny weather further reduces soil moisture levels. Therefore, rainfall during the Guyu (Grain Rain) period plays a crucial role in promoting seed germination, seedling emergence, and overall crop growth.

In summary, the farming proverb 'Qingming should be sunny, and Guyu (Grain Rain) should bring rain', is based on the key stages of crop cultivation, including sowing, germination, growth, flowering, pollination, grain filling and so on. Under normal circumstances, sunny weather during Qingming and rainfall during Guyu (Grain rain) create favourable conditions for agricultural production. Otherwise, unfavourable weather patterns, such as inconsistent wind and rainfall, could disrupt farming activities.

Since agriculture relies heavily on weather conditions, 'Qingming should be sunny, and Guyu (Grain Rain) should bring rain' represents an ideal climate of harmony between wind and rain, benefiting agricultural production and improving crop yields. As a result, this proverb serves as an important guide for peasants, ensuring a smooth spring ploughing and sowing season.

#### **References:**



[1] Official website of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, 2006. Origin and Legend of Qingming Festival. For details of the original article, see:

[https://www.gov.cn/test/2006-06/06/content\\_301580.htm](https://www.gov.cn/test/2006-06/06/content_301580.htm)

[2] Fucha Dun Chong (Qing dynasty, Guangxu period), Hundred Questions on the Years of the Year, Yanking Years of the Year, 1960, Beijing Publishing House.

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