



Using and producing forages and forage seeds

As the price of concentrate feeds and crop residues increase alongside increasing food prices, forages are becoming an economic alternative for feed livestock in many sub-Saharan African countries. Forages can be used effectively as supplementary feeds to improve the quality of the diet and increase or sustain livestock production to satisfy growing market demand for milk and meat.



The term 'forage' covers many different plants including grasses, protein rich legumes, shrubs and fodder trees.



They grow in different places on the farm. Some can be intercropped with cereals, some grow along fence lines or on bunds and others can be treated as crops and planted in the fields. Some can be cut and fed to cows in the barn, others are grazed directly or can be fed as fresh feed or made into hay. Some can be cut frequently and will grow back for continued feeding while others are planted in the rains and harvested only once.

Growing forages as part of crop systems





With so many different types available, how can farmers pick those best suited to their livestock feed needs, farm size and cropping system?

Once a farmer has looked at the available choices and decided to plant forages as part of the feeding plan, where can farmers get planting material and how do they manage their forage fields to get the best results?

Staff of the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) can help answer these questions by providing relevant information and a supply of starter seeds for those who want to start forage seed production and enter the forage market. Seeds are available at a reasonable cost and can be ordered from the seed unit at the Ethiopian Meat and Dairy Technology Institute (EMDTI) campus at Debre Zeit on Monday and Friday mornings.

ILRI can also provide training in forage management and forage seed production through short courses with durations ranging from 3 days to 2 weeks that are tailor made for different groups, including courses for farmers, extension workers, researchers or commercial producers.



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