



Para grass (*Brachiaria mutica*) for livestock feed on small-scale farms

Objective

To provide high quality forage for livestock feed in the tropics and warmer subtropics

Description

- A creeping perennial usually up to 1 m high which spreads rapidly from stolons
- Very tolerant of waterlogged conditions
- Grows in partial shade but prefers full sunlight
- Very palatable young stems and leaves
- Adapted to a wide range of soil types and grows well on acidic soils
- Used for grazing or as cut and carry fresh feed

Limits of use

- Very sensitive to frost
- Poor drought tolerance
- Potential weed if grazed

Management

Field preparation—well prepared seedbed for sowing and an initial ploughing for stem cuttings

Establishment—broadcast seeds at 3–4 kg/ha, lightly covered and compacted but more commonly planted from stem cuttings disc-harrowed into soil

Fertilizer—apply 100 kg DAP per hectare during establishment and 100 kg nitrogen per hectare after every cut. Very responsive to nitrogen under moist growing conditions

Weeding—weed twice after planting at monthly intervals during establishment. Once established it can suppress weeds effectively

Harvesting—should be cut before first flowering and not grazed until the grass is more than 20 cm high and well-established and 4–6 week intervals thereafter

Performance

Expect dry matter yields of 5–12 t/ha per year and crude protein contents from 14–20%

This information leaflet on livestock feeds and feeding technologies for small-scale farmers is developed through collaboration between ILRI and its partners.

For further information, contact

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