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 ungrazed

**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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