



Guinea grass (*Panicum maximum*) for livestock feed on small-scale farms

Objective

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

Description

- A tall tufted perennial with a deep, dense and fibrous root system
- Wide adaptation from sea level to 2500 masl altitude in the tropics
- Adapted to high rainfall areas but some tolerance to drought
- Tolerant to acidic soils
- Suited for grazing and cutting
- Very palatable and high quality feed
- Good for erosion control

Limits of use

- Not adapted to areas with waterlogging
- Not adapted to heavy frosts
- Requires fertile soil or fertilizer application
- Intolerant of heavy grazing or severe defoliation

Management

Field preparation—well prepared seedbed is generally required

Establishment—broadcast seed, ahead of the expected rainy season, at a rate of 3–6 kg/ha and cover lightly. For soil erosion control it can be established from root splits, planted every 0.5–0.6 m in rows from 1.25–1.5 m apart on contours

Fertilizer—apply 100 kg DAP per hectare during establishment and 100 kg nitrogen or manure per hectare after every cut

Weeding—weed twice after planting at monthly intervals during establishment

Harvesting—needs to become well-established before grazing. It should not be grazed or cut below about 30 cm to ensure persistence

Performance

Expect around 14 t/ha dry matter, depending on variety and growing conditions. Crude protein ranges from 6–25% depending on age and nitrogen supply

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

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