

About the Programme!

E-SLIP is a jointly funded programme of the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

The Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock (MFL) is the lead implementing agency of the programme.

The developmental goal of the programme is to sustainably improve incomes and food security of rural poor households with the objective of improving livestock production and productivity of key livestock systems in Zambia.

The programme has two technical components:

- i). Animal Disease Control component.
- ii). Livestock Production & Productivity Component.



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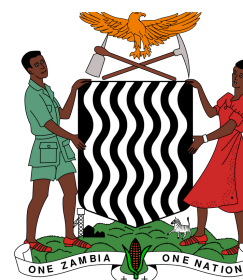
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E-SLIP

ENHANCED SMALLHOLDER LIVESTOCK
INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

FORAGE PRODUCTION



1. What is Forage?

Forage includes plants, grasses, forbs and shrubs that are eaten by livestock. It also includes fodder that is cut and carried to livestock for feeding.

2. Why Forage Production

During the rainy season, the quantity and quality of grass is plentiful for livestock to feed on. However, the quality and quantity of grass really goes down during the dry season i.e., from May to November.

Therefore, it is important that farmers conserve fodder during the rainy season when they are still of good feeding value for livestock. This will help to maintain livestock body condition, improve productivity due to improved nutrition and prevent disease incidences and mortality. The amount of fodder to be conserved will depend on the farmer's goals.

These goals may include:

- To meet the nutritional requirements for animals, i.e, lactating cows, pregnant cows, steers
- To generate income
- To conserve enough fodder for the coming months. In general, a farmer should conserve enough fodder to last at least 6 – 7 months of the dry period in a year.

3. Types of Forage?

There are two types of forage categories based on utilisation namely; Natural and Cultivated (conserved) pastures;

1. Grazing natural pastures - where animals feed on plants such as grasses, shrubs or tree leaves or pods. Grazing is the most common and cheapest method of utilizing forage species as livestock feed.
2. Cultivated improved pastures (also called cut and carry) - any forage material whether natural or cultivated that is cut in fresh form and transported to livestock and fed.



4. Benefits of Forage Production?

1. Forage production guarantees good animal nutrition amidst climate change.
2. Provide higher quality feed for their livestock than the natural pasture can supply resulting in increased number of calves/kids/lambs born, meat, milk and animal draught power.
3. Fill the gaps in the feed supply over the long dry season in order to maintain body condition and health of the animal.
4. Supply animals with nutrients that are relatively cheaper than those found in commercial stock-feeds.
5. Increase the overall carrying capacity of grazing system.
6. Pasture and fodder production can also be a source of income through direct sales of the fodder and seeds to livestock farmers.
7. Some pasture species can contribute to soil fertility improvement by adding nitrogen into the soil.
8. If well managed the planted forage species assist to control soil erosion.



5. How Can Forage Be Used?

There are two ways in which fodder is conserved, and that is; hay and silage.

There are notable differences between hay and silage. The following are the differences between hay and silage.

- a. Hay has low moisture content (less than 20%) while silage has more than 60% moisture content. Hay can be made from any type of grass while silage requires specific type of grass.
- b. The heat in the dry season easily spoils silage while heat dries hay (caution: too much exposure of hay to direct sunlight for a long time can also spoil its nutritive value).
- c. To make good silage, air must be removed by pressing air out completely while hay needs a lot of air to dry quickly.

6. Where Can I Find Forage Seed For Planting.

E-SLIP has supported a total of 85, 291 farmers in efforts to promote forage production amongst smallholder farmers. These farmers locally grow and produce forage seed at community level and sell it to other farmers.

The program has also identified and trained 55 seed growers that produce forage seed for the programme and buy back that seed to promote forage production by supporting small holder farmers. The growers have an association called Forage Seed Growers Association and are located across the Zambia.

