

Fodder Farming for Profit efficiency of dairy farmers in Kenya – Part 1

Fodder is a feed given to animals specifically to feed domesticated livestock such as cattle, rabbits, sheep, horses, chicken and pigs.

Some of the fodder include: hay, straw, silage, compressed and pelleted feeds as well as legumes. Most farmers in Kenya use fodder to feed their animals and the fodder varies in terms of fibre, palatability and nutrition hence its important to balance fodder to give animals the required nutrition.

Adressing fodder

There are several fodders that can be fed to animals and these are; Sudan grass, desmodium, lucern, green maize, forage sorghum, rod grass, legumes ,sweet potato vines, Kikuyu grass and star grass.

Desmodium is leguminous fodder rich in protein and minerals, lucern is a protein fodder and tufted grass is in the napier family. Grain fodder like sorghum, Sudan grass and sometimes a mix of all these to make up a silage.

Planting and care

When planting napier a distance of 2 feet by 2 feet per cut or split is observed and for desmodium, spacing is 1 foot by 1 foot whereas for sweet potato which is usually good for weaning stage in calves a spacing of 45 cm by 30 cm is applied.

Growth of fodder is supported by use of NPK (Nitrogen, Phosphorous and Potassium) fertilizer. By planting fodder

farmers are able to cut the cost of production hence maximizing profits.

Integrating fodder

Farmers are advised to plant two types of fodder on their farm because when integrating two fodders, plants will always compete for nutrients because of population per square. Napier grass and desmodium are trimmed to regrow and can last about 8-10 seasons which is roughly 4-5 years.

The nutritive value of feed for livestock is determined by its content of dry matter, crude protein and crude fibre, digestibility of organic matter and the voluntary intake of other nutrients.

Read more on Fodder Farming for profit efficiency of dairy farmers in Kenya -Part 2