GROW GIANT PANICUM GRASS FOR INCREASED MILK YIELD

IN AREAS PRONE TO NAPIER STUNT AND HEAD SMUT DISEASES
Introduction

- Giant panicum grass (*Panicum maximum*) is a perennial fodder crop which can be directly grazed or cut (harvested), chopped and fed to livestock in smallholder farms
- It is leafy, palatable and has high nutritive value
- It has a rapid re-growth after cutting
- It is not infected by Napier stunt and head smut diseases

Where to grow Giant panicum grass

It grows well in low to medium altitude areas of Kenya with 700-2400 mm of rainfall per year.

Source of seed

- KARI Centres
- Ministry of Agriculture

How to plant

- Prepare a good seed bed
- Dig holes 15-20 cm deep at a spacing of 50 x 50 cm
- Apply one soda bottle-top of DAP/TSP or 2 bottle-tops of SSP fertiliser per hole and mix with soil (one bag/acre) at planting
- Alternatively, add 1-2 handfuls of well-cured FYM per hole (4 tonnes FYD/acre) at planting
- Plant 2-3 Giant panicum grass root splits per hole at the onset of rains

How to manage Giant panicum grass

- Weed whenever weeds appear
- Topdress by broadcasting with 100-150 kg (2-3 bags) of CAN in 3 split applications per acre in a year after harvesting
- One can also apply FYM at the rate of 3-4 tonnes/acre

How to utilise Giant panicum grass as feed

- Directly graze or cut and feed 3-4 - months after planting
- Subsequent harvests should be done at 4-6 week intervals
- Conserve it as hay to feed during times of scarcity
- A well-managed Giant panicum grass field can produce 5-7 tonnes of DM/acre per year. This can sustain one dairy cow in a year