Feed cassava leaves to dairy cattle in the dry season
Introduction

Cassava is a popular food crop in Coastal Kenya but its potential in livestock feeding has not been fully exploited. Leaves can be harvested during the crop growth period and dried for feeding livestock during the feed scarcity dry months of January to March. Varieties recommended for leaf production are Guzo and 2836.

Cultivation

Plant cassava in June at a spacing of 1.0x1.0 m. Harvest the leaves from October i.e. 4 months after planting and thereafter monthly, every 2 months or every 2 months.

Harvesting

To harvest the leaves for storage and subsequent feeding:

• Use a stick of 0.3 m (1 foot) to measure the top part of each cassava branch.

• Pluck the leaves (and petioles) that are below 0.3 m.

• Remove all the leaves on the stems during root harvesting.

• Spread the leaves on a concrete floor or on a polythene sheet for 3 days to dry, so as to avoid spoilage and to reduce poisoning.

• Store the dry leaves in gunny bags or bale into hay using a hay box, for use as main feed.

Yields

From one hectare, the crop harvested under different regimes gives the following yields:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Harvesting regime</th>
<th>Leaf yield in kg</th>
<th>Number of cows sustained</th>
<th>Length of dry season months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>4800</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every two months</td>
<td>3900</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every three months</td>
<td>3100</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The more the leaves are harvested, the less the quantity of roots produced.

Leaf feeding

The following ration may be fed per day to a medium size cow weighing approximately 350 kg:

• 12 kg of the dried cassava leaves or 4-6 kg if green grass or grass hay are also fed

• 3 kg maize bran or cassava chips

• 8 kg fresh or 2 kg dry Leucaena, Gliricidia, Clitoria or Mucuna

• 60 g maclik super as supplement

• Provide clean drinking water at all times.