

FARMERS REAP BENEFITS FROM KALRO KIBOKO IMPROVED PASTURE

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Mr. George P. Muindi started his fodder production initiative in December 2013 after seeing at a friend's farm (Professor Mbatha). He started with 5 acres of *Chloris gayana* grass (Boma Rhodes) purchased from Simlaw seeds E.A LTD. However, due to low rainfall in his area, the grass did not fully establish to maturity. Based on the advice provided by the manager Sultan Estate farm, a neighbouring 100 acre farm, also engaged in fodder production, he decided to visit KALRO Kiboko where he was trained on sustainable fodder production, its best practices and the suitable species for his farm at Sultan Hamud. He requested for technical assistance during the initial establishment where his 3 farm workers were trained in aspects of land preparation, planting and crop management.

Following the training, George plants 5kg of *Cechrus ciliaris* grass (fox tail) seeds in one acre and harvests an average of 100 to 150 bales of hay weighing 18 kilograms each. His initial establishment (30 acres) in March 2014 took off fairly well considering that he planted during the long rains season which is usually not very reliable compared to the short rains season in ASALs. This made him expand the acreage to 60 during the short rains season of 2015. George now boasts of a 120 acre fodder farm from which in 2015 short rains season, he produced 4000 bales (a significant growth from the initial 30 acres) and sold all of it at KES. 300 farm gate. The farmer initially had the County Government bailing the hay for him at a cost of 20% of the total number of bales but is now using a private partner who is bailing at KES. 70 per bale.

“Unlike maize and beans which are the common crops grown in the area, the range grasses do not need a lot of attention and are hardy”, says Mr. George adding that he only applies farmyard manure and has now increased his herd from 6 dairy animals to 24. “I mix seeds with dry manure when planting using a tractor, spray to curb weeds after two weeks and wait to harvest after four months,” he says, adding that the crop is harvested about three times when the seasons are good. “We are now about 8 farmers engaged in commercial fodder production thanks to KALRO Kiboko, George concludes his story”.



Part of the 120 acre Farm in Sultan Hamud