

KENYA NATIONAL FARMERS' FEDERATION

CONNECTING, TRANSFORMING AND SUSTAINING LIVELIHOODS

Silage bale wrapping, new trend in fodder packaging lasts two years

April 7th 2018

Standard Newspaper

Many dairy farmers are used to buying silage packed in kilos and compressed in open packs. But there is a new trend in town — bale silage. According to silage experts, bale-wrapping system introduced in mid 1980s, brought in baled silage that is high quality, nutritious and long lasting. Wrapping silage, already practiced in several developed countries like Netherlands, has helped farmers feed their herds in an easy and cost-effective manner.

Latest machine

The machine scoops silage, packs it into huge rolls, wraps the roll using whitish nylon paper and finally rolls it to the ground. The silage is wrapped in quality material to guarantee freshness. This process happens in minutes. Farmhands are on standby to push the wrapped silage roll to a different location. The ready silage bales are kept at a safe corner ready for transport to various locations depending on orders from dairy farmers. The silage baling machine has enhanced how silage is packaged and stored and for dairy farmers it means high milk yields and higher profit margins. The packed silage is of high quality and nutritious to dairy cows. In dairy farming, forage is the most essential feed component. Providing high quality silage at cheaper prices is key to unlocking the huge potential and enhance the competitiveness of the dairy industry in Kenya and beyond. This can only happen with improvement of feed and forage systems.

Easy transportation

The baling machine packs the silage in packs weighing between 350kgs and 400kgs. Each bale goes for Sh5,000. One advantage of the bale silage is it eases transportation using pickups and trucks. The technology has been received with excitement on the ground.

“Farmers appreciate the package silage, saying it is cheaper compared to the hay they are used to and it has numerous benefits. Unlike previously when silage was made manually or using makeshift machines and would be affected by heat, bad weather and poor storage leading to spoilage, baled silage can last for over two years in good state.

Good silage

The whole process from cutting to baling to wrapping, stacking and storing needs critical care to avoid spoilage and wastage. One critical aspect of bale wrapping is selection of a high quality wrap for best protection. Good quality wrap can withstand rigours of high speed wrapping equipment and the stresses during wrapping, transport and storage. Equally important is quality silage. Mr. Jos Creemers, a fodder management expert says good quality silage comes from maize. “We are advising farmers to consider planting maize for silage as it is a better quality product. It has a lot of energy components and is more digestible,” he says. Maize silage is harvested together with stem, cob and the leaves, which are chopped into small pieces-sizes of about 1-2cm. The corn has a lot of starch in them which makes excellent nutrients for dairy cows.

When livestock uses maize silage effectively, a farmer can cut on costs for buying commercial feeds significantly. This will in turn translate to higher profit margins. Notably, quality fodder for silage starts with land preparation and crop management. Harvesting should be at the right stage and proper machines should be used. Apart from maize, farmers can also invest in sorghum for silage. On estimate three dairy cows can use one bale for a week. Apart from making silage for sale, the machine can also be hired by farmers who have 50 and above acres of silage to package.

Feed storage

The machine can package silage that has already been done in pits or direct from the farms. The flipside is that the technology is still new in the country, yet several farmers are lining up for its services. “As far as I know, this is the only baling machine in the country at the moment. With that reality, we are getting orders from all over the country from dairy farmers,” says Jos.

The machine was acquired as a result of linkage between the suppliers and the Feed Innovation Team by The Kenya Market Led Dairy programme’s innovation fund, under The Netherlands Development Organization. The baling machine comes with experts who advise client farmers on critical aspects of feed storage and management.

Farmers tipped on best seeds for highlands

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Daily Newspaper

Farmers have been asked to use certified maize seeds to be able to curb pests and diseases. SeedCo managing director Kassim Owino said that right seeds makes the difference in farming. He noted that there were new seed varieties from the company for the highlands producing over 30 bags per acre. The three varieties were named as KH621A, KH621A (TWIGA 81 and TWIGA 83) and Tembo 73.

According to Owino, for the highlands, a spacing of either 25 by 75cm or 30 by 60cm is recommended. He warned that if a farmer fails to plant in each hole, he will lose plants from each of those positions and compromise yields.

Major problems facing maize farmers include diseases like Maize Lethal Necrosis Disease (MLND) and Fall armyworm invasion. "The solution for MLND lies in seed breeding and I think so far there are two varieties that have been released," noted Owino. With armyworms, he recommend the use of Corragen, March, Scant and Belt pesticides, which have shown strong results in controlling the pest.

Farmers get cheaper banana seedlings

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Daily Newspaper

Bomet County government has kicked off the distribution of 100,000 tissue culture banana seedlings to farmers across its five sub-counties.

Governor Joyce Laboso said her administration had subsidised the cost of the suckers given to farmers to boost food security.

The county used Sh12.5 million to purchase the seedlings from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology and the farmers will pay only Sh50 per seedling.

"Each of the 25 wards in the county will receive 4,000 seedlings for distribution to farmers to enable them diversify food production both for domestic and commercial purposes," said the governor, who was speaking at Rotu farm in Kaplomboi in Sotik sub county this week.

She said that in the next financial year, her administration would set aside a similar amount to enable them distribute another round of suckers across Sotik, Konoin, Chepalungu, Bomet East and Bomet Central sub-counties.

The governor said that the aim of the project was to make Bomet a banana bread basket.



Key agriculture meeting to be held next week

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Daily Nation

The second conservation agriculture conference will be held next week from Tuesday in Nairobi.

The two-day event is expected to bring together over 350 participants from government (both national and county), NGOs and academia.

Issues that will be discussed include fall of armyworm attack and climate change. Myra Bernardi, Head of Agriculture from European Union Delegation to Kenya, said conservation agriculture would help farmers tackle current challenges.

Deputy President William Ruto will be the chief guest.



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