

## KENYA NATIONAL FARMERS' FEDERATION

CONNECTING, TRANSFORMING AND SUSTAINING LIVELIHOODS

### InnovAfrica Partners with KENAFF to promote Brachiaria grass



*Youth and women in a training centre in Kirinyaga county*

KENAFF is a member of a consortium comprising local and international organizations implementing the Innovations in Technology, Institutional and Extension Approaches towards Sustainable Agriculture and enhanced Food and Nutrition Security in Africa (InnovAfrica), a four year research project (2017-2021) supported by the EU under the Horizon 2020 program. The project recognizes the contribution of the youth and women in achieving food and nutrition security (FNS) through agriculture. KENAFF staff attended a meeting in Kimbimbi village, Kirinyaga County on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2018 to mainstream youth and women into growing Brachiaria grass. The meeting attracted 47 participants including representatives of Kimbimbi Women Dairy Farmers.

## Brachiaria Grass Varieties

Common varieties of brachiaria grass available in the market are:

- **Brachiaria Decumbens Cv. Basilisk**



It is adapted to infertile soil and withstands heavy grazing and trampling. The grass can tolerate shading and is suitable for soil erosion control.

- **Brachiaria Brizantha Cv. Xaraes (Toledo)**



It grows in soil of medium fertility with annual rainfall of over 800 mm and up to 2300 m above sea level. It holds the soil firmly and can be used for erosion control on hilly areas. It is the best for semi - arid, sub humid and humid areas.

- **Brachiaria Brizantha Cv. MG-4**



It can grow in low rainfall (<800 mm) due to its deep root system and is productive even in low soil fertility.

- **Brachiaria Brizantha Cv. Piata**



It is drought and cold tolerant. It is suited to soils of average fertility and can be cultivated in sandy soils.

- **Brachiaria Hybrid Mullato (ii)**



It can be grazed or cut and fed to animals under zero-grazing and also has high biomass production capacity making it a good alternative for making silage or hay. It is tolerant to prolonged period of drought of up to 4 months. It is adapted to many soil types ranging from sands to clays but does not tolerate poorly drained soils. In Kenya, Mulato II is most suited

for growing in the coastal lowlands because in other parts it is vulnerable to red spider mites attack.

## Why Brachiaria Grass?



*KENAFF'S Project Officer during a field day in Kirinyaga county (Training farmers on the benefits of Brachiaria Grass)*

- Brachiaria is a perennial tropical forage with productive lifespan of about 20 years. This native African grass is well adapted to drought and low fertility soils. Other attributes of Brachiaria grass includes high dry biomass production, high nutritive value, deep and large root system, efficient user of nitrogen fertilizer, mitigates greenhouse gas emission, and increase livestock productivity.
- Brachiaria grass crude protein ranges from 9 to 20 percent. It is drought tolerant has less pests and diseases. More importantly, it produces seeds which do not lose the hybrid vigor it can also be used in crop pasture integrated systems where the grass seed is over sown on maize crop planted earlier for the production of high quality forage in the off season.
- Breeding of Brachiaria grass is a low- risk and highly profitable enterprise that will have a major impact on animal production in Kenya. There is a growing interest in Brachiaria and the demand for planting material is increasing by the day. Farmers with entrepreneurial skills can seize this golden opportunity for Brachiaria seed production.
- Brachiaria grass is an important forage that has potential to alleviate livestock feed shortage in the sub-Saharan Africa. Adoption of the Brachiaria forage technology will improve food and nutrition security, income and livelihood of the smallholder farmers in the region through improved livestock productivity and creating more jobs. Moreover, Brachiaria improves soil and environmental health and enhances resiliencies of African livestock agriculture.
- Brachiaria can tolerate drier conditions and more light exposure than some other plants. It can also grow in many environments from swamps to shady forests to semi deserts but generally do best in savanna and other open tropical ecosystems, hence also called the climate smart grass.

# InnovAfrica's Partners



Farmers Conference Centre (FCC)  
Thogoto Mutarakwa Road  
P.O Box 43148-00100  
Nairobi.

Phone: +254 20 2180608  
Mobile: +254 729903957  
Email: [farmers@kenaff.org](mailto:farmers@kenaff.org)