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Cultivated pastures – An extension innovation in Nquthu communal areas

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INTRODUCTION

- It is vitally important for livestock farmers to provide feed for their livestock at all times.
- Nquthu has an average rainfall of 700mm and shallow soils
- Eragrostis teff (Wiliiam lovegrass) is a good option, being an annual hay grass that produces high yields with low inputs and with a short production season it is therefore ideal for the small scale rural farmers.



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INTRODUCTION

- Farmers in the Nquthu were highly affected by the recent drought.
- It is estimated that farmers lost 40% of their livestock due to drought
- Farmer approached the extension officer on advice on drought mitigation



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OBJECTIVES

- Introduce smallholder livestock farmers on cultivated pastures
- Utilization of scarce resources for improved benefits for farmers



Material and Method

- On-farm 0,2 ha demonstration/ trial involving 17 farmers from the local farmers association.
- Three kg of Eragrostis teff was planted in January 2016 by hand broadcasting on ploughed and disced deep red soils.
- Farmers were trained using farmer field school approach, where each critical stage in cultivated pastures was explained
- They were also encouraged to observe and discuss amongst themselves.





Material and Method

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OBSERVATIONS

- 60% germination was observed
- Due to drought and high temperatures, supplementary irrigation was supplied to assist during germination





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OBSERVATIONS

- Initial growth was uneven due to uncontrolled seed depth-no proper equipment was used
- After the first cutting in March, growth got reasonably even



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RESULTS

- The 1st cutting was done on the second week of March 2016; the final cutting done in May 2016 with hand slasher



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RESULTS(cont)

- Farmers' day attended by over 50 farmers was in August 2016 for results awareness/ diffusion
- Pasture was cut and baled using a 'Box Baler'



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RESULTS(cont)

- 37 bales that weighed 10kg were made of which 12 bales were sold to neighbors
- Each bale was sold at R120 and the rest he used on his own livestock



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CONCLUSION/EXTENSION IMPLICATIONS

- Over 60 farmers gained knowledge on the new commodity,
- A farmer assisted by extension officer took initiative and generated income
- More farmers (diffusion) have shown interest in planting pastures for their livestock.



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Thank you