



Rain-fed and irrigated fodder production

One key solution has been to introduce rain-fed and irrigated fodder production techniques. Fodder is key to maintaining healthy animals. It is also cheaper and more nutritious than the industrial concentrates used by many Senegalese farmers. Fodder cultivation is well suited for integrated farming. After the long Sahelian dry season (October to June), fodder production as part of an integrated farming system provides food for Senegal's livestock and dairy herds under a sustainable and profitable production model. It allows for conservation of the soil and, thanks to the significant inputs of organic matter, improves soil health over time rather than continuing its deterioration each year.

Because fodder production is central to increasing the productivity of Senegal's livestock and dairy sectors, the promotion of fodder crops remains a central priority of the Ministry of Livestock and Animal Production. The need to boost fodder production is particularly acute given the country's shrinking grazing areas and depleted water resources, which makes feeding domestic animals increasingly complex.

What is fodder?

Fodder refers to a variety of crops produced primarily as animal feed, rather than plants that animals forage by themselves in open fields. Fodder can come in the form of hay, straw, silage, compressed and pelleted feeds, oils and mixed rations, and sprouted grains and legumes.

What are fodder crops?

Fodder crops are plants that have been found to produce high yields of plant material, are high in nutrients, and are particularly suitable for livestock. The plant material from fodder crops can be fed to cattle as both a fresh green crop during the rainy season and in conserved form during the long dry season. Although a wide variety of crop species may be used for fodder production, farmers should select varieties that are suitable

Crops for animal production

Convincing farmers to grow crops for animal consumption can be difficult. In Senegalese culture, crops are grown for household food consumption and commercial sale, not for livestock. Unfortunately, this has limited the growth potential of the country's dairy sector to date.

Analysis conducted by IFC under the IFC Kirène Dairy Project, with the technical support of the Sustainable Crop Production Platform, identified limited and low-quality animal feed during the dry season as one of the central obstacles to the sector's growth in Senegal. The project therefore focused its activities on providing training materials and coaching on how to use appropriate farm equipment and inputs, and expertise to help farmers grow climate-resilient fodder crops that could increase milk production.

Production of irrigated fodder

At the beginning of the project, the team piloted the production of fodder using irrigation to increase the quality, quantity, and predictability of crop yields. In addition to crops typically grown by farmers, Guinea grass (*Panicum maximum*), a large perennial bunch

grass that is native to Africa, was selected due to its high nutritional value. The project tested its cultivation on several farms around the regions of Thies and Fatick to determine its local performance. The Dabakh Farm, a Kirène supplier, produced two types of fodder on a 37-hectare plot, seven hectares of which were irrigated to produce Guinea grass, while 30 were used to produce sorghum under rain-fed production. Other large farms that supply Kirène, especially those with access to a reliable and sustainable water source such



IFC
2121 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20433 U.S.A.

www.ifc.org