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“Reconcile land system changes
with planetary health”

Scaling improved forages for resilient livestock systems in Eastern Africa: Insights from the grass2cash@scale project

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Abstract

Livestock productivity in Eastern Africa is increasingly threatened by feed scarcity during dry seasons and wastage during wet periods—challenges exacerbated by climate variability. Despite the availability of high-quality improved forages such as *Panicum* and *Brachiaria*, adoption remains limited due to knowledge gaps, weak seed systems, and socio-economic barriers. The Grass-to-Cash@Scale project, led by the Tropical Forages Program of the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, aimed to address these constraints by promoting forage adoption in Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia.

This study assessed farmers' knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) regarding improved forages, evaluated the effectiveness of outreach strategies, and explored gender dynamics in forage production. Using a multi-stage sampling approach, baseline and follow-up surveys (2022–2024) were conducted across selected counties and districts. Descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and difference-in-means tests were applied to analyse KAP changes and intervention impacts.

Findings reveal a notable increase in forage cultivation, particularly in Kenya, with Napier grass, *Panicum*, and *Brachiaria* being the most common. Outreach activities—especially field days and agricultural exhibitions—proved effective in enhancing knowledge and shifting attitudes. The study also highlighted the potential of improved forages to generate environmental co-benefits and create economic opportunities for women and youth. Notably, the project triggered shifts in intra-household labour dynamics, with women increasingly taking on roles in input procurement and forage management.

These results underscore the importance of context-specific, gender-sensitive interventions to scale forage adoption. By bridging knowledge gaps and leveraging inclusive outreach, improved forages can enhance livestock productivity, strengthen rural livelihoods, and contribute to climate-resilient agri-food systems in Eastern Africa.

Keywords: Africa , brachiaria, gender, grass2cash, improved forages, panicum maximum, scaling

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