

On-farm evaluation of hybrid Napier var. CO-3 as a fodder grass under smallholdings in dry and intermediate parts of Kurunegala district

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This study was carried out to evaluate the on-farm status of hybrid Napier (*Pennisetum purpureum* x *P. americanum*) var. CO-3 fodder grass in small dairy holdings in wet and intermediate parts of the Kurunegala district. A sample of 100 farmers who had a CO-3 grass crop at minimum extent of 0.05 ha in Kurunegala & Kuliyaipitiya (intermediate zone) and Polgahawela (wet zone) veterinary divisions was randomly selected for the study. Information pertaining to the establishment, management, green yield and farmer attitude in the grass viz; source and type of planting materials, land extent under the grass, planting space, fertilizer application, irrigation, frequency and intensity of defoliation, reasons in inclination for the grass and farmers direct suggestions for spreading out among other similarities were collected. (with the assistance of Livestock Breeding Project, Polonnaruwa, and veterinary staff at Polgahawella, Kuliyaipitiya & Kurunegala ranges).

Results revealed that 87% of the farmers utilized 0.05 to 0.2 ha of land extent for the grass, 26% irrigated their grass crop during drought spells and 68% followed the recommended spacing for planting. Farmers applied a variety of organic manures and urea and, 80% of farmers used cow dung as the only source of manure due to low cost and ease of availability. 85% and 61% of the farmers followed recommended frequency and intensity of defoliation, respectively. A majority of farmers obtained 3-5 kg of fresh yield/clump.

Farmers preferred this grass due to its high leaf biomass and speedy growth, and palatability and high milk production by animal. Suggestions for further improvement and popularizing among other farmers were also pointed out by the farmers.