**Developing Countries Farm Radio Network**

Pack 13, Item 3

Type: Script

Date

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**Pigeon pea plants for animal feed, part 1 - especially good for the dry season** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Information on this subject area was requested by DCFRN participants in Antigua, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guinea, Honduras, India, Jamaica, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, St. Lucia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

Presenter: George Atkins

**Special notes**

1. Pigeon pea (*Cajanus cajan* or *Cajanus indicus*) is known by different names in different countries, e.g., Congo (or gungo) bean or pea, Angola pea, red gram, tur. Please use the name(s) most commonly used by farmers in your area.

2. Before using the information in this item, please read the notes at the end concerning related DCFRN items.

**Suggested introduction**

We at this radio station are part of a worldwide information network that gathers farming information from developing countries all over the world. It's the Developing Countries Farm Radio Network, sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency, Massey Ferguson, and the University of Guelph.

Through this Network, we bring you information on ways to increase food supplies for your family, or to sell—ways that other farmers have used successfully.

Today we'll talk about a low-cost feed for livestock, especially in the dry season. Here's George Atkins.

**ATKINS:** Are there times of year in your area when there is little

or no rainfall? When your animals lose weight because there's not enough fresh feed or fodder for them to eat?

Well, I know of a farmer in Brazil who has found a simple, low-cost solution to this problem. He uses pigeon pea plants to produce feed for his animals. Of course, most people grow pigeon peas mainly for the peas, to eat or to sell. But also, as you may already know, the leafy branches are good for animal feed.

This Brazilian farmer, Reimar von Schaaffhausen, has found ways to make pigeon pea bushes keep on producing leafy branches after the peas have been harvested. He then feeds these leafy branches to hiscattle and other livestock—with excellent results.

In the dry season, some of the animals on farms nearby get very thin, as grasses and other fresh feeds dry up. But Reimar's livestock don't get thin. Eating the tasty nutritious leaves and branches of pigeon pea plants, his cattle stay strong and healthy. Young cattle continue to grow well—even after months without rain!

Reimar says many other farmers could benefit from his methods—farmers with one or two animals, or farmers with many animals. And it doesn't matter whether they keep cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys, or horses, leafy branches of pigeon peas are good low-cost feed thatfarmers all over the world can use for their animals. Here's what he advises:

First, if you're growing pigeon peas for peas to eat or to sell, harvest the peas but don't cut the whole plant down. Just cut off the leafy upper parts. You can feed these to your animals. Leave the woody lower stems uncut.

From the woody stems that are left, new leaves and branches will start to grow—even in the dry season. Then after a few weeks, you can feed this new leafy growth to your animals. After each cutting, new leaves and branches will grow again.

Generally, it's best to cut the stem at least half a metre (1-1/2 feet) above the ground. With short varieties, you can cut a little lower down. But don't cut them too low or they won't grow well.

Now if your plants have produced more leafy branches than you need for feeding to your animals, you could chop up the others and just leave them lying on the ground as mulch. This will help protect thesoil from erosion, and add organic matter and plant food which will help future crops. And as you know, growing legumes such as pigeon pea also helps provide nitrogen in the soil for future crops.

Now let's think about feeding those plant tops to your animals. There are two ways of doing this. I've already said that you can cut the leafy plant tops and feed them to your cattle or other animals.

Another way, however, is to let the animals graze or browse directly on the plants.

It's good to cut or graze only a few plant tops at a time, so you can have a continuous supply of fresh leafy feed over a period of several weeks or months. The plants will need one or two or three months to grow back again after each cutting or grazing. You can then cut or graze them again.

Now I said earlier that pigeon pea plants are very useful for animal feed in the dry season. That's because they have deep roots that grow far down into the soil where they can find water. This makes the plants stay green even after months without rain, when grasses andother leafy plants with shorter roots have all dried up.

After the dry season, when the rains come again, you can cut them right down and plant something else. But Reimar, the farmer in Brazil, has found pigeon pea plants so useful for animal feed that he continues to grow them all year round especially for this purpose.

We'll hear more about his methods in a later program.

Until then, serving Agriculture, the Basic Industry, this is George Atkins.

**Notes**

1. This item is the first of two items in this package on the topic of using pigeon peas for animal feed. This item may be used alone, or may be followed by Item 4 for further details.

2. Other DCFRN items with information on livestock feed for the dry season include:

Good Cow Feed at the End of the Dry Season - DCFRN Package 1, Item 3

A Drying Structure for Groundnuts - DCFRN Package 8, Item 1A

Hay (Part 1 of Harvesting and Drying Hay), and

Hay (Part 2 of Making a Haystack) - DCFRN Package 9, Items 4 and 5

3. This item mentions the valuable role of legumes, such as pigeon pea, in providing soil nitrogen for future crops. Further information on that topic can be found in:

Nitrogen Fertilizer That Doesn't Cost Any Money - DCFRN Package 5, Item 4