**Developing Countries Farm Radio Network**

Pack 13, Item 4

Type: Script

Date

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**Pigeon pea plants for animal feed, part 2 - some special ways to grow them**

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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 note**

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.

3. You may wish to break this item up into a series of shorter "mini-items," each concentrating on a particular method.

**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.

Now with more ideas about a low-cost feed for livestock that you can feed during the dry season, here's George Atkins.

**ATKINS:** Not long ago, we talked about how pigeon pea plants can produce good animal feed—especially in the dry season when other fresh fodder is scarce.

We learned from Reimar von Schaaffhausen, a farmer in Brazil, how you can make your pigeon pea plants produce lots of leafy growth to feed to your animals. He does this by cutting off the leafy branches every few weeks or so, and he feeds them to his animals.

He also says you can allow your animals to eat the leaves and branches directly from the plants. New leaves and branches grow back on the old, woody stem after a light grazing or if you cut the stem at least half a metre (1 1/2 feet) above the ground.

Today, we'll hear about three successful methods Reimar has developed to grow pigeon peas for animal feed.

Of course if you don't need many pigeon pea plants, you can just plant a few in your garden, around your house, or along the edges of your fields.

*Intercropping pigeon pea with other crops*

If you're growing a lot of pigeon peas, a good method is to plant them together with other crops. Usually, you harvest the other crop first, and then the pigeon peas. The leafy parts can then be fed to your animals. This is a very good way to produce fresh leafy fodder in the dry season, using land that's too dry to produce other kinds of crops at this time.

A good way to do this is to plant a row of pigeon peas between every couple of rows of crops like maize (corn) or sorghum. Many farmers do this. Or you can mix the seeds together before planting: Mix one handful of pigeon pea seed with every four or five handfuls of maize seed, and plant them together.

If you plant pigeon peas with a crop like maize, the pigeon peas will grow slowly until near harvest time for the maize. Then they will start to grow more. The maize will be harvested first, and a few weeks later you can harvest the pigeon peas for food or to sell.

Then you can start using the leafy parts of the pigeon pea plants to feed to your animals. You can let the animals into the field to feed directly on the pigeon pea leaves, twigs, and stems—as well as what's left of the maize plants after harvest. Even grazers like cattle and sheep will reach up to browse on the leaves and tender branches of the pigeon pea plants. Or you can cut off the leafy branches to feed to the animals, as we described in an earlier program.

*Alley cropping with pigeon pea and other crops*

Now Reimar von Schaaffhausen has found pigeon pea plants so good for animal feed that he keeps some plants growing all year round especially for this purpose.

In fact, the same pigeon pea plants can keep producing fresh leafy forage year-round for two or three years or even longer. If you do this, however, you'll find that after the first year or two, the plants may produce fewer “peas.”

Now perhaps you might want to grow fodder like this for your animals, but you think you can't because you need your land for growing other crops. Here's one way Reimar says you can solve this problem:

Plant your pigeon peas in rows 3 or 4 metres (10 to 15 feet) apart. Between these rows, you can plant any other crops you need to grow—crops such as maize, sorghum, groundnuts (peanuts), or a mixture of crops, including forage crops for hay and pasture, if you want to. You'll have one row of pigeon peas, then your other crops,then another row of pigeon peas, and so on. Using this cropping system, you can continue growing the pigeon peas over several years, with other crops between the rows of pigeon peas.

If the land is sloping, the rows should follow the contour, that is, they should go across the slope, not up and down.

Now within each row, the pigeon peas should be seeded very close together—much closer than you would normally plant them.

Reimar sows his plants from 2 to 10 centimetres (1 to 4 inches) apart. Grown close together like this, the plants won't become too woody when they get older. You'll get bushy leafy plants with thinner stems—plants that produce lots of green leafy forage for your animals.

*Alley cropping with pigeon pea in pasture*

Now finally, if there's some grassy pastureland where you don't grow other crops but where your livestock graze, you could plant pigeon peas right in the pasture as well. If you do this, however, you must arrange to keep livestock away from the pigeon peas for the first couple of months after planting, until the plants arewell established and growing strongly. Also, make sure they don't get choked out by grass or weeds when they're young.

You could plant the seeds in furrows a few metres (yards) apart, across the slope, if it's hillside land. Again, plant them close together in the rows, to get good, leafy, bushy growth.

You'll probably find that in the rainy season, when there's lots of grass, cattle will eat the grass first, and not the pigeon pea shrubs. You may even be able to harvest some peas for yourself before the animals get interested in them.

But when the dry season comes, and the grass starts to dry up, your animals will really enjoy the leaves and branches of the pigeon pea plants in the pasture. And with this fresh feed to eat, they won't get thin—they'll stay strong and healthy even after weeks without rain.

Finally, there's just one thing you must remember about growing pigeon pea plants for fodder for your animals: Whenever you cut or your animals browse these plants, always leave enough of the stem so that new leaves and branches will grow back easily.

Serving Agriculture, the Basic Industry, this is George Atkins.

**Notes**

1. This item is the second of two items in this package on the subject of using pigeon peas for animal feed. Please use them (items 3 and 4) in the proper sequence.

2. You may also wish to consider using information in this item in association with information from:

Saving Hillside Topsoil (Parts 1 and 2) - DCFRN Package 5, Items 7 and 8

Intercropping - DCFRN Package 3, Item 6 (notes benefits of growing pigeon pea with sorghum in India)

Alley Cropping Recycles Deeply Leached Plant Food - DCFRN Package 11, Item 8