

## A sustainable solution for helping smallholder farmers to overcome fodder shortage

Shortage of fodder production is one of the major limiting factor of livestock production in Pakistan.

Non-availability of quality fodder seeds results in low yield and availability of green fodder throughout the year in rural areas. Improving on-farm efficiency is one of the objectives of ‘Aik Saath Dairy-beef’ project which is working in Pakistan with the support of Australian the Government. To address the on-farm challenges, Dairy-beef project developed a research focus group (RFG) including researcher, progressive livestock farmers, commercial seed companies and agriculture experts.

The aim is to address the challenges and finding innovative solutions through mutual collaboration to improve productivity and profitability of smallholder farmers. One of the member of RFG is Dr. Masooma who is working as Assistant Professor in plant breeding and genetics, department of the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad (UAF).

She is actively involved with Dairy-beef project to help smallholder farmers for overcoming the fodder scarcity problem by improving seed production technology. She

took on the challenge to work on Rhodes grass seed production in an experimental trial after attending the research workshop conducted by Dairy-beef project. She has collaborated with Dairy -Beef project and engaged two of her M.Sc (Hons) students (Saheera and Nadeem) who are conducting research trail on Rhodes grass seed production. The Dairy-beef project is supporting these students to develop their technical capacity on data collection and analysis for seed production. Both students are enthusiastic to learn these techniques of applied research benefitting the smallholder farmer in Pakistan.



Picture 1 Nadeem & Saheera are carrying field sowing activities in Rhodes Grass seed production research trial. 15<sup>th</sup> April 2019 in PARS, University of Agriculture Faisalabad.

Rhodes grass seed is currently expensive and has very limited availability to Pakistani farmers. Therefore, Dr Masooma feels that by having local Rhodes grass seed production, farmers can help overcome their fodder shortage period in a sustainable manner.

To initiate the dissemination of this information, Dr Masooma arranged a seminar on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019 covering different aspects of fodder production and the aims of her research. UAF management and more than 300 livestock and agriculture farmers were present. The objective was to increase the awareness of smallholder farmers to overcome fodder shortage. The seminar involved a diverse group of technical experts and provided farmers with an opportunity to share some of the



Picture 2: Farmers are attending forage seminar in UAF 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019 in University of Agriculture, Faisalabad.

#### **Theme 4 – Innovative solutions**

challenges they are facing and hear about potential solutions from research targeting those problems.

Dr Masooma invited the Dairy-beef project team to share their experience regarding working with farming communities and farm systems. The Team also shared project

interventions on improved agronomy practices for increasing agricultural productivity with participants and farmers. After the seminar, farmers took a keen interest and requested the project team to remain engaged in advisory services in the area. The management team of UAF acknowledged the efforts of Dairy-beef

project carrying out research for development activities in Pakistan. The seminar was a great opportunity to share research experiences of both the Dairy-Beef Team and the UAF researchers, and was a wonderful initiative driven by Dr Masooma.