PRODUCTION OF *LABLAB* IN NIGERIA

EXTENSION BULLETIN NO 206

LIVESTOCK SERIES NO. 23

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND RESEARCH
LIAISON SERVICES
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY
P.M.B. 1067
ZARIA NIGERIA.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author wishes to register his deep appreciation to Dr. J. T. Amodu (Forage Agronomist) for his cooperation in providing valuable literature materials for the preparation of the manuscript. Gratitude is also expressed to Mr. E.O. Ajileye and Mr. R. J. Tanko for their useful information.

Finally I would like to register my appreciation to all staff of livestock and Fisheries programme who have contributed in one way or the other to bring this publication to success.

Muhammed Nasiru
2001

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INTRODUCTION

Lablab purpureus is a legume of promise throughout the ecological zones of the county. It originated from the tropics and has been grown for several years in Asia and Africa. The crop is very important in India and Kenya. It was introduced into Nigeria many years ago through several sources. It became prominent as pasture legume following its promotion by the pasture unit of the Federal Livestock Department in 1977. *Lablab* is a legume which produces high quality conserved feed and if utilized in conjunction with natural pasture, sown pasture, browse plants and crop residue will help to reduce weight losses common to livestock during the dry season.

The Rongai and Highworth cultivars are very popular in Nigeria. Rongai was introduced from Kenya while Highworth was introduced from Southern India. Both cultivas have high seed yield (1.0-1.2t/ha) and forage production (0.64-4.62t/ha). The white seeded Rongai cutivar is a dual purpose providing food for farmer as well as forage for livestock. Despite the importance, usefulness and nutritional qualities of the crop, there is limited information on the agronomic practices that will lead to increase production of the crop. In these days of scarce and expensive food and livestock feeds, there is need to investigate alternative sources of livestock feed, such as the use of *Lablab* and other dual purpose crops. The economic potential of this crop cannot be properly realized if adequate cultural practices are not identified.

This bulletin therefore highlights the agronomic practices of the legume as well as the usefulness and its important role as a source of livestock feed in the country.

USES OF *LABLAB*

Lablab has many forms of uses.

A. **As human food:**

Lablab seeds are edible and are also used in the preparation of bean cakes 'kose' and moimoi. The young pods, leaves and sprouts can all be eaten.

B. **For grazing:**

Cattle, sheep and goats can graze on *Lablab* and can safely be stocked at about 1-2 beasts/ha. As green forage grazing, plant in late July to early August at a rate of 15-20kg/ha. By eight weeks after planting, *Lablab* is ready for grazing. Grazing could continue till the end of the wet season during which time *Lablab* starts flowering.

C. **As 'Cut and Carry' System**

Lablab is quite suitable to daily harvesting of green forage for feeding stall animals i.e. (animals kept indoor)

D. **As Grazing Supplement**

Lablab can be grown with cereal crops (maize, sorghum, millet) as inter-crops. It provides highly nutritious protein supplement while the animals' grazes cereal residues along with its forage.

E. **For Hay Production**

Lablab could be used for hay. A planting rate of 25-30kg/ha of *Lablab* seed is ideal for high dry matter yields. The seed should be planted in late August to take advantage of the hot and dry October - November Months for harvesting. Precaution should be taken in harvesting *Lablab*, especially in a severe harmattan. It is highly advisable to harvest for fodder when seeds are half-matured. The month of December is recommended in the Northern Guinea Savanna of Nigeria for harvest as hay.

F. **As green manure.**

Lablab has been used in various situations to increase

soil fertility since it is capable of fixing its own nitrogen through the activities of certain bacteria living in its nodules.

SPECIES OF *LABLAB*

1. *Lablab* purpureus : Cultivated throughout the tropics as a pulse crop.
2. *Lablab* benghalensis: Common in Abia but also grown in Africa.
3. *Lablab* uncinatus: It grows wild in topical Africa and seeds are similar to purpureus

SOIL REQUIREMENTS

Lablab is tolerant to different soil types, it grows in deep sands to heavy clays, with fair drainage. *Lablab* has been found in Fadama areas of Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara States. It is adapted to a wide range of P H from 5.0 to 7.5. Saline soil should be avoided as this trend to reduce the plant population and produces chlorotic leaves.

RAINFALL REQUIREMENT:

Lablab grows in areas with rainfall as low as 400mm and where deep soils are available. It also prefers areas with rainfall in excess of 750mm but not above 2500mm.

AGRONOMIC PRACTICES

1. Rongai: This was introduced from Kenya
2. White seeded Rongai : Is a dual purpose providing food for man as well as forage for livestock
3. Highworth: Introduced from Southern India, but very popular in Nigeria. bot cultivar have high seed yield 1.0 – 1.2t/ha and forage production (0.64-4.62t/ha).

4. Rongai: Is a late maturing variety with white flowers and light brown seeds.

5. Highworth: Is early maturing with purple flowers and white (creamy) seeds. Other varieties have black seeds.

LAND PREPARATION

Lablab prefers a well-prepared seedbed free of weeds. It could be over sown into roughly ploughed land or strip-cultivated land. But it performs best when drilled into a well prepared seedbed, but can be establish by broadcasting into roughly ploughed or cultivated land provided the seed is covered to some extent.

SOWING DATE/SEED RATE

Planting early during the rainy season will yield up to three grazing and planting late will result in crop yielding for only one grazing.

Plant at least 2-3 seeds/hole for better establishment.

SOWING DEPT

Seeds are usually sown at a depth of 2.5 to 5cm. Hand planting by dibbling in the seeds or using row hand machine are also recommended.

FERTILIZER REQUIREMENT

Lablab requires application of single super phosphate (or any other phosphatic fertilizers) applied at sowing or after the first weeding at the rate of 18-36pkg/ha. Generally in fertile soils *Lablab* does not require any fertilizer, but in poor sandy soils, 250 to 500kg/ha nolybdenized superphosphate and some