FarmLens Ltd

Website: farmlens.africa | App: app.farmlens.africa | Headquarters: Nairobi, Kenya

Crop details

Sudan grass

Sorghum × drummondii (Sudan grass)

Family: Poaceae

Categories

Forages & Fodder

Generated: 2025-12-14 11:45

Quick stats

Family	Poaceae
Typical harvest	26.7 t/ha
Varieties	2
Pests and diseases	7
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Crop profile

Growth habit	annual
Days to harvest	60-120
Main uses	Forage; hay/green chop
Pollination	wind
Origin and where it grows	Africa; warm regions

Weather, soil and spacing

Best temperature	24 - 32 °C
Rainfall	500 - 800 mm/yr
Altitude	0 - 1600 m
Best pH	6 - 7.5
Soil type	Well-drained; tolerates drought
Row spacing	50 cm
Plant spacing	10 cm
Planting depth	2.5 cm
Seed rate	15 kg/ha

Simple notes for farmers

About the crop: This crop is annual; it grows and is harvested in one season. Harvest typically starts about 60-120 days after planting.

Main use: Farmers mostly grow this crop for forage; hay/green chop.

Pollination: Mainly wind; healthy flowers and pollinators improve fruit set.

Where it grows: Africa; warm regions. Grouped under: Forages & Fodder.

Best climate: 24 - 32 °C; 500 - 800 mm/yr; up to about 1600 m a.s.l.

Soil: Best at pH 6 - 7.5; well-drained; tolerates drought.

Farmer guide (Mwongozo wa Mkulima)

Planting	Sow into warm, moist seedbed after onset of rains or with irrigation; roll/firm for good contact.
Transplanting	Not transplanted.
Irrigation	Drought-tolerant but highest yields with timely moisture; avoid saturation.
Fertigation	Grasses respond to N; split N 2–3 times; ensure K and S for regrowth.
Pest scouting	Scout early for shoot fly/armyworms and leaf diseases; manage weeds aggressively in first 4–6 weeks.
Pruning and training	Not applicable; manage by cutting height and intervals.
Harvest	First cut at 45–60 DAS (50–70 cm height) or early boot; leave 10–15 cm stubble for regrowth.
Postharvest	For hay, wilt rapidly to safe moisture; for silage, chop at 30–35% DM; avoid nitrate/prussic acid risks.

Nutrient schedule (Mbolea kwa Hatua)

#	Stage	DAP	Product	Rate	Targets (kg/ha)	Notes
1	Basal	0	DAP 18-46-0	80 kg/ha	N: N/A, P?O?: N/A, K?O: N/A	Place below/aside seed to avoid burn
2	After first cut	45	Urea	80 kg/ha	N: 40, P?O?: N/A, K?O: N/A	Irrigate or apply before rain
3	After 1st cut	55	Urea 46% N + MOP (KCl)	80 kg/ha (urea) + 60 kg/ha MOP	N: 40, P?O?: N/A, K?O: 30	Broadcast evenly on moist soil

Nutrient requirements

Nutrient	Stage	Amount	Unit
N	Basal	40	kg/ha
P?O?	Basal	20	kg/ha
K?O	Basal	30	kg/ha
N	Topdress	40	kg/ha
N	Topdress1	40	kg/ha
P?O?	Topdress1	0	kg/ha
K?O	Topdress1	30	kg/ha
N	After_cut	40	kg/ha
P?O?	After_cut	0	kg/ha
K?O	After_cut	30	kg/ha

Field images

Varieties

Name	Country	Maturity (days)	Traits
Local Sudan Grass	KE	80	Fast regrowth
Piper type	TZ	75	Fine stems; good hay

Fertilizer recommendations

Stage	Product	Rate	Notes
Basal	NPK 17-17-17	100	
Topdress	Urea 46% N (or CAN)	80	Split after emergence and after cuts
After cut	MOP (KCl)	60	Supports regrowth and stand persistence

Pests and diseases

Name	Type	Symptoms	Management
Sorghum midge	pest	Poor seed set	Early planting; tolerant types
Armyworms/cutworms	pest	Defoliation; stand loss	Early scouting; baits/controls if thresholds exceeded
Shoot fly	pest	Deadhearts in seedlings	Timely sowing; seed treatment; replant gaps
Stem borers	pest	Tunneling; broken stems	Stubble management; rotations; biological controls
Leaf spot/rust	disease	Spots/pustules on leaves	Resistant lines; airflow; timely protectants if severe
Smut/ergot (sorghum)	disease	Black sori; sticky exudate	Clean seed; crop hygiene; rotation
Sorghum midge (in seed)	pest	Poor grain in seed production	Synchronize flowering; avoid volunteer hosts

Yields

System	Typical	Min	Max	Notes
cut-and-carry	30	15	50	Fresh biomass
rainfed forage	15	8	25	Fresh biomass per cut; 2–3 cuts possible (site-dependent)
irrigated forage	35	20	60	Cumulative fresh biomass across multiple cuts

Season calendars

Country	Region	Planting	Harvest
KE	Lowlands & mid-altitudes (long rains)	Mar–Apr	May–Sep
KE	Lowlands & mid-altitudes (short rains)	Oct–Nov	Dec–Apr
TZ	Central semi-arid (with showers/irrig.)	Dec–Jan	Feb–Jun

Region suitability

Country	Region	Suitability
KE	Cool highlands (>2000 m)	Low
KE	Lowlands & mid-altitudes	High
KE	Lowlands/Semi-arid	High
TZ	Central semi-arid (irrigated)	High
UG	Dry savanna	Medium

Source: **FarmLens Ltd** - farmlens.africa and app.farmlens.africa. Headquarters: Nairobi, Kenya. This guide was generated from the FarmLens database.