

## Forage Research

Forage research is important to the development of Jamaica's livestock farming and increasing its competitiveness in international trade. The Bodles Agricultural Research Centre (BARC), in the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries, has several forages under study. This is aimed at reducing dependence on feed importation; eliminating the high cost to purchase manufactured feeds; and ensuring optimum health of and nutrient-intake by Jamaican livestock.

New strains of forage are duplicated and tested at the research station in Bodles, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. Tests conducted by BARC include germination and in vitro organic matter digestibility. A 3-year evaluation programme of the strains is done to verify the yield, nutritional value, agronomics and persistence of the plants before they are introduced on the local farms. The extensive period of evaluation is a fail-safe measure to ensure that the forage can be planted successfully in Jamaica and that farmers will have access to continuous, highly nutritional feeds.

Based on the results of the study, BARC then develops an agronomic package for the new strain, which it then takes to the cattle farmers for adaptation. Samples and seedlings of the verified forage are also made available to the farmers at the BARC nursery.

### Forages under study



#### **Mulato II**

This hybrid, of 3 varieties of Brachiarias, is hoped to improve the livelihood of rural, cattle farmers. Mulato II is considered internationally as relatively good quality feed and excellent for dry season productivity. BARC has already conducted seed production trials in its field, but awaits more conclusive findings before farmers get the green light to plant seed on their farms.



#### **Crop residue**

BARC is also looking at crop residue and by-products from mills to be used as forage in Jamaican cattle farming. Crop residue from cassava is being given much attention, especially since the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) invested some US\$250,000 (J\$18 million) into the production of the root crop. All economic prospects to be gained from the production of cassava is being identified and manipulated.