

# **STRATEGIES FOR SUITABLE FORAGE-BASED LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

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# Contents

- The FAO Programme for better utilization of local feed resources 1-9  
in developing countries  
*P. L. Pugliese*

## PROJECT/COUNTRY REPORT

- Utilization of forages under coconut-vanilla-clove plantation 11-25  
*I. M. Nitis, M. Suarna, K. Lana, W. Sukanten and W. Bebas*
- Improved productivity of Imperata pasture under coconuts with 27-31  
Signal grass and fodder schrubs  
*D. A. Kaligis*
- Potential development of acid-soil tolerant leucaena lines for 33-38  
forage production  
*C. P. Chen and E.M. Hutton*
- Establishment of Forage Propagation Centres for distribution 39-41  
of planting materials in Malaysia  
*F. Y. Chin and K. S. Tay*
- Demonstration trials on improved pastures under coconuts 43-48  
in Bicol region  
*F. A. Moog, A. G. Deocareza and H. E. Diesta*
- Demonstration trial on suitable backyard pasture utilization 49-57  
for small dairy farm in Khon Kaen  
*S. Udchachon and W. Boonpuckdee*
- Demonstration trial on suitable backyard pasture utilization 59-62  
for small dairy farm in Pak Chong  
*S. Thinnakorn and I. Kreethapon*
- Grasslands of Lao P.D.R. and its potential for livestock 63-70  
production  
*B. Norachack, S. Novaha and P. Noraseng*
- The forage research and development in Vietnam 71-74  
*L. V. Ly*

## OVERCOMING FEED SHORTAGE DURING DROUGHT

- Utilization of forages, crop residues and tree fodders for ruminants in Thailand 75-92  
*M. Wanapat*
- Potential of sweet corn stover silage as dry season forage for dairy cattle in Malaysia 93-97  
*S.M. Yusoff and K. H. Teoh*
- Production of "silawrap silage" from fodder grass species for dry season feeding 99-101  
*L. L. Koon*
- Forage conservation for livestock smallholders in Malaysia 103-109  
*M. A. Mohd Najib, A. Aminah and A. B. Idris*

## IMPROVING PRODUCTIVITY AND QUALITY OF FORAGE FOR ANIMAL PRODUCTION

- Managerial approach to pasture production in Thailand 111-125  
*S. Tudsri and S. Sawasdipanit*
- Analysis of the use of legumes and nitrogen fertilizer in pasture in the Philippines 127-132  
*F. G. Valenzuela and H. E. Diesta*
- Improved practices of management and utilization of tropical ranch pastures for dairy cattle production 133-137  
*T. W. Choo*
- Growing Guinea grass (*Panicum maximum* Jacq.) on grey podzolic soil in the southeast region of Vietnam 139-145  
*D. Huynh*
- Growth and yield of sixteen provenances of *Gliricidia* in dry season 147-153  
*W. Sukanten, I. M. Nitis, K. Lana, M. Suarna and S. Putra*
- Performance evaluation of forage and pasture species under different agro-ecological conditions 155-159  
*A. C. Dela Vina and F. A. Moog*
- Screening and evaluation of *Stylo* and *Leucaena* in Vietnam 161-164  
*N.N. Ha*

## **PASTURE SEED PRODUCTION**

- Ruzi grass (*Brachiaria ruziziensis*) seed production and research in Thailand 165-173  
*C. Phaikaew and P. Pholsen*

## **STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME LAND CONSTRAINTS IN FORAGE PRODUCTION**

- Light response curve: A criteria for species selection under plantation crops 175-178  
*P. Sophanodora*
- Sheep productivity under mango 179-187  
*C. P. Chen and G. Khairuddin*
- Animal production on improved pasture crops under coconuts 189-193  
*A. G. Deocareza and H. E. Diesta*
- Sylvo-pastoral to support livestock production 195-202  
*U. Thongmee*
- Ley farming and livestock production in Northeast Thailand 203-206  
*S. Simaraks*
- Ley farming: From theory to practice-extension of crop-pasture rotations in Northeast Thailand 207-215  
*J. Foppes*

## **IMPROVING TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER FOR PASTURE AND FODDER PRODUCTION**

- Experiences in setting up on farm pasture demonstration trials 217-219  
*F. A. Moog*
- Feeding strategies for smallholder beef production 221-230  
*R. A. Halim*
- Beef Production Programme under Greening Northeast Project in Thailand 231-241  
*C. Manidool*
- Effective land use for forage production through grazing reserve development 243-246  
*S. Zaharah*

## **General Discussion of Workshop Sessions**

- |                                 |         |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| I. Country Project Proposal     | 247-259 |
| II. The fourth Meeting/Workshop | 260     |

<b>List of participants</b>	261-265
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# LIGHT RESPONSE CURVE: A CRITERIA FOR SPECIES SELECTION UNDER PLANTATION CROPS

Pravit

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## Abstract

A laboratory experiment was conducted to determine the light response curve of *Brachiaria mutica*, *B. humidicola*, *Stenotaphrum secundatum*, *Panicum maximum* cv. Hamil and *P. maximum* cv. TD58. The initial slopes of the curve were calculated to obtain quantum yield of each species. This photosynthetic capacity indicates some potential criteria for selection of plant under low radiation level. However, this value may not reflect pasture productivity.

## INTRODUCTION

Integration of pasture with plantation crops is a mean to diversify production systems and to so utilise space and radiation under the canopy of plantation crops. It is well known that this system will maximise land use and could provide a sustainable agricultural system. Several articles have been reviewed on prospect and future of pasture under plantations (Shelton et al. 1987, Reynold 1988).

Naturally occurring forage resources are commonly low in productivity. While the improved forage species mostly are well known as sun plant, hence they lack of long term persistence under plantations (Stür and Shelton 1991). Hence there is a need to understand and investigate the nature of forage species which will probably more suitable to the plantation environments. Wilson and Ludlow (1991) proposed a logical model which described basic on plant adaptation to shade. They suggested that 3 major characters of plant need to be identified in order to estimate potential productivity of forage under plantations. These were the light use efficiency (E), the light level under storey (PI) and the light interception (J).

This paper discusses E of 4 well known tropical grasses as shade tolerator by the measures of light response curves and the analyse of it.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Light response curves of cut plant were measured in laboratory at Klong Hoi Khong research station of Faculty of Natural Resources, Prince of Songkla University, 40 km south-west of Hat-Yai. The observed species were *Brachiaria mutica*, *B. humidicola*, *Stenotaphrum secundatum*, *Panicum maximum* cv. Hamil and cv.

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TD58. Measurement of leaf photosynthesis was done on the youngest fully expanded leaves for 2 replicates except *B. mutica* which was measured for 6 replications. The equipment was a modified IRGA system (ADC made) using a halogen lamp (Phillips, 50W) as light source. The lamp was mounted with adjustable neutral filters in order to vary the photon flux without changing light quality.

An analysis of quantum yield ( $\Phi$ ) and saturated rate of  $\text{CO}_2$  assimilation ( $A_{\text{sat}}$ ) was determined as described in Long and Hallgren (1985). This technique enable to compare the genotypic differences on photosynthetic capacity of the used materials.

## RESULTS

Figure 1 shows the light response curve ( $A/Q$ ) of *B. mutica*. A curvilinear response was obtained with greater discrepancy at high photon flux ( $Q$ ). The initial linear phase of increase assimilate ( $A$ ) with  $Q$  gives an estimation of quantum yield ( $\Phi$ ).

Similarly, light response curve and  $\Phi$  of the other four species were also obtained (Figure 2).  $A_{\text{sat}}$  can be averaged from the potential highest  $A$  values after the curve reached saturation. Quantum requirement ( $Q_p$ ) was determined from the reciprocal of quantum yield. The summary of these results for all species is shown in Table 1.

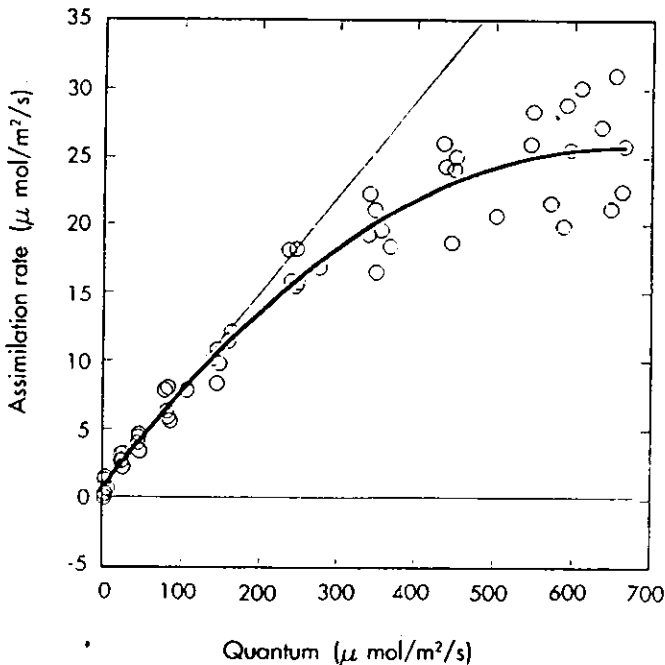
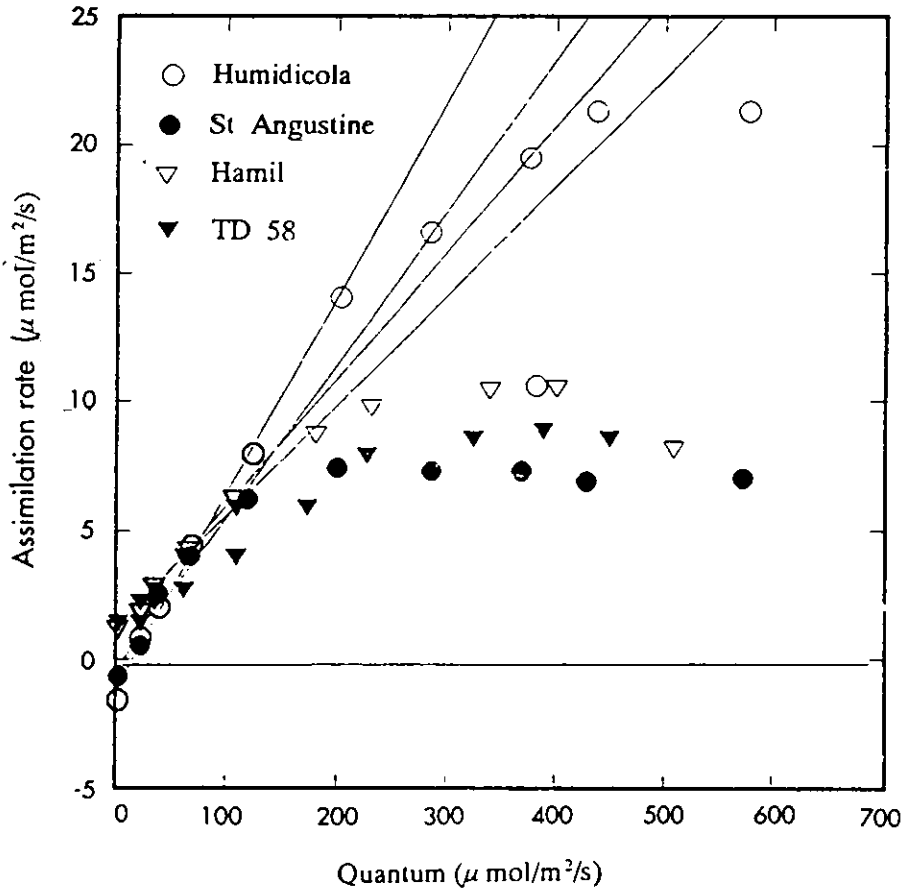


Figure 1.  $\text{CO}_2$  assimilation rate ( $A$ ) of *B. mutica* in response to photon flux ( $Q$ ). The straight line indicates initial linear phase of light response curve



**Figure 2.** CO<sub>2</sub> assimilation rate (A) of *B. humidicola*, *Stenotaphrum secundatum*, *Panicum maximum* cv. Hamil and cv. TD58 in response to photon flux (Q). The straight lines indicate initial linear phase of light response curve

**Table 1.** Quantum yield ( $\Phi$ ), quantum requirement ( $Q_r$ ), light saturated rate of CO<sub>2</sub> assimilation ( $A_{sat}$ ) of *Brachiaria mutica*, *B. humidicola*, *Stenotaphrum secundatum*, *Panicum maximum* cv. Hamil and cv. TD58.

Species	$\Phi$ molCO <sub>2</sub> /molQ	$Q_r$ molQ/molCO <sub>2</sub>	$A_{sat}$ $\mu$ molCO <sub>2</sub> /m <sup>2</sup> /s
<i>B. mutica</i>	0.0707	14.1	25.56
<i>B. humidicola</i>	0.0765	13.1	21.35
<i>S. secundatum</i>	0.0596	16.8	7.43
<i>P. maximum</i> cv. Hamil	0.0494	20.2	10.53
<i>P. maximum</i> cv. TD58	0.0427	23.4	8.96

The data shows that both *Brachiaria* species have higher  $\Phi$  than the rest. Maximum  $A_{sat}$  was obtained from *B. mutica* at 25.56  $\mu$ mol CO<sub>2</sub>/m<sup>2</sup>/s slightly higher than *B. humidicola*. Light response curves of these two species showed saturation at Q of above 600  $\mu$ mol/m<sup>2</sup>/s while the rest were saturated at c. 200  $\mu$ mol/m<sup>2</sup>/s.

*Light response curve: Species selection under plantation crops*



## DISCUSSION

Forage yield of species used in this experiment were ranged according to Ng (1991) showed some correlation with pasture yield with  $\Phi$  except for *P. maximum*. In fact in Ng (1991) the cultivars were Riversdale and Vencedor which were different from species used in this experiment. Possibly *P. maximum* used in this experiment received slightly low nitrogen fertilizer. Several reports showed that N supply could modify E value (Sophanodora 1989, Wilson and Ludlow 1991).

The technique can provide an estimation of genotypic leaf photosynthesis capacity of the studied plants. This could possibly be adopted as a quick method for selection program which comprise large number of species. However, productivity of pasture per unit area may not necessary accord to its potential leaf photosynthesis capacity since the amount of photon flux intercepted by the canopy can be modified by the rate of canopy development and canopy structure.

The results suggested that *B. humidicola* which is known as more shade tolerant than *B. mutica* could operate through the strategy of more leaf development and canopy light interception than *B. mutica*. This need to investigate in greater details. Partitioning of assimilate rather than improving in maximum photosynthetic capacity would play more important role.

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