Making hay could save farmers during drought

By NGURE K. N

MAKE hay while the sun shines, so goes the popular saying. It is one of those sayings that you have probably taken for granted.

Hay is pasture that has been conserved and stored to be used when there is a shortage, like during droughts. Of course, the saying has been used to mean other things as well.

Basically, it refers to taking advantage of what is available in plenty and storing it to be used in case of shortage.

During the rainy season, there is plenty of food crops, pasture and fodder. Man and his livestock are well fed. The vegetation has grown and it is green all over. Animals are eating what they can and trampling on the rest. They are well-watered too.

As a result of the rains, livestock gain in weight. Lactating cows are produce more milk. The vegetation has grown and it is green all over. This provides sugar for the animals due to starvation will be well-spread out and consequently, space occupied by hay. It also makes it easier to handle. The compaction gets rid of air thus reducing microorganism activities.

Baling does not have to be done mechanically. In fact hay can be put in stacks in the shelter without baling. Alternatively, baling can be done by hand by tying together some volumes using sisal.

Forage crops that get damaged if livestock are left grazing, can be conserved. Examples of fodder crops are maize, nappier grass and sorghum. To make silage, some gently wilted fodder is chopped and conserved by making silage. Hay making procedures involve baling, and mechanical baling is out of reach for small-scale farmers. Every livestock farmer gets surplus forage during the growing season but shy away from making hay because they recognise one step in the procedure that is impossible.

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