



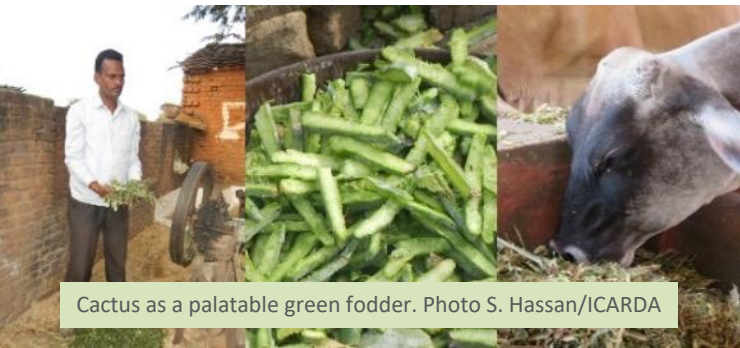
Cactus agronomic best-practices. Photo M. Louhaichi/ICARDA

Context

- Smallholder farmers in semi-arid environments have limited resources to improve the supply of animal feeds.
- Cactus pear (*Opuntia ficus-indica*) demonstrates great adaptive traits under harsh agro-climatic conditions, and often thrives where no other crops can grow.
- Cactus as a fodder crop can address the widespread shortage of green fodder

Our innovative approach

- We explored the potential of using cactus pear as a new source of fodder.
- We attempted to change perceptions, attitudes and practices toward cactus among farmers.



Cactus as a palatable green fodder. Photo S. Hassan/ICARDA



CLIMATE CHANGE & GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION

Cactus is catching up in India

Cactus has potential to:

- help farmers cope with climate change and variability
- grow on marginal land with little input
- increase water use efficiency of production systems
- solve the problem of increased demand for green fodder
- reduce livestock watering



RESEARCH PROGRAM ON Livestock

Feed and Forages Flagship

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Outcomes

- More than 120,000 cladodes were distributed and planted in 1200 farmers' fields.
- A cactus suitability map in India was generated. The best planting time in India is July before the monsoon.
- Well-adapted cactus pear accessions were identified.
- Demand for cactus cladodes is expanding as more States request this crop.

Future steps

- Support local institutions, NGO, and farmers' associations to play an active extension role.
- Set up nurseries across several States to speed up cactus pad multiplication.
- Develop the capacities of farmers, extension services, local authorities, and development agencies on cactus production
- Explore additional uses of cactus such as fruit production.

Partners

- Indian Council of Agricultural Research
- Indian Grassland and Fodder Research Institute
- ICARDA-FAO Cactus Net



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