

FORESTRY AND FARMING A WAY THROUGH: ALOE VERA THE GREEN GOLD AMONGST US

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Eritrea is a country located in the arid, semi arid and mountainous parts of east Africa. During the past times, the merciless cutting and destruction of forest resources in Eritrea have resulted in environmental degradation and expansion of desertification. Land is exposed to erosion and the fertile part of the soil has been depleted. To combat this alarming situation and having realized the precarious conditions of the environment different sectors of government have been involving in various activities.

As a strategy, planting multipurpose species would be advisable considering the assurance of growth in production and environmental sustainability. Among them is a species known as Aloe, that has been demonstrated its multipurpose and cultivated for centuries. Most Aloes have some medicinal or commercial value, but it is the *Aloe Barbadosis Miller* (*Aloe vera* or "true Aloe") plant which has been of most use to mankind because of its multiple benefits.

Aloe vera (*Aloe barbadensis Miller*) is a perennial, species of Aloe, native to Northern Africa. Cultivation of *Aloe vera* has a multiple objectives that include Health benefits, productive and social welfare benefits, soil and water conservation, environmental Provision and Tourism. It is one of the most versatile plants in the surface of the Earth. This species is now popular both with modern gardeners and commercial farmers. Although *Aloe vera* is simple to grow, it is best if we follow specific scientific recommendations.

In Eritrea *Aloe vera* is a native crop that grows naturally in most parts of the country. Eritrea has the right climatic conditions, diverse ecology, an arable land and concerned government sectors to carry out successful *Aloe vera* plantation. The *Aloe vera* can be cultivated in hillsides and mountains, around coastal areas, in community closures and in modern farms. If we effectively utilize this plant we will be one of the greatest producers in the regional and international markets where the demand is sky rocketing.

The primary objective of this paper is to introduce and increase awareness of the population on the wonders of *Aloe vera*, and future proposals on what should be done to get the maximum payback of the plant.

One other objective might be Eritrea, a country that has been damaged by long term colonialism, war for independence and natural problems. This paper is a contribution: in addition to the promise held by the people and the government of Eritrea to heal this damage.

The other objectives is

- Reducing poverty by supporting value chain development of Aloe vera products which have a potential “economies of scale” for increased income and employment opportunities
- Ensuring practice of sustainable forest management by promoting resource conservation that uses incentives (cash in kind) to influence environmental services through a concept of Pro Poor Payment for Environment Services
- To expose farmers to Aloe vera farming and its value addition for income generating and poverty alleviation within the semi arid lands and to determine the Aloe vera species that are most adaptable for growing in the semi arid lands and their fertilizer and manure requirements for commercial production.

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