

Sowing Brassicas

As you know, Winter Fodder levels are historically low in many parts of the country due to the severe drought. The one bit of silver lining in all of this is that SOIL temperatures are much higher than normal for this time of year - this means that Forage Crops sown this autumn have a good chance of yielding **30 – 40 % more than normal.**

No land should be left in idle stubble this year – all available forage will be needed

What to sow; People tend to spend a lot of time considering which brassica crop to grow when the REAL issue is NOT which crop to sow, but rather HOW you sow whichever crop you choose.

Every year, we see MASSIVE differences in crop establishment & subsequent Dry Matter Yield from field to field & from grower to grower. See pictures below. These differences largely arise as a direct result of 2 variables;

1. **Sowing Date;** The old saying goes “One growing day in July is worth 3 in August and 6 in September”. This is still very, very true. Every day you delay in sowing at this time of year will have a massive impact of how well the crop is established before growing conditions fall off to little or nothing once you hit the average Irish October /November.

So make every effort to get straw off the stubbles as quickly as possible & to sow your forage crop as soon as possible from now on – Every DAY counts at this time of year.

2. **Sowing method;** It is ABSOLUTELY VITAL not to sow seed into a loose /trashy seedbed. This is particularly true this time of year because soils are still quite dry after the summer. Seed germination & early plant establishment is basically all about that seed being able to absorb sufficient water from the soil for it to swell up, put out a little root & get going.

IF IT DOES NOT HAVE CLOSE CONTACT with the soil, then germination will be greatly delayed & at best, much more erratic. You must do whatever you have to in order to ensure you end up with a VERY FIRM seedbed. This will involve lots of rolling.

2 crops sown the same day in fields next door to each other



Picture A – Stubbles disked once & sown with a One pass system – not Rolled



Picture B – Stubbles disked once, sown with a Guttler & Rolled

€2.75m Government Scheme for Tillage Farmers to Grow Fodder

The Department of Agriculture is to support growing of catch crops by tillage farmers to plug the fodder gap. The payment is available to tillage farmers growing between 3ha and 50ha of additional temporary forage crops (additional to that already grown under GLAS). €155/ha for temporary crop of short rotation grasses for fodder production over the winter months & €100/ha for catch crops such as fodder rape, turnips etc.

Crop option after cereals	Redstart	Rape	Westerwolds
Optimum Sowing date	ASAP	August 15 th to Sept 15 th	ASAP
Potential yield (Tonnes/Acre/Dry matter)	2.8	2	1t (5bales) before end of year and 1t at grazing end of Feb next year before ploughing for spring crop.
Seed Rate (kg/acre Broadcast)	3.5	4	15
Base fertiliser (bags/acre)	2 x 13-6-20	1 x 13-6-20	3 x 18-6-12
Topdress fertiliser (bags/acre)	2 CAN + S	1.5 CAN +S	-
Eliminate volunteer cereals if present	0.6lt/acre Stratos ultra	0.6lt/acre Stratos ultra	-
Cost to produce crop after cereals	€174	€138	€250 (Includes making 5 bales of silage)
Cost per tonne of DM	€62	€69	€125