

AERIAL PASTURE SEEDING INTO SUMMER CROPS

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Winter and summer growing annual and perennial pasture species have been successfully established by aerial seeding into soybean or summer legume forage crops on the North Coast of NSW.

Trials, demonstrations and farmer sowings over the past 4 years have shown that this technique is an option for establishing a pasture following a summer legume cropping programme or for winter grazing between summer legume crops.

**METHOD**

- \* Pasture seed is flown into the soybean crop when the soybean leaves start to yellow just prior to leaf drop. With forage legumes the pasture seed can be broadcast by surface machinery prior to the final grazing.
- \* At this time of the year (March, April) surface moisture under the crop is normally sufficient for the pasture seed to germinate.
- \* Following leaf drop sufficient light penetrates the crop for the establishing pasture seedlings. The crop leaf also forms a good mulch aiding pasture germination.
- \* Soybeans are harvested or the fodder crop grazed during May to early June. The pasture is about 8-10 cm high and does not interfere with the harvest.
- \* With soybeans the pasture is ready for grazing shortly after harvest with the crop stubble also being utilized for grazing.

**PASTURE SPECIES SEEDED BY THIS METHOD**

Ryegrass, both annual and perennial, Whittet kikuyu, Narok setaria, Callide Rhodes grass, *Paspalum dilatatum*, Haifa white clover, red clover and Maku lotus.

**ADVANTAGES**

- \* The environment under the crop at the time of seeding is favourable for surface germination of pasture seed in most years.
- \* Timeliness of sowing - pastures are sown early.
- \* Early grazing.
- \* No soil erosion risk.
- \* Better land utilization - land is not out of production for long periods.
- \* Cheap - cost of flying or broadcasting seed is cheaper than conventional land preparation and planting.