

Opportunities in pasture seed production

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Pasture seed production can offer the opportunity to expand and/or change the emphasis of your farm. It can also present you the opportunity to reduce capital cost per unit of production by spreading it across a larger farm enterprise.

Seed production is probably going to be more intensive than many other operations on your farm at present. So the first consideration you need to make if you are thinking of getting into seed production is:

"How will seed production affect my farm?"

The second is:

"How is seed production going to affect my family and me?"

There are many reasons to consider pasture seed production on your farm. The first and most important is sustainability. One of the most important, if not the most important, aspect of any sustainable enterprise is profitability. Given the right planning and appropriate inputs to achieve the desired result, pasture seed production can be the most profitable enterprise on your farm.

Another reason to consider pasture seed production on your farm, could be to allow the full time employment of a family member. It may also enable you to employ a full time farm worker where you currently use casual or part time labour. Either of these scenarios can add benefits to your farm other than by profit alone.

Better pasture utilization can also be a great benefit of pasture seed production. For example, the main time paddocks need to be locked-up for seed production is over the spring/summer period when most farms have an adequate or over supply of feed. Locking up one or more paddocks for seed, may be the best way to improve the return from these paddocks instead of making hay or carrying over large amounts of dry feed into autumn.

If you currently own a tractor, combine, windrower, boom spray or a header, pasture seed production may be a way to better utilise this existing machinery. It may enable you to update to that piece of machinery you haven't been able to justify to date. Most machinery will only require minor modification, if any, to be used in pasture seed production.

Depending whether your farm is irrigated or dryland, whether you are a mixed farming enterprise, a cropping enterprise or purely grazing, will determine what type of pasture seed you will want to produce. Following are a couple of scenarios for your consideration.

DRYLAND PHALARIS

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| 1. May-August | Prepare land and plant phalaris stand |
| 2. Next 12-18 months | Graze and or cut hay |
| 3. September | Lock up for seed |
| 4. December-January | Harvest seed, then graze through winter |
| 5. July-August | Winter clean (weeds) |
| 6. Back to step 2 | |

NOTE: Phalaris stands can be certified for seed for ten years and can produce good seed crops for fifteen to twenty years, depending on management.

Potential Gross Income 2nd year on:

Dryland Phalaris

Grazing March-Nov 8 DSE / ha	
@ 20c DSE / day	= \$ 432 / ha
350 kg Phalaris seed @ \$3.00 / kg	= \$ 1050 /ha*
TOTAL	= \$ 1482 / ha

N.B. *seed represents 70.85 % of total gross income

Dryland production can present more of a challenge than irrigated production, however the resultant profit can represent as much or more of a boost to the profit from your farm. As with any successful farm operation timing is the key to success.

LUCERNE - IRRIGATED

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| 1. May-August | Prepare land and plant lucerne stand |
| 2. Next 4-6 months | Graze and/or cut for hay |
| 3. December-January | Water and lock up for seed |
| 4. April | Harvest seed, then graze through winter |
| 5. July-August | Winter clean (weeds) |
| 6. October-December | Cut hay or graze |
| 7. November-December | Lock up for seed |
| 8. January-March | Harvest seed |
| 9. Back to step 4 | |

NOTE: Lucerne stands can be certified for seed for six years and can produce good seed crops for ten years, depending on management.

Potential Gross Income 2nd year on:**Irrigated lucerne**

Grazing Feb-Oct 12 DSE / ha	
@ 20c DSE / day	= \$604.80 / ha
2 cuts hay / 2 tonne / ha	= \$ 720.00 / ha
300kg lucerne seed @ \$3.50 / kg	= \$1050.00 / ha*
@ \$180.00 tonne	
TOTAL	= \$ 2374.80 / ha

N.B. *seed represents 44.2 % of total gross income

Types of pasture suitable for multi-purpose production (Grazing, Hay, Seed)

Lucerne
 Sub Clover, Medics, Serradella (Note: special machinery required)
 Top Seeded Clovers (Persian Clover, White Clover, Balansa Clover)
 Grasses (Phalaris, Cocksfoot)
 Other useful seed crops for rotation with pastures:
 Cereals (Oats, Barley, Wheat)
 Legumes (Field peas, Lupins)