

Leaving Certificate

Agricultural Science

Catch Crops

CATCH CROPS

“Any crop that is grown between 2 main crops is called a catch crop.”

- ⦿ Cabbages, Kale, Rape, Grasses, Cereals and Stubble Turnips have been used from time to time as catch crops.
- ⦿ In Ireland, rape, kale and stubble turnips are the ones most commonly used.

Advantages of Catch Crops are

- An additional crop is grown on land that would be left idle.
- The grazing season is extended as a fresh green crop is produced outside the normal growing season.
- Better control of weeds.
- Better use of nutrients in the soil.

Advantages of Catch Crops are

- Adds organic matter to the soil.
- Protects soil structure against heavy rain.
- Conserves leachable minerals.
- Sometimes can add Minerals to the soil e.g. Legume add N.
- Conserves soil moisture.
- Examples of catch crops are: *Italian Rye Grass, Kale, Fodder rape, Vetches.*

Rape & Kale

- Are members of the **Brassica's**
- Best sown in July/August in light free draining soil.
- Fine seed bed is essential.
- Seed sown by precision drill/broadcast.
- Roll after sowing to maintain moisture.
- Application of fertiliser needed for best results (be careful not to lodge the crop)

Rape & Kale

- Capable of quick growth and good yields of herbage.
- Best used by December.
- Sugar Beet cannot be grown in the same field for 2 years afterwards.
- Leave at least 3 years between Brassica crops to avoid problems of **“Club Root”**.

Rape



Kale



Kale & Rape

- Kale & Rape are generally grazed “**in situ**” by cattle & sheep.
- The intake of rape and kale by cattle should be restricted to avoid problems with nutritional red water, iodine and phosphorus deficiency.



Stubble Turnips

- Also known as fodder turnips.
- Sown Late July to mid August.
- Usually sown into standing crop that is due to be harvested early.
- Need plenty of fertiliser.
- Fast growing and provide quick supply of fresh fodder.
- Generally grazed **“in situ”** by sheep.

Italian Rye Grass

- Sown July/August and needs to be grazed before the autumn sets in.
- Sowing Italian Ryegrass in September produces a higher yield in Spring if they are not grazed in the Autumn.
- Has the ability to grow rapidly.
- Recovers quickly to give several grazings.
- Has an added advantage over other catch crops in that it can be carried on through the following season to give a one year ley.

How Catch Crops are being used

Example 1

| Year | Crop |
|------|---|
| 1 | Early Potatoes Followed by Rape for Winter Grazing (Catch Crop) |
| 2 | Cereal |

Example 2

| Year | Crop |
|------|--|
| 1 | Winter Barley Followed by Rape for Winter Grazing (Catch Crop) |
| 2 | Spring Cereal/Potatoes |