

## **Growing Sainfoin**

Sainfoin leys should be considered to last 4 years or more. In this they are similar to Lucerne. However a proportion of the sainfoin will last considerably longer. (up to 20 years) The potential longevity is confirmed by its presence in self sown patches which recur annually e.g at side of roads etc. As a crop it will become diluted by grass after about 4 years.

### **Establishment;**

The seed of sainfoin is quite large (5 – 7 mm.) being contained in a husk. Formerly milled seed was also used but not in recent years.

In the UK sowing is usually done in spring after the soil has had time to warm up (April or May) or it can be sown later up to August. A high seed rate is required on account of the large seeds in the husk. Recommended rate 65 – 100 kg. unmilled seed per hectare. (25 – 40 kg. per acre) The seed rate will depend on germination level of seed, size of seed and soil conditions.

A companion grass such as meadow fescue should be sown @ 7.5 kg. per hectare (3 kg. per acre ref. Henry Edmunds). In recent NIAB trials this was found to be the best species of grass under UK conditions. Other grass species such as cocksfoot (orchard grass), timothy or tall fescue may be suitable.

### **Sowing The Crop**

Seed Rate - 25kg per acre ( 82kg per Hectare)

Depth of Sowing 1-2 cm

### **Plant Density Required**

70 - 150 plants per sq. metre at establishment

50 - 60 plants per sq. metre at the end of the first season

Companion Grasses - Must be non-competitive

Meadow Fescue 5 - 7 kg per hectare (preferred)

or

Timothy 2.5 kg per hectare

White Clover 0.5 - 1 kg per hectare

Sainfoin can be sown into a spring barley cover crop. This provides a return in the first season. The barley seed rate is reduced and the seed bed should be very firm and fine. The sainfoin is cross drilled into the barley.

DEPTH OF SOWING 1 –2 cm.

Sainfoin must be allowed to grow unchecked during the summer of establishment and grazing, if any in the autumn should be light according to the crop or it should not be grazed at all (ref. Dai Barling).

At emergence the crop can be treated with a suitable selective weed killer if necessary. Weed control is however best achieved by the "false seedbed" i.e allowing the weeds to grow and

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then harrowing in before sowing. On a pure stand of sainfoin grass weeds can be controlled in the dormant period.

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