

# ORGANIC



## organic farming technical summary

### Oversowing Clover into Existing Grass Swards

- **Oversowing** is the technique of sowing clover and/or grass into existing pastures without preparing a traditional ploughed and cultivated seedbed.
- Sowing into a **ploughed and cultivated** seedbed will always give a quicker, better establishment of white clover. **BUT**
- Oversowing could be useful in situations where ploughing and seedbed preparation is not possible.

#### Secrets of success

- Ensure adequate **soil fertility: pH, lime, phosphorus, and potassium.**
- Choose the **best white clover varieties** available.
  - Use small-leaved varieties for long-term swards and continuous grazing.
  - Use medium and large-leaved varieties for cutting.
  - SAC Consulting can advise you which are the best varieties.
- Use a **seed rate of 5kg/ha clover**, either alone or with perennial ryegrass.
- The **machine** you use for sowing **makes little difference** to the success of the operation.
  - Use whatever machinery is available on the farm - seed drill, grass seed broadcast, or fertiliser spreader.

#### THERE ARE TWO FACTORS CRUCIAL TO OVERSOWING SUCCESS:

##### 1 Availability of soil moisture for germinating seedlings

###### Ensuring adequate soil moisture:

- Sow in spring (late March/late April)
  - Plenty of moisture in the soil
  - Long growing season for seedlings to get established before winter
- Sowing in mid-late summer will almost always give a poorer establishment
  - Less soil moisture available, shorter time for clover seedlings to get established

##### 2 Controlling competition:

- **Adequate sward - depends on grasses present and sward density**
  - a) Thin, open, predominantly perennial ryegrass - cut or graze very tightly before oversowing (expect high success rate with minimum preparation)
  - b) Dense, predominantly ryegrass swards - cut or graze tightly, one or two passes with harrows (expect moderate success rate with some mechanical treatment)
  - c) Dense, matted mixed grass swards - needs fixed tine harrow, power harrow or rotavator (expect low success rate - considerable pre-conditioning required)
- **Graze tightly after sowing - do not set up sward for cutting for hay or silage**
  - a) Initial post-sowing period - repeated intensive short periods of grazing
  - b) Avoid continuous heavy grazing with sheep in the initial post-sowing period



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