



Feed Shortage 2018

Planning your summer cropping program

With the tight fodder supplies affecting all dairy regions, now is the time to plan your summer cropping program if you have access to water or soil moisture that will support their growth.

Summer crop options

Options for summer crops will depend on the region you are in and water access or soil moisture you have. Planning is important to get the best production from your investments. It is also important to purchase seed as early as you can as seed will be in high demand.

Some options for summer crops depending on your location would include: maize, sorghum, millet, chicory, and brassicas. For some quick spring feed annual or Italian ryegrass could be options.

The following is an outline of some of the actions you could take to start the planning process for your summer cropping program.

Plan your feedbase for your farm system and needs

1. Consider the climate and market outlooks for the upcoming season.
2. Ensure that you will be able to secure water to meet your crop needs or that you have soil moisture to support crop growth.
3. Consider all your options: grow, buy or contract: match your decisions with your budget and your appetite for risk
4. Consider how the crop will meet the diet requirements of your herd and work with a nutritionist to develop a feed plan to ensure that the diet is balanced and milk production is maintained.
5. Ensure you have the infrastructure and system to conserve and feed out the crop, or the ability to direct graze crops that can be direct grazed.
6. Work with your agronomist to select a species and variety that will suit your production requirements.
7. Select and prepare your paddock well – this includes getting soil testing completed to ensure that nutrient and pH levels are at the required level for the crop you choose to grow. Assess any soil constraints within the paddock that will affect the growth of the chosen crop.
8. Manage weeds early. Weeds compete with crops for moisture, sunlight and nutrients.
9. Sow seed when the soil temperature is ideal for your crop and sow into moisture if possible.
10. Aim for correct seed placement, and seed-soil contact for a better emergence rate.
11. Use your agronomist to help plan and manage your crop through the season, reducing risk and helping to optimise production.

For further information on forage conservation and details on summer crops go to dairyaustralia.com.au/feedshortage.