

Herbage Seed Production



Who can grow herbage seed?

- Profitable herbage seed production is a potential cropping option on any mixed or arable farm in the UK.

Why consider it now?

- Review of cropping options essential due to changes to agricultural support regimes.
- Improved price stability in herbage seed.
- Strong and increasing demand for high quality UK-bred herbage varieties.
- Competitive margins when compared with many alternative crops.

Key benefits

- £400 - £600/ha gross margin can be expected.
- Break crop from regular broadacre cropping.
- Additional income potential from grazing or silage.
- Potential for two years of seed production per crop.
- Expert advice provided free to growers by British Seed Houses.

Payment Structure

- Prices are set in November and adjusted if necessary according to market conditions in March and June.
- Under a British Seed Houses contract, payments are received following harvest as follows:

40% in November
50% in March
10% in June



- A proportion of cleaning and certification costs are charged back to growers, with the rate determined by purity of seed at intake.



G R O W I N G H E R B A G E S E E D

The System

- Select fields that have not grown grass for at least four years and where grass weeds (e.g. couch, blackgrass) are not a significant problem.
- Observe specific isolation requirements from other ryegrass crops.
- Sow in the autumn for first harvest the following autumn.
- Exploit forage income potential from sheep grazing in first winter, sheep/cattle grazing after first harvest, silage cut in first spring (hybrid ryegrasses only).
- Apply fertiliser and sprays as recommended for the crop.
- The crop may be combined direct, using a conventional combine harvester, or mown first and collected by a combine with a pick up attachment.
- Bale hay aftermath for home use or sale.
- Dry the crop using on-floor drying to a maximum moisture content of 14%. Avoid applying heat directly to the seed.
- Store the crop in cool and dry conditions until collection in bulk.
- All cleaning and certification carried out by British Seed Houses.



Annual Variable Costs

- Variable costs are dependent on recommended seed rate, fertiliser requirement and necessary agrochemical use, but would typically be £250 - £300/ha, including entry and inspection charges.

Annual Income

- Gross seed income expected to be £650 - £900/ha
- Grazing income: Consistent with local grass keep rates.
- Hay: Up to £20/tonne, depending on the season.

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