



A close-up of a flowering Kakariki clover at K G Maw farming - photo courtesy of John McCaw

GRAIN OF TRUTH

While dairy, sheep and beef producers have been experiencing positive market conditions, it has been a tough ride for arable farmers of late.

There has been much scratching of heads as to what can be done to improve the current state of the arable industry.

In my opinion, a government-led “Buy New Zealand Grown” campaign would be one of the most effective levers available to support not only the arable sector, but also this country’s agriculture and horticulture industries.

Current policy settings place such a strong emphasis on increasing export earnings that the needs of producers supplying the domestic market are increasingly being overlooked. The closures of processing operations such as Wattie’s and McCain’s have already resulted in significant job losses, with substantial downstream impacts for growers, contractors, transport operators, and seed companies.

At the same time, New Zealand’s milling wheat sector remains in a precarious position, with most of the domestic demand now met through imported Australian grain. This raises important questions around food security, supply chain resilience, and the long-term viability of local production systems.

There is a growing contradiction in New Zealand proudly promoting itself as a global food producer while an increasing proportion of the food on supermarket shelves is imported. Consumers are often unaware that products carrying familiar New Zealand brands may contain imported ingredients or be entirely foreign grown.

A coordinated Buy New Zealand Grown campaign, backed by government procurement policies, clearer country-of-origin labelling, and public awareness initiatives could help strengthen domestic production, improve resilience against international supply disruptions, and retain more economic value and employment

within regional communities. Supporting locally grown food is not about opposing exports — exports will always remain critical to the New Zealand economy — but about ensuring domestic production capacity is not eroded in pursuit of export growth alone. A balanced approach is needed, where supplying local consumers is valued alongside supplying international markets.

On a positive note, the recent budget announcement of significant new spend on wilding pine control is welcome news to many, and to assist domestic grain supply, Luisetti’s are thrilled to be launching our 100% New Zealand grown calf pallets carrying the New Zealand Grown Grains logo, a first ever for the industry, more on this inside.

Also in this issue is some great agronomic advice, and much more. Enjoy.

— *Edward Luisetti,
Managing Director*

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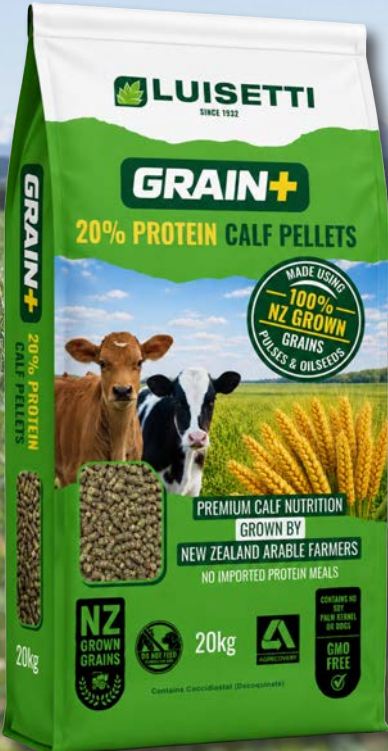
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GRAIN+

20% PROTEIN CALF PELLETS

PREMIUM CALF NUTRITION

GROWN BY

NEW ZEALAND ARABLE FARMERS

NO IMPORTED PROTEIN MEALS

LUISETTI SEEDS LAUNCHES PREMIUM NZ-GROWN CALF FEED

Luisetti Seeds is launching a 100 percent New Zealand grown and manufactured calf feed on the market this spring, offering dairy farmers and calf rearers a high feed quality option that supports local growers.

Grain+ is the company's first foray into livestock feed mixes and Luisetti Seeds' Grain Trading Manager James Davidson worked alongside livestock nutritionists to produce a nutritionally balanced and highly palatable pelletised feed from locally-grown ingredients. The feed is manufactured in Methven.

James says the pellets contain wheat, barley, maize, peas and faba beans, sunflower meal and canola meal– all locally grown and processed – along with molasses and minerals which are the only imported ingredients.

Wheat, barley and maize provide energy and starch to support growth, feed conversion and rumen development.

Peas and Faba beans offer protein and starch sources that support growth and help balance the ration.

Sunflower and canola meal provide protein, fibre and rumen support while helping maintain pellet quality and consistency.

James says they have trialled the Grain+ pellets on autumn-born calves with great success and he is looking forward to launching it onto the market in time for calving this year.

He says farmers can choose between 16 percent protein or 20 percent protein options and while it is a premium product, it is priced on par with other pelletised calf feeds.

Grain+ can be fed to calves from day one through until weaning.



Grain Trading Manager, James Davidson packaging up some Grain+ Calf Pellet samples for customers at our Ashburton Site. Photo courtesy of Ngaire Coote.

TO GRAB A FREE SAMPLE OR LEARN MORE, GET IN TOUCH WITH JAMES ON 027 511 7181 OR AT GRAIN@LUISETTI.NZ





A well mannered herd trimming down a feed paddock during the Winter time. Photo courtesy of Caleb Pomare-Edwards.

AGRONOMIC ADVICE HEADING INTO WINTER

Luisetti Seeds’ agronomist Ella Richards provides some timely advice as we head into the colder months:

- + If you haven’t already done so, measure winter forage crop yields and correlate yields with livestock demand. Identifying any shortfalls early will give you the opportunity to consider your options (buying feed, selling stock) so you can go into spring with enough feed to meet demand.
 - + When grazing winter forage crops, be aware of nutrient losses and minimising the impact of grazing on soil and
- water resources. Catch crops are a great way to capture nitrogen left in the wake of winter grazing (see the article in this issue about the benefits of catch crops).
 - + Spray lucerne crops for weeds (see Winter Lucerne Management article).
 - + Think ahead to next winter’s forage crops. Farmers intending to grow fodder beet should be testing their soil pH. If pH is low, lime should be applied now so it has time to break down before crop establishment.
- + To boost pasture growth heading into spring, dairy farmers could consider applying 20gm/ha of Gibberellic acid along with 20l/ha of UAN. This will help put feed in front of the cows at what can be a challenging time of year.
 - + Plan for a long, hot summer! With El Nino conditions predicted, consider ways to build resilience into your farm system. Dry-tolerant Raphno forage crops could be a good option this spring. Talk to your Luisetti Seeds’ agronomist.

 **Intimidator™**



Superior Quality Feed Oats for your Livestock

Fast establishing forage oat, productive and high yielding





 **Intimidator™**

A dense catch crop of Intimidator oats, planted as Spring feed for finishing lambs.

CAPTURING THE BENEFITS OF CATCH CROPS THIS SPRING

With El Niño weather conditions predicted, catch crops sown after winter forage crops could be the ideal way to turn residual soil nitrogen and moisture into high quality green chop silage.

El Niño weather patterns typically mean drier than average conditions on east coast regions so farmers will be looking to fully utilise any spring moisture to grow supplementary feed.

The Catch Crops for Clean Freshwater project highlighted the value of these crops for their ability to capture up to 100kg nitrogen (N)/ha- N that might otherwise have been lost to the environment. They can also help maximise the quantity of drymatter grown in a paddock over a 12-month period.

Given that catch crops are typically sown at the coldest time of the year, the best sowing options are winter active crops such as Intimidator oats, ryecorn, triticale and Italian ryegrasses which can be sown with a cereal such as oats. Luisetti Seeds agronomists can advise on the best options for specific environments and farm systems.

Plant & Food Senior soil scientist Dr Brendon Malcolm led the Catch Crops for Clean Freshwater project which trialled catch crops at both plot and farm scale.

He says it is important to get the catch crops into the ground as it is practicable after the paddock has been grazed, when soil temperatures are two degrees and above.

Timing is critical with catch crops and research has shown that sowing oats immediately after grazing has the greatest impact on reducing N losses. With every month that sowing is delayed, there is a notable reduction in effectiveness.

Dr Malcolm says while July-sown oats can be very slow to come away, they are still capturing a significant amount of N through their root system during the high-risk period, despite the small amount of above ground foliage.

Ideally the paddock should only be minimally cultivated, just enough to ensure good soil to seed contact, but pugged soils may require more cultivation.

Dr Malcolm says a high plant population is required to capture the N and maximise dry matter production and he recommends a sowing rate of 110-120kg seeds/ha for oats to achieve an optimal plant population of 300 plants per square metre.

Weed control is important and again, Luisetti Seeds agronomists can provide advice on the best weed control for the crop and paddock.

While catch crops don't initially require N, as they capture the residual N in the soil, when they start to come away in October and November, Dr Malcolm says they may require a dressing of 40-50kgN/ha to help maximise yield and quality.

For catch crops grown for green-chop silage, the timing of harvest is important. Ideally, the crop should be harvested when the oats just start to go reproductive. Quality can quickly decline after this stage.

A typical yield of a green chop silage crop sown after winter grazing is 8-10t DM/ha with a feed value of around 11 MJME/kg DM.

While catch crops offer significant benefits, they are not suitable for every farm system. Taking an oat catch crop through to green-chop silage can delay the sowing of subsequent winter forage crops.

This is particularly the case with two-year fodder beet rotations as the optimum harvest time of the catch crop is past the essential sowing window for fodder beet.

However, research has shown that when balanced out over a 12-month period, a paddock will grow more feed in total when a catch crop grown for green chop silage follows a winter forage crop.

A particularly wet spring may also make it difficult to establish catch crops in time to fully capture their benefits.

The Catch Crops for Clean Freshwater was a joint project between AgResearch, Plant & Food Research (BSI), DairyNZ, Beef + Lamb New Zealand, Foundation for Arable Research, Southern Dairy Hub, Environment Canterbury and Environment Southland.

Talk to your Luisetti Seeds agronomist about capturing the benefits of catch crops this spring.



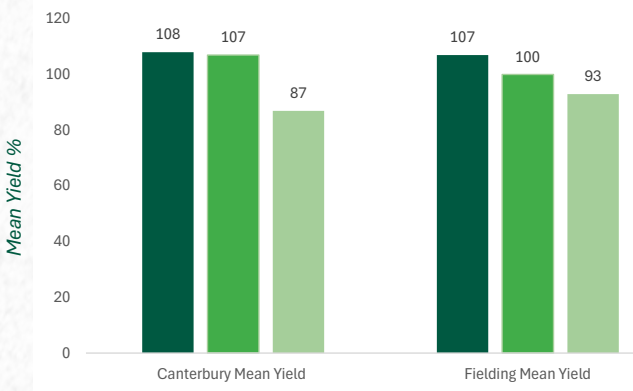
Luisetti catch crop varieties available to maximize N capture and make the most of your nitrogen inputs and minimize losses to the environment.



A paddock of flowering Kimberley located in Mid-Canterbury. Photo courtesy of Jono Young.



SPRING-SOWN CPT TRIALS - MILLING WHEAT 2024-2025



KIMBERLEY MILLING WHEAT AN IDEAL SPRING SOWING OPTION

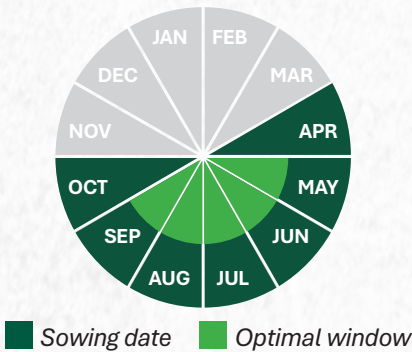
Growers considering their spring sowing options cannot go past Kimberley wheat if they are looking for a consistently high yielding milling wheat bred to perform in New Zealand conditions.

Kimberley came out of the Bioeconomy Science Institute’s (formerly Plant & Food Research) breeding programme and has been a proven performer in FAR’s CPT trials for both spring and autumn milling wheats.

In 2025/26 trials, Kimberley consistently yielded well above the site mean at a range of both dryland and irrigated sites throughout the wheat growing areas, with a maximum 118% above the site mean on a dryland property in Manawatu.

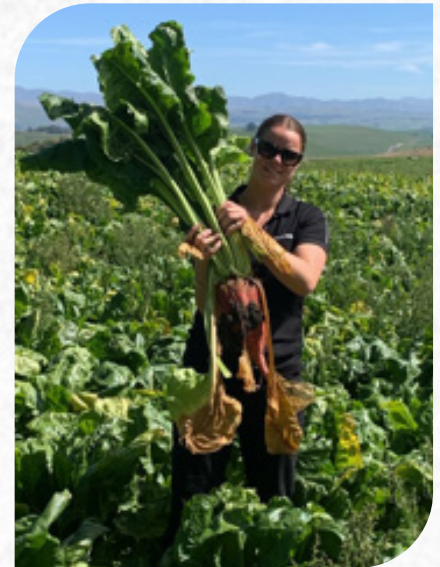
Kimberley is a grade 1 milling wheat with early to intermediate maturity. It is of medium height with stiff straw and has good resistance to stripe rust, powdery mildew and leaf rust.

Luisetti Seeds has limited supplies of Kimberley, so talk to your Luisetti Seeds agronomist soon to avoid disappointment in spring.





Harry Washington from Bentley Downs sporting one of the beet bulbs from a 30+ ton per hectare feed crop for livestock. Photos courtesy of Luisetti Agronomist, Stephen Booth



Agronomist Ella Richards with the same type of bumper beet crop in South Canterbury.

BUMPER FODDER BEET CROPS GIVE FAMILY TRADING OPTIONS

With yields topping 32.8t/ha, the 50ha of Kokomo fodder beet crops on Bentley Downs are going to keep a lot of mouths happy over the winter months.

Bentley Downs is 1200ha mixed cropping and livestock operation near Pleasant Point in South Canterbury which is owned and operated by the Washington family. Winter forage crops play an important part in their farm system, used for feeding both trading and capital stock.

Harry Washington says high yielding fodder beet crops – which are all dryland crops – give them options, particularly with trading cattle.

After what was a growthy summer, Harry had his beet crops measured twice over autumn. Once by his Luisetti Seeds' agronomists Stephen Booth and Ella Richards and again by Ravensdown when he was talked into entering a local winter forage crop competition, so he knew he had a lot of drymatter on hand going into winter.

Harry has been growing fodder beet for around eight years and while he admits it requires both time and

patience over the transition period, once stock are through this, it is a great for feeding a lot of stock over a small area.

This year, the beet crops will be used for feeding 1100 cull dairy cows, 450 R2 trading cattle and deer.

Harry says their highest yielding paddocks came straight out of pasture and the yields reflect the high levels of residual nitrogen in the soil.

He admits that fodder beet crops do have high nutrient requirements, but rewards growers with high yields.

The Bentley Downs crops were sown in early October using a strip drill. Local contractor J M J S Contracting carries out the work every year and Harry says they do a great job at both drilling and following up to ensure the crops have established well.

On the advice of Stephen and Ella, Harry used Backrow Max at crop establishment to hold the pre-emergent herbicide in the soil profile longer which worked very well for them on their heavy soils.

A subsequent herbicide application controlled grass weeds and thistles.

The crops were sown with 150kg DAP Boron Boost down the spout and received a further application of urea before canopy closure to make a total of 220kg urea applied. This was alongside 50 units of potassium.

A fungicide was applied after Christmas because of the wet conditions.

Harry admits that while they did spend money on inputs, they have seen a good return on their investment in terms of crop yield. "We got great result. The moisture was there, so we just went for it." The fodder beet will be fed with supplement, according to the class of livestock.

The cull dairy cows will have ad-lib access to straw while the R2 cattle will be given either silage or baleage along with the straw to ensure their protein requirements are met.



A beautiful crop of Hokkaiwakaba Lucerne at JO & AJ Clarkson in Selwyn, managed by agronomist, Nick Jenkins.

WINTER LUCERNE MANAGEMENT OPTIMISES SPRING PRODUCTION

To ensure lucerne crops are clean, healthy and productive this coming spring, stands should be grazed hard this month in preparation for winter herbicide and nutrient applications.

Lucerne’s key requirements are a lack of weed competition and adequate fertility. Get these right and growers will be rewarded with a bank of very high-quality feed to drive lactation, lamb growth rates and optimise production in that vital spring period.

High Body Condition Score ewes or dry hoggets are ideal stock classes for removing all green plant material on lucerne stands and as much dead organic matter at the base of the crop as possible

– as this can harbour pests and diseases. It is important plant material is reduced to the extent that the ground is exposed. This maximises the efficacy of the subsequent herbicide application.

The weeds farmers should be targeting in their lucerne stands are annual and perennial ryegrasses and annual broadleaf weeds. Luisetti Seeds recommends using paraquat and atranex at a rate recommended by a Luisetti Seeds’ agronomist.

June is also a good time to test soil nutrient levels as lucerne has specific requirements, including a soil pH of around 6. Sulphur, potassium, boron, molybdenum

and sodium levels should also be checked and deficiencies corrected to ensure nutrients are not a limiting production.

With the correct management, growers should get eight years out of a lucerne stand, but there are “stitch-in” options once plant populations start to decline to help maximise drymatter production before the stand is renewed.

These include various grass options - but again, a Luisetti Seeds’ agronomist will make recommendations based on the individual paddocks and the requirements of the grower.

For more information contact your Luisetti Seeds agronomist.

