

# SHORT-ROTATION RYEGRASS IN CANTERBURY

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The paper presented by Mr C. E. Iversen has covered the field of experience with short-rotation ryegrass in Canterbury and I would like to compliment him on his paper.

Canterbury is essentially an arable province and is well suited to the production of seed of all kinds. This has been demonstrated over the years by the tremendous increase in the acreage devoted to grass and clover seed production. With the introduction of short-rotation ryegrass into commerce it was natural that Canterbury would exploit seed production.

This is illustrated by the following figures giving the acreages of short-rotation ryegrass entered for certification :—

		Acres
1944-45	.....	182
1945-46	.....	2,308
1946-47		10,595
1947-48	.....	5,985
1948-49	..... -- .....	9,121

It will be seen from these figures that there was a steady increase up to 1946-47, and in 1947-48 there was a drop of about 50 per cent. This was caused by there being a falling off in demand for the seed, with a consequent drop in price.

It also illustrates the Canterbury farmer's attitude to short-rotation ryegrass. He can and does exploit the seed angle if it is profitable to do so, and he is not concerned with its lasting qualities. It is for farmers in other areas of New Zealand to find out the suitability of the strain for their conditions, and if it is suitable and there is a demand, the Canterbury farmer will produce the seed.

Before the introduction of short-rotation ryegrass Italian ryegrass, along with white or red clover, had been grown extensively, and the overseas demand for it kept the price attractive.

If short-rotation ryegrass is in demand in New Zealand and overseas, there will be a swing away from

Italian toward, short-rotation ryegrass, because both species are equally suitable for use in Canterbury.

The plant breeder has scope for further improvement in other species if he can introduce into them the ability, of short-rotation ryegrass to re-establish from shed seed. Success in this work would solve some of the problems associated with the lasting ability of other species.

Short-rotation ryegrass and white clover seem to be complementary. The experience in South Canterbury in particular indicates that good crops of seed of short-rotation ryegrass and white clover can be obtained in average conditions.. Red clover does not seem to combine with short-rotation ryegrass as well as white clover.

Emphasis should be placed on the last points raised by Mr Iversen:—

1. Short-rotation ryegrass is a high-fertility demander.
2. It requires special grazing management.
3. It is a good winter producer, but slumps in the summer.
4. Except on the best of soils, it cannot be expected to last more than 3 years in Canterbury: