

# Intercropping

## *Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs)*

Intercropping is an agricultural practice where two or more crops are grown simultaneously in the same field. Intercropping reduces nitrogen use and increases soil health using soil-building crops. To qualify for RALP, the practice must be carried on for three years, but it can be on different fields each year.

### HOW TO START AN INTERCROPPING PROJECT

- Interplant two annual crops at the same time, including one pulse.
- Harvest both crops, either as seed or forage.
- Consider using an inoculant to improve germination success.
- If crops are grazed, installing perimeter fencing and off-site watering systems may benefit the project.

**Note:** You may wish to consult an accredited technical advisor (e.g. Professional Agrologist, P.Ag or Certified Crop Advisor, CCA) to develop or support your management plans.

### Management Benefits

#### Increased Yield and Productivity

- Intercropping often results in higher total yields compared to monoculture, as crops can complement each other in terms of nutrient use, growth habits, and resource utilization.
- Diversifying crops can mitigate production risks associated with weather, pests, and diseases.

#### Resource Use Efficiency

- Efficient use of sunlight, water, and soil nutrients as different crops with varying needs are grown together.
- Reduced competition for resources between crops due to differences in rooting depths and nutrient requirements.

#### Weed and Pest Management

- Reduced weed growth as the canopy cover from different crops shades the soil.
- Natural pest control as certain crops may act as repellents or attract beneficial insects.

#### Improved Soil Health

- Crop diversity promotes a healthier soil microbiome and reduces the risk of soil-borne diseases.
- Less soil erosion due to continuous ground cover.

#### Economic Benefits

- Diversified income streams from multiple crops.
- Potential cost savings on inputs like fertilizers and pesticides.

### Key Considerations

#### Crop Selection

- Choose crops with compatible growth habits, nutrient requirements, and maturity periods.
- Consider the market demand and economic viability of selected crops.
- To qualify for RALP, at least one of the crops must be a pulse.

#### Spatial Arrangement

- Determine the optimal arrangement and spacing between crops to avoid competition for resources.
- Consider factors like light interception, water use efficiency, and accessibility for harvesting.

#### Rotation and Succession Planning

- Plan crop rotations and successions to optimize the use of nutrients and break pest and disease cycles.
- Rotate crops with different growth habits to maintain soil fertility.

#### Pest and Disease Management

- Be mindful of potential pest and disease interactions between crops.
- Implement integrated pest management (IPM) strategies to minimize the use of chemicals.

#### Harvesting Considerations

- Consider differences in maturity periods when planning for harvesting.
- Choose crops that can be easily harvested together or have compatible harvesting equipment.

### Start a Project Today

1-866-310-RALP  
info@RALP.ca



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