

SEPTEMBER, THE MONTH TO PLANT SEEDS



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The summer is almost finished. Time to plant more seeds? Heresy! ... some will say. Yet winter crops, which are highly popular in Ontario are penetrating Québec too. That's especially true of wheat and new rye hybrids which can now increasingly be seen in local fields prior to the first snowfall. Will Financière Agricole du Québec's new crop insurance plan spur record planting this winter?

Grain planted during the fall season adapts to the cold to survive winter and is harvested about twenty days before the spring grains. The general benefits of planting grain in the fall in Québec are impressive:

- Winter plantings offer 25% to 40% higher yields than spring grains.
- They help check erosion caused by the heavy rains.
- They provide all the benefits of a green fertilizer, while generating significant income for the producer.
- They reduce herbicide use because the fact that the grain is already well rooted in the spring means that it competes with weeds.
- The crop rotation effect increases yields of subsequent plantings.

Sowing during the fall months also helps reduce workloads during the busy spring season.

THE CHALLENGE, SURVIVING WINTER

Producers that experimented with winter grain planting thirty years ago indicated that the key challenge lay in preventing losses due to winter weather. Premature thawing and refreezing can in certain conditions severely damage plants. Warmer winters have improved this situation somewhat as has better drainage in the fields. The introduction of Financière Agricole du Québec's new winter crop insurance program is another particularly big driver of the new activity. If losses are too high, farmers still have time to plant a spring crop while continuing to profit from agronomic advantages such as increased biological activity through until winter, coupled with improved soil structure which facilitates work during the spring months.

A MAJOR PROVINCIAL PROJECT GETS UNDER WAY

The potential productivity of winter grains is undeniably superior to that of spring crops. Indeed the IRDA recently launched a three-year project in conjunction with producers from 10 Québec regions coupled with experimental sites in Saint-Lambert-de-Lauzon and Saint-Bruno-de-Montarville in order to demonstrate that potential.

Most of the producers who will take part in the project have been identified. However the IRDA continues to search for demo plots in farms in the Mauricie and Abitibi-Temiscamingue regions. Take advantage of this opportunity to help demonstrate the potential productivity gains, economic advantages and benefits related to soil health and the reduced pesticide use that fall grain plantings provide.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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