

Option 1: Mix of Linseed and Triticale sown together (seed cost for 0.5 hectare - 1.25 ac)

	If drilled		If broadcast	
	Seed required	Cost	Seed required	Cost
Triticale	40 kgs	€30	60 kgs	€42
Linseed	7.5 kgs	€30	10 kgs	€40

If available, Oats are cheaper than Triticale but supplies are very scarce.

Option 2: Kale in half the area, linseed in the other half (seed cost for 0.5 hectare - 1.25 ac)

	If drilled		If broadcast	
	Seed required	Cost	Seed required	Cost
Kale	1.5 kgs	€26	2 kgs	€34
Linseed	7.5 kgs	€30	10 kgs	€40

Growing crops for wildlife



**CATHERINE KEENA
TEAGASC**

AEOS 1 farmers grew almost 2,000 hectares of crops for wildlife last year. More farmers chose this option in AEOS 2 and many are preparing to grow the crop for the first time at present. This is in addition to farmers growing similar crops in REPS. All REPS linnet crops and AEOS wild bird cover crops must be sown by 31 May. The purpose of these crops – which are left unharvested – is to provide food for seed eating birds over the winter months. In effect,

crops are giant bird tables. Two crop types must be sown in the plot.

There are two options for sowing. The easier option to grow is an integral mix of linseed and a cereal (oats or triticale). Oats are now extremely scarce. Triticale is a good alternative as it seems to last longer into the winter than oats. These can be mixed and broadcast in a fertilizer spreader. It is recommended to sow the full field with half the mixture, travelling in one direction, refill and sow across the previous spreading lines.

The second option is to sow kale in half the area and another crop in the other half – oats, triticale or linseed.

Kale requires a high lime or pH status and also needs high phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) soil fertility. It will not suit some of the sites

which have been chosen for a crop for wildlife. Where it can be grown, the advantage is that it will not have to be resown in the second year.

The second crop sown in half of the field will have to be resown in the second year in any case. Some farmers dislike the large amount of grasses that grow with a two-year crop and find cultivations more difficult after two years' growth. However, it is of great benefit to wildlife and is favoured in game crops.

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Keen interest in Roscommon demonstration

AEOS 2 farmers in Roscommon growing a crop for wildlife for the first time gathered on the farm of Richard Thompson in Willsgrove, Ballintubber, last Thursday, with Teagasc adviser Kieran Kenny to discuss the growing of the crop.

Most farmers attending are growing an area of 0.5 hectares or 1.25 acres of the crop for which they will receive a payment of €435.

Crops will be sown in land that has been in permanent pasture in this county, where there is little tillage.

There was great discussion on the ground preparation required.

On the Thompson farm, the grass was sprayed off

with glyphosate. Contractor Dermot Keaveney, Cloonchambers, Castlerea, ploughed, disked and power harrowed the field.

ROLLING

At the demonstration, Richard rolled the field before and after sowing. Rolling beforehand is necessary to prevent small seed falling through cracks in the soil. For the purpose of demonstration, a number of different crops and sowing methods were carried out: Dermot Keaveney used his seed drill to sow oats, using the recommended seeding rate for drilling oats of 75kgs per hectare. His drill can also be calibrated to sow linseed

at the required drilling rate of 15kgs per hectare.

On the day, Richard also broadcast linseed with his fertilizer spreader, having first mixed the linseed at the broadcasting rate of 20kgs per hectare with fertilizer. Granlime could also be used as a mixer.

OATS

Oats was also broadcast at the required broadcasting rate of 112kgs per hectare. Drilling is the preferred method. To compensate, broadcasting seeding rates are increased by one half for cereal seeds and one third for

small seeds such as linseed and kale.

KALE

Kale was also sown on the day and generated most debate. The appeal of kale is that the crop lasts two years as a wild bird cover crop because it is a biennial. This means in the first year it grows vegetatively and in the second year it produces flowers and seed. However, as the second required crop of linseed or cereal must be resown in the second year, only half the area of wild bird cover is retained without resowing each year.



MAIN PICTURE: Walter Keaveney, Dermot Campion, Germinal Seeds, Richard Thompson, host farmer, Kieran Kenny, Teagasc Roscommon, and contractor Dermot Keaveney.

ABOVE: Richard Thompson rolling in preparation for sowing the mixture of oats and linseed on his farm in Co Roscommon, at the Teagasc demonstration on sowing AEOS wild bird cover crop.

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