



*Close-up view of wheat crop growing among native pasture.*

# Native pasture cropping

## What is pasture cropping?

Pasture cropping is a zero tilling technique of sowing annual cereal crops into living perennial pastures (in this case, summer-active native perennial grasses). The crops grow within the existing pastures with real benefits for both the pasture and the crops.

Pasture cropping can improve year-round resource use, increasing overall annual productivity compared with conventional cropping or pasture alone<sup>1,2,3</sup>.

## How does it work?

Pasture cropping is a mixed farming system that involves sowing a winter cereal crop into summer-active perennial pasture. Generally, the crops are sown after the first autumn frosts, when summer growing native grasses become dormant. This is done to take advantage of the

different growing phases of the annual crop and perennial grasses.

Shading from the crop delays the growth of the summer grasses until the crop senesces and the canopy opens. After harvest the summer native pastures respond to removal of the covering crop and can be rotationally grazed until the following autumn<sup>3</sup>.

## What are the benefits?

The benefits of pasture cropping centre around the reduced input costs of cropping, summer grazing and environmental benefits.

Conventional cropping requires extensive ground preparation and weed control. From an economic point of view the potential for good profit is high because the input costs of pasture cropping are a fraction of conventional cropping. Maintaining perennial pastures helps



# pastures

# native



*Wheat crop growing in a native pasture plot at BCG's native pasture cropping trial site at Hopetoun.*

minimise annual weed problems. Herbicide costs are thus reduced.

Up to six months extra grazing is available with native pasture cropping compared with the loss of grazing due to ground preparation and weed control required in traditional cropping systems<sup>1,2</sup>.

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- <sup>1</sup> Bruce, S. 2005. Pasture cropping: benefits revealed. *Australian Farm Journal*. September 2005.
- <sup>2</sup> Seis, C. 2006a. Pasture cropping as a means to managing land. *Australian Organic Journal* – Winter 2006.
- <sup>3</sup> Seis, C. 2006b. Pasture cropping techniques and land management. *Australian Organic Journal* – Spring 2006.



*Barley stubble in a native pasture paddock near Birchip.*



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