

# Approaches to producing organic rapeseed crops in Scotland

## Problem

Organic rapeseed is a niche crop in the UK. Agonomic knowledge is limited, and farmers need to develop their own approaches to growing the crop.

## Solution

A group of Scottish farmers are collaborating to develop viable approaches to growing reliable organic rapeseed crops, including the use of intercropping.

## Applicability box

### Theme

Crop Production

### Keywords

Cropping systems; Diversification; Arable farming; Low input agriculture; Intercropping

### Context

Organic rapeseed in Scotland

## Benefits

The collaborative approach enables peer-to-peer learning of positive and negative experiences through facilitated discussion. Collating and sharing this information can help future decision making.

## Practical recommendations

Facilitated collaboration can support knowledge exchange to better understand organic rapeseed production and intercropping potential (Picture 1). Trust within the group needs to be built up over time to encourage open and frank discussion of ideas.

Recommendations for organic rapeseed:

- Growing rapeseed after grass-clover and FYM use can help fertility & reduce weed issues.
- Use high vigour, disease & pod shatter resistance varieties.
- Sow early (e.g., early August in Scotland). Autumn sown varieties are generally preferred.
- Organically approved slug pellets may be useful.
- Swathing then combining is preferred, but direct harvesting can work.
- Drying needs care (~ 9% MC).
- Seed sorting likely to be required.
- Early grazing or multiple light cultivations can reduce volunteers.

Crop mixes:

- Intercropping with spring cereals or legumes, e.g., fenugreek may help reduce flea beetle damage.
- Intercropping with clovers or vetch may also confuse pest species and fix N to aid soil and crop fertility.



**INTERCROP  
VALUES**

**IFOAM**  
ORGANICS EUROPE

SRUC

SAOS

## PRACTICE ABSTRACT N°22

Picture 1. Farmer members of the intercropping group discussing a crop of organic oilseed rape with vetch, fenugreek, berseem clover and buckwheat sown to help fertility and control flea beetle (Robin Walker, Dec 2025)



### Further information

#### Video

- [Marketing organic intercropped rapeseed oil in Scotland](#) (YouTube in English)

#### Further readings

- <https://www.fas.scot/article/organic-oilseed-rape-production-in-scotland/>
- <https://www.fas.scot/downloads/organic-oilseed-rape-in-scotland-a-technical-guide/>

#### Weblinks

- <https://www.organic.co.uk/>
- Check the [Organic Farm Knowledge Platform](#) for more practical recommendations.

### About this practice abstract

**Authors:** Dr Robin Walker (SRUC) & Jim Booth (SAOS), SRUC, Craibstone Estate, Ferguson Building, Aberdeen, Scotland AB21 9YA  
<https://www.sruc.ac.uk/>, <https://saos.coop/>.

**Publisher:** IFOAM Organics Europe, Rue Marie Thérèse 11, 1000 Brussels -BE, [organicseurope.bio](http://organicseurope.bio)

**Date:** April 2026

**Contact:** [Robin.Walker@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:Robin.Walker@sruc.ac.uk); [jim.booth@saos.coop](mailto:jim.booth@saos.coop)

**Review:** Boglarka Bozsogi, IFOAM Organics Europe; Christine Watson, SRUC; Odette Weedon, University of Kassel

**IntercropVALUES** aims to exploit the benefits of intercropping to design and manage productive, diversified, resilient, profitable, environmentally friendly cropping systems acceptable to farmers and actors in the agri-food chain. As a multi-disciplinary and multi-actor project, it brings together scientists and local actors representing the food value chain. It includes 27 participants from 15 countries (3 continents) from a wide diversity of organizations and stakeholders. The project will run for four years and started in November 2022.

**Project website:** <https://intercropvalues.eu/>

