

Catch crop

Catch crops are fast growing crop sown with the main crop. They bind and gather nutrients from the soil as well as improve the soil texture.

Similar terms: cover crop

Catch crops are usually grown beside the main crop. It is also possible to sow catch crop after harvest.

After growing season and harvesting, catch crops maintain till next growing season preventing nutrient leaching and erosion and improving soil structure. These benefits are result of the roots which make canals in the soil. Catch crop can also have contribution to soil nitrogen and to the application of a nitrogen fertilizer for the main crop. This leads to reduced nitrogen losses to the environment and cost savings of purchased nitrogen fertilizers.

Application

There are no limitations that prevent using catch crops in cultivated lands. Benefits for the nitrogen intake of the main crop and less nitrogen leaching into waterbodies makes catch crops recommendable for different types of fields. In some cases catch crops can also prevent growth of weeds.

Factors that should be taken into account when choosing the species to use are climate, soil structure, crop rotation and the aim in using catch crops.

Maintenance

- No extra maintenance needed

Economics

- Price of the catch crop seeds (in Finland approximately 20-75 €/ha)
- Subsidies can be applied (in Finland 100 €/ha)



Catch crop in Northampton county.
Picture: Nicholas A. Tonelli

Further information:

[Elsoms - Catch crops](#)

[Baltic Deal - Catch crops](#)

Sources: 1) Lemola R. et al. 2014. Kerääjäkasvit – Hyötyä viljelijälle ja ympäristölle (FI). ([Link](#))