B-04

THE INTERCULTIVATION OF PRUNED TEA FIELDS WITH BUCKWHEAT—A POTENTIAL SUBSTITUTE IN CATTLE FEED RATIONS

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Buckwheat is a pseudo-cereal from which a pure white flour could be milled. Its energy value is equal to that of whole wheat. This crop is generally used as a component in animal feed rations and also for human consumption in other countries.

This crop was found to grow well in the upcountry acid tea soils (pH 4.0-5.5) where most of the high energy animal feed crops do not grow satisfactorily.

The aim of this experiment was to investigate whether this crop could be intercultivated in pruned tea fields. If this was feasible a considerable extent of land would be available for this crop (as 20-25% of the total tea area is pruned annually).

Results have indicated that buckwheat could be cultivated within the tea field during the period that the tea is recovering from pruning (five to six months). The following four varieties were cultivated in a pruned tea field and their yields at the end of the experiment are as follows :

	Yields *kg/ha*	Period *days*
(*a*) Buckwheat (of Dutch origin)	110	310
(*b*) Giant American (Fagopyrum sagittum)	70	105
(*c*) Tempest (Fagopyrum sagittum)	70	123
(*d*) Penn Quad (Fagopyrum escalatum)	70	30

It was observed that the recovery of the tea plant was not affected by the presence of the inter-cultivated buckwheat. Analysis of soil samples collected at the end of the experiment revealed that the nutrient status of the soil was also not affected by its presence.