

Campaign for the Farmed Environment

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CFE Voluntary Measures	What to do and how it will benefit your farm
1. Grass buffer strips next to a watercourse or pond	<p>AIM: To provide a grassy buffer so that soil, run-off, pesticides and fertiliser stay out of watercourses on your farm.</p> <p>HOW: First sort out any areas of compaction. Then sow, allow natural regeneration or manage existing grass areas, to give a buffer at least 6 m wide from the top of the bank. A mix of tussocky grasses and non-woody vegetation without too much cocksfoot (which tends to out-compete other grasses) is best. Cut as seldom as possible and try to avoid storing, or driving, on the buffer as this could increase compaction.</p>
2. In-field grass strips to avoid erosion	<p>AIM: To reduce field erosion and run-off and trap sediment, including soil, nutrients and pesticides. Also provides habitat for wildlife.</p> <p>HOW: Put a grass strip (minimum 3 m) either across the slope or within a field valley. Establish and manage strips exactly the same as grass buffer strips.</p>
3. Management of maize to avoid erosion	<p>AIM: To minimise soil erosion, improve soil structure and reduce the risk of run-off.</p> <p>HOW: Plant an early maturing maize crop and harvest as early as possible. If conditions allow, remove compaction before planting a winter cover crop or the next crop. A green cover may be established by undersowing the crop with a grass or clover-based mix.</p>
4. Watercourse fencing	<p>AIM: To keep stock out of watercourses and off banks adjacent to watercourses to avoid bank erosion and contamination of water with soil and faeces.</p> <p>HOW: If not already present, erect post and wire fencing. Maintain new and existing fencing in stock-proof condition. Consider adding a gate to enable bankside access and to maintain SPS eligibility.</p>
5. Winter cover crops	<p>AIM: To avoid soil erosion and nitrate leaching over winter on vulnerable (generally light) soils. This can also improve soil fertility depending on the crop established.</p> <p>HOW: Establish a quick growing cover crop by mid-September without using fertilisers. Do not destroy until immediately before establishment of following spring crop</p>
6. Wildflower mix	<p>AIM: To increase amounts of wildflowers in grass margins, buffers and field corners for farm wildlife, particularly insects.</p> <p>HOW: Manage existing flower-rich, grassy areas or sow a wildflower mix including fine grasses (if considering this, please take advice). Cut and remove cuttings in late summer and, if necessary, in early spring.</p>
7. Pollen & nectar mix	<p>AIM: To provide food for nectar feeding insects, including bumble bees, butterflies and other beneficial insects, for as long a season as possible.</p> <p>HOW: Sow a mix of at least 4 nectar-rich plants, cut all or part of area once or twice a year and re-establish every few years as necessary.</p>
8. Legume and herb rich temporary grass	<p>AIM: To provide enhanced food supplies and habitat for invertebrates in temporary grassland, whilst improving soil structure and providing high quality animal feed.</p> <p>HOW: Sow a mix that includes grasses, legumes and wildflowers and at least 9 species, and allow them to flower during late spring and summer. Manage by cutting or grazing without the use of inorganic nitrogen.</p>
9. Ryegrass seed for birds	<p>AIM: To provide a winter food source for birds from temporary grassland.</p> <p>HOW: On temporary grass fields containing at least 50% ryegrass, take one or two cuts of hay or silage, close-up the field from end June and leave undisturbed until early March.</p>
10. Wild bird seed mix and maize-free game strips	<p>AIM: To feed wild farmland birds over winter.</p> <p>HOW: Sow a combination of small seed-bearing crops, but not maize or giant sorghum; for best results sow an area of at least 0.4 ha and minimum 6 m wide. Leave until the end of February (or as long as there are still seeds available)</p>

11. Skylark plots	<p>AIM: To provide landing and feeding areas for skylarks, safe from predators, in winter cereals.</p> <p>HOW: Create 2 plots (about 16 m²) per ha of winter cereals in open fields, either by turning off the drill when sowing or by spraying out before the end of December.</p>
12. Lapwing plots	<p>AIM: To provide sparsely vegetated nesting sites for lapwing and other ground-nesting birds in large arable fields.</p> <p>HOW: In February or early March cultivate a plot of at least 1 ha, well away from hedgerows, trees and watercourses, to produce a rough fallow. Ideally, place where lapwing nest. Retain until the end of July.</p>
13. Unsprayed and/or unfertilised cereal headlands	<p>AIM: To provide an area for arable plants and insects to thrive, where birds can feed.</p> <p>HOW: Sow a cereal headland – a strip at least 3m wide on the edge of an arable crop – then leave unmanaged. Avoid using fertilisers and summer insecticides and limit herbicides to grass and cleaver control. To provide additional winter food supplies, leave unharvested until the beginning of March.</p>
14. Cultivated margins	<p>AIM: To allow rare arable plants to germinate annually on lighter soils. This will encourage insects.</p> <p>HOW: Cultivate an arable field margin at least 3m wide to about 15 cm depth in either spring or autumn. Avoid areas with a lot of pernicious weeds, e.g. ragwort, brome, blackgrass. Do not place next to watercourses.</p>
15. Over wintered stubbles	<p>AIM: To provide food and cover over winter for birds and other wildlife, with options for increasing benefits for wildlife in the previous crop and the following spring and summer.</p> <p>HOW: After harvest, subsoil along tramlines and headlands to remove any compaction and then leave stubble of any combinable crop (except maize) unploughed and untreated until mid-February (light cultivations or small areas of winter cover crops are allowed). Options include reduced herbicide use and no insecticide use in the previous crop (including where grown for whole-crop silage) to increase the stubble value. Alternately, leave stubble until mid-August (spray grass weeds if necessary after mid-May), to provide breeding habitat, foraging areas and cover.</p>
16. Supplementary winter feeding for farmland birds	<p>AIM: To feed wild farmland birds (not gamebirds) during the “hungry gap” of January to March and beyond.</p> <p>HOW: Spread a mixture of cereals, oilseeds and grains such as millet, on or close to (ideally on a hard track) seed-producing areas such as wild bird mix or overwintered stubbles; spread the mix weekly, but reposition if pest (e.g. rodent) problems develop. Feed hoppers may be used.</p>
17. Field corners	<p>AIM: To create wildlife habitat, buffer features and minimise run-off and erosion.</p> <p>HOW: On awkward corners or other difficult areas in arable or grass fields, establish or maintain rough grassy areas.</p>
18. Beetle banks	<p>AIM: To create dry in-field habitat in place of hedges or ditches, this will provide wildlife corridors as well as breeding and feeding habitat for insects, birds and other wildlife.</p> <p>HOW: Create an earth ridge about 2m wide across an arable field, by e.g. two-directional ploughing. Sow with tussocky grasses, cut for establishment and then leave uncut except to control woody species.</p>
19. Fertiliser-free permanent pasture	<p>AIM: To increase wildflowers, insects and small mammals in permanent pasture, and protect soil and water.</p> <p>HOW: Manage by grazing, or a late cut of hay/silage, without inorganic fertilisers and avoid over- or under-grazing and poaching. If wildflowers are present, avoid topping before they have set seed and remove any toppings or cuttings.</p>
20. Arable land reverted to grass	<p>AIM: To establish grass areas, particularly in arable landscapes, to provide habitat and foraging areas for insects and other wildlife, and to protect archaeology.</p> <p>HOW: Establish, or maintain an area of grass and non-woody vegetation; manage without fertilisers by grazing or cutting. Allow wildflowers to set seed.</p>
21. Selective use of spring herbicides	<p>AIM: To reduce herbicide use on land to encourage a diverse range of non-competitive weeds in the crop. This will benefit insects, birds and other wildlife.</p> <p>HOW: With input from from a BASIS registered agronomist, you may be able to avoid using autumn herbicides and instead use a single application of selective herbicide (e.g. amidosulfuron) in the spring.</p>
22. Brassica fodder crops	<p>AIM: To allow weeds to set seed in the crop to benefit insects and seed-eating birds over winter.</p> <p>HOW: Graze fodder brassicas, avoiding poaching; retain the stubble uncultivated and untreated until mid-February. Herbicides should only be used prior to initial cultivations.</p>