

Summer Fallow

This scheme aims to fund a diverse summer fallow cover crop mix as an alternative to a traditional break crop. The preceding overwinter crop must be a cover crop, and the following crop to the summer fallow must be a cover crop, followed by a spring crop. A summer fallow offers the chance to control difficult grass weeds such as black grass and ryegrass, whilst also building soil organic matter and capturing residual nitrogen, and reducing nitrate leaching.

Payment rate:

One off payment of:

- £650/ha for fields in the High Priority Area
- £550/ha for fields in the Wider Safeguard Zone

Length of scheme:

- 2 – 6 months

Benefits:

- Provides an alternative break crop
- Offers the opportunity to control difficult grass weeds such as black grass and Ryegrass
- Part of an integrated crop management approach to control weeds by non-chemical methods to help protect existing chemistry against resistance build up
- Build soil structure, increase soil organic matter and fertility
- Summer flowering crop good for pollinators and beneficial insects

Eligible areas:

- This scheme is available to all arable fields within the Safeguard Zone
- In fields where there has been an over winter cover crop or a failed winter crop
- Suitable to use in fields where there is a difficult weed burden that need controlling.
- Up to 20ha of land per farm business can be entered into the scheme.

Non-eligible areas:

- Fallow options which are funded by any other scheme (such as Countryside Stewardship, Sustainable Farming Incentive, Biodiversity Net Gain or nutrient neutrality) are not eligible.
- Do not use this measure on fields that have already been taken out of arable production
- Areas of land to be used for vehicular access
- Land outside of the Safeguard Zone

Requirements

Establishment:

- Establish a summer fallow mix by 15th May
- Seed rate dependant on the mix but in the range of 10-15kg/ha
- Species that may be sown included in the summer mix: Linseed, Phacelia, Buckwheat, Sunflowers, Clovers (Legumes do not exceed more than 20% of the proportion of the mix)

Topping:

- The summer cover crop may be topped in the late summer to prevent crops setting seed and to control grass weeds

Inputs:

- Applications of organic manures are not permitted.
- Applications of inorganic fertilisers (N, P, K) are not permitted.
- Applications of lime are permitted.
- Use of glyphosate and graminicides is permitted to terminate cover crops and to control grass weeds.

Destruction:

- Summer fallow may be destroyed from the 1st August either by topping, cultivating or use of herbicides.
- Following the destruction of the summer fallow an over winter cover crop must be established withing 2 weeks of destruction, by 15th September.

Overwinter cover crops:

- This scheme only covers the summer fallow
- Over winter cover crops before and after the summer fallow may be funded through alternative schemes, including the Wessex Water cover crop scheme.
- For optimum cover crop effectiveness the following over winter cover crop should be established by the 15th September
- An adviser may visit the site the following winter to validate an over winter cover crop is being grown

Returning to arable production:

- Land to be returned to arable production in the following spring to a spring sown crop following a cover crop.
- The over winter cover crop may be destroyed in accordance with the scheme guidelines.
- Nitrogen release from the preceding cover crops and summer fallow must be considered when nutrient planning to ensure there is no over application of Nitrogen to the following cash crop

Application process

- Please fill out the expression of interest form, stating an approximate area of land you wish to enter into the scheme.
- Upon submitting the Expression of interest form, your Catchment Adviser will be in contact with you to discuss the scheme further.
- Once the scheme and area is agreed a formal contract will be drawn up between the Farmer and Wessex Water.

Record keeping, validation and data collection

- In entering the scheme, you are agreeing to allow a Wessex Water adviser to visit land in a scheme for visual inspection before, during and after the implementation of the scheme.
- In entering the scheme a Wessex Water catchment adviser may request farm records from you demonstrating fertiliser rates, the change in cropping, stocking rates etc.
- In entering the scheme Wessex Water may carry out soil sampling, porous pots, grain samples and crop tissue samples for nutrient analysis. Any data collected will be shared with the farmer. Wessex Water will store data on an internal Wessex Water database and may be used to contribute to a larger aggregated and anonymised data set.

Payment terms

- Payment will be made annually.
- To claim payment for the scheme your Wessex Water adviser will request you to send an invoice to be sent directly to them.
- Wessex Water payment terms are end of the month plus 30 days
- The invoice should be submitted between the 1st – 31st January to guarantee payment by 31st March.
- You may be required by the Wessex Water payments team to be registered as “suppliers” to Wessex Water Services Limited, please ensure paperwork is filled out and returned.