

Option Name: Provision of winter feed crop for wild birds

Option Code: WFC

Option Payment: Year 1: £590.00 per ha
(Where Greening reductions apply: £278.00 per ha)
Year 2 – 5: £590.00 per ha each year
(Where Greening reductions apply: £278.00 per ha each year)

Option Aim(s): To provide foraging habitat and food, primarily during the winter period, as crop and weed seed for farmland birds.

Scheme Applicability: Wider – EFS(W) Higher – EFS(H) Group – EFS(G)

This option is made up of: Annual Management requirements NPI (capital items)

This option is: Permanent Rotational

Option Description and Outcome: This Option is an annual management Option and does not contain essential non-productive investments (referred to as capital works). For EFS(H) sites 'Provision of winter feed crop for wild birds' Option is eligible where it will maintain and enhance the biodiversity value of these sites and is included in the site specific Remedial Management Plan (ssRMP). Areas of winter feed crop are created each year to provide winter feed for wild birds.

Choice of site: The ideal location is improved, arable and temporary grassland (sown to grass for less than five years). It should not be established on Permanent Grassland Sensitive (PGS) fields. The winter feed crop may be grown as a plot or as a crop margin. This is a rotational Option. This means that it can be moved around the farm in the normal rotation, but the same total area must be established and maintained each year of the agreement.

Essential capital works: This Option does not contain an essential capital works element.

Additional optional capital works available for this Option: None.

Area Permitted per individual plot:

Minimum	0.10 ha	Maximum	1.00 ha
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Area Permitted per Agreement:

Minimum	0.10 ha	Maximum	As per max agreement value*
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* DAERA reserves the right to limit a Higher Level agreement value where it considers appropriate to ensure value for money.

Requirements and Controls:

Code	Annual management requirements	Control type ⁽¹⁾		
		Admin	CwRS	OTSC
WFC1M	Complete the claimed area of 'Provision of winter feed crop for wild birds' each year of the EFS.	✓		✓
WFC2M	The maximum size for each individual 'Provision of winter feed crop for wild birds' plot is one hectare.		✓	✓
WFC3M	Establish, retain and manage the claimed area of 'Provision of winter feed crop for wild birds' each year period for the duration of the EFS agreement.		✓	✓
WFC4M	Sow a mix consisting of at least one recommended spring cereal from Table 1 below and at least one other seed-providing species from Table 2 below.	✓		✓
WFC5M	Do not include grasses or legumes in the sown winter feed crop.	✓		✓
WFC6M	Manage the winter feed crop to ensure that the sown species are present over at least 75% of the area.		✓	✓
WFC7M	Do not harvest the winter feed crop and keep it in place from sowing to 1 st March the following year.	✓		✓
WFC8M	Exclude livestock from the winter feed crop from sowing to 1 st March the following year.			✓
WFC9M	Keep and provide on request to DAERA evidence of the seed mix used (labels, invoices detailing the mix contents and the quantity supplied).	✓		✓

Code	Annual management requirements	Control type ⁽¹⁾		
		Admin	CwRS	OTSC
WFC10M	The 'Provision of winter feed crop for wild birds' must be established, retained and managed as detailed in the ssRMP for EFS(H) sites.	✓		✓
WFC11M	Field records must be kept detailing area established/re-established, location, date completed, seed mix used and all Management Requirements including Integrated Pest Management (IPM) requirements.	✓		✓

(1) The possible control types for each requirement may be:

'Admin' – administrative checks, 'CwRS' – Control with Remote Sensing, 'OTSC' – On-the-Spot Check

EFS(W) agreements started 1st July 2017 - 12 month and 18 month payment requirements

This Option is unaffected by the 18 month payment as it cannot be established during the period July – December in any given year due to seasonal limitations and Cross-Compliance restrictions. This EFS Option is eligible for a 12 month management payment only.

Further Advice:

Site

Choose sites that are capable of supporting a cereal crop. Avoid sites that are poorly drained or heavily infested with perennial or noxious weeds. The crop should be established adjacent to thick hedges if possible. Margins/plots should be greater than six metres wide. The crop can be kept in the same location or rotated on the eligible arable land or improved grassland.

Seed mix

The seed mix must contain at least one spring cereal from Table 1 and at least one other seed - providing species from Table 2.

Table 1: Recommended spring cereals for winter feed crop for wild birds

Oats	Barley
Wheat	Triticale

Table 2: Recommended seed-providing species for winter feed crop for wild birds

Linseed	Mustard
Oilseed rape	Quinoa

Establishment

Good establishment is essential to ensure the success of the crop. Approved herbicides/pesticides may only be applied pre- or post-harvest or to control noxious weeds or invasive species by spot spraying of an approved herbicide if justified as part of the implementation of IPM. Pesticides should not be applied to the crop area after sowing. Take care if applying pesticides to adjacent crops to avoid 'drift' into the winter feed crop for birds.

Check the area for compaction and subsoil before ploughing if necessary. After ploughing and creation of the seed bed, it is useful to wait a few weeks to spray off a fresh flush of weeds (stale seed bed technique) before sowing the seed mixture.

Sow in April or May into a warm soil. Seed should be drilled or broadcast onto a firm, fine seed bed and rolled after sowing to ensure good seed/soil contact. Treated seed must not be broadcast as it may harm birds that eat it. Check the seed label to confirm if broadcasting is an option.

If sowing seed types separately, sow all components on the same day in case bad weather causes delay. Care should be taken to avoid separation of different sized seeds when sowing mixtures. Experience has shown that cereals and linseed should be drilled, the resulting seed bed rolled, and then the smaller seeds, such as brassicas (oilseed rape and mustard) and quinoa shallow drilled to 1.50 - 2 centimetre deep or broadcast (if they are not treated). Broadcast seed should be lightly harrowed. A fertiliser spreader can be used to broadcast the seed if it is mixed with a bulking agent such as fertiliser or sand. For shallow drilling and broadcasting, the seed bed should be rolled again to ensure good seed/soil contact.

Suggested sowing rates and optimum sowing depths are given in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Recommended single seed rates and optimum sowing depths

Divide the seed rate by the number of seed types in the mix. For example, drill oats and linseed mixture at 65 kg/ha and 30 kg/ha respectively. Broadcasting seed rates should be raised by between one third (for smaller seeds) and one half (for larger seeds).

Species	Seed rate for drilled seed (kg/ha)	Seed rate for broadcast seed (kg/ha)	Optimum sowing depth (cm)	Comments
Spring oats	125	187	2 - 3	Tolerant of acid soils. Soft, palatable grains. Slower to lodge than barley.
Spring wheat	125	187	2 - 3	Slower to lodge than barley.
Spring barley	125	187	2 - 3	Suited to lighter soils. May lodge early.
Spring triticale	125	187	2 - 3	Slow to lodge. Grain held on ear throughout winter. Less susceptible to rabbit damage than other cereals.
Spring linseed	60	90	2 - 3	Retains seed into late winter.
Oilseed rape	7.5	10	1.00 - 1.50	High energy, long-lasting seed. Risk of clubroot.
Mustard	12	16	1.00 - 1.50	High energy, long-lasting seed. Risk of clubroot.
Quinoa	10	13.5	1 - 2	Protein-rich seed.

Nutrients

Good soil fertility is required to successfully grow a winter feed crop for birds. Apply nutrients to meet crop requirement based on previous nutrient applications and analysis of a soil sample. Where possible, split the application of any artificial fertiliser between the seed bed and a further application when the crop is through the ground. Apply when growing conditions are favourable.

The figures given in the tables below are two-thirds of the maximum rate of application. Approximately two-thirds of the maximum rate of application for a commercial cereal crop should be sufficient for winter feed crop for wild birds because lower seed rates are used and yield is not the driving factor.

Nitrogen (N)

Nitrogen levels need to be adjusted to take into account soil type, organic fertiliser applications and previous cropping. Where possible, split the application of artificial fertiliser between the seed bed and a further dose once the crop is through the ground and when growing conditions are favourable. For example, the following figures for nitrogen assume a Soil Nitrogen Supply (SNS) index of three and an organic soil.

Predominant crop	Maximum N to be applied (kg/ha)
Spring oats	35
Spring wheat	80
Spring barley	55
Spring triticale	35

Phosphorus (P)

Chemical phosphorus fertiliser should only be applied if soil analysis shows a requirement for the crop in accordance with the Phosphorus Regulations (2006). This must be based on the analysis of a soil sample.

Predominant crop	Soil index				
	Maximum phosphate (P₂O₅) to be applied (kg/ha)				
	0	1	2	3	4
Spring oats, spring wheat, spring barley, spring triticale	70	55	35	0	0

Potash (K)

Predominant crop	Soil index				
	Maximum potash (K₂O) to be applied (kg/ha)				
	0	1	2	3	4
Spring wheat, spring barley, spring triticale	85	70	55 (2-) 35 (2+)	15	0
Spring oats	105	85	70 (2-) 55 (2+)	25	0

Soil pH

Species	Optimum pH
Spring oats	5.5 - 6.5
Spring wheat	6.0 - 6.5
Spring barley	6.0 - 6.5
Spring triticale	5.5 - 6.5
Spring linseed	5.5 - 6.5
Oilseed rape	6.0 - 6.5
Mustard	6.0 - 6.5
Quinoa	6.0 - 6.5

Pesticides

Do not apply any pesticides to the crop area after sowing, with the exception of spot spraying using an approved herbicide to control noxious weeds or invasive species if justified as part of the implementation of IPM. Take care if applying chemicals to adjacent crops or grassland to avoid 'drift' onto the winter feed crop for birds.

Preparing for re-establishment

After 1st March, the crop can be removed. A flail-type topper or conventional topper can be used to pulverise stems and clear brash before ploughing. Livestock can be used to graze the crop between 1st March and re-sowing. Clearing the crop in early March will allow birds to access fallen seeds and give time for use of stale seed bed technique for weed control.