

WBD4: Arable reversion to grassland with low fertiliser input

What you must do to get paid for this action and advice on how to do it.

From: **Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs**
(/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs) and
Rural Payments Agency **(/government/organisations/rural-payments-agency)**

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Grant type: **Sustainable Farming Incentive** **(/find-funding-for-land-or-farms?**

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Land type: **Arable** **(/find-funding-for-land-or-farms?land_types=arable)** and **Waterbodies** **(/find-funding-for-land-or-farms?land_types=waterbodies)**

Areas of interest: **Water quality** **(/find-funding-for-land-or-farms?areas_of_interest=water-quality)**

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This is an action in the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) scheme: expanded offer for 2024. You must read the [SFI scheme information](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-scheme-expanded-offer-for-2024) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-scheme-expanded-offer-for-2024>) to understand the scheme rules and how to apply.

Duration

5 years

How much you'll be paid

£489 per hectare (ha) per year

Action's aim

This action's aim is that there's a dense and diverse grass sward throughout the year which:

- is on land at risk of erosion or surface runoff, or that creates a buffer to a sensitive habitat
- has a range of heights during the autumn and winter months
- has minimal bare ground, so the soil is covered by vegetation and is not directly exposed to the elements
- has low fertiliser inputs

The purpose this is to:

- stabilise the soil
- reduce nutrient losses
- reduce the risk of flooding

Where you can do this action

You can do this action on agricultural land that's:

- identified by you as being at risk of soil erosion or surface runoff, or important for buffering 'sensitive habitats' – you must keep evidence of this
- an eligible land type (as defined in [section 5.1 'Eligible land types for SFI'](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-scheme-expanded-offer-for-2024/sfi-scheme-information-expanded-offer-for-2024) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-scheme-expanded-offer-for-2024/sfi-scheme-information-expanded-offer-for-2024>) in the SFI scheme information)
- registered with an eligible land cover on your digital maps
- declared with a [land use code](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-payments-land-use-codes-2024/land-use-codes-2024) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-payments-land-use-codes-2024/land-use-codes-2024>) which is compatible with the eligible land cover

For the purposes of this action, 'sensitive habitats' include:

- watercourses and waterbodies (streams, rivers, ponds or lakes)
- sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) at risk of diffuse water pollution – you can find these on

the MAGIC website

(<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx?&startTopic=GreyRasters&chosenLayers=siteunitIndex,siteunitIndex,backdropDIndex,backdropIndex,europeIndex,baseIndex,cswaterIndex,gwnip,swnip,gwpip,swpip&box=-93613:150307:620764:601158&useDefaultbackgroundMapping=false>)

- priority habitats – you can find these on Natural England's priority habitat inventory map (<https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/39403df11c8044d998772db5b54ad86c/explore>) or the MAGIC website (https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx?&startTopic=GreyRasters&chosenLayers=baseIndex,coastmarshIndex,dunesIndex,cvsIndex,mcsIndex,mudflatIndex,lagoonIndex,calamgrassIndex,bapcfgmarshIndex,goodgrassIndex,baplcgrassIndex,bapldacidgrassIndex,baplowmeadIndex,bappmg_rushpastIndex,bapucgrassIndex,bapuhmeadIndex,baplowheathIndex,mountainheathIndex,bapupheathIndex,limestonepavIndex,bapbbogIndex,bapfensIndex,baplrbogIndex,bapreedbedIndex,uplandswampIndex,pondsandlakesIndex,bapdeclIndex,orchardIndex&box=-633930:208030:1433931:1191970&useDefaultbackgroundMapping=false).

Eligible land

Eligible land type	Eligible land cover	Compatible land use code
Arable land used to grow crops	Arable land	Land use codes for <u>arable crops</u> or <u>leguminous and nitrogen-fixing crops</u>
Temporary grassland	Arable land	TG01
Arable land lying fallow	Arable land	FA01

Eligibility of protected land

Protected land	Eligibility
Sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs)	Eligible – you must get SSSI consent before you do this action (read section 10.3 'SSSI consent' in the SFI scheme information to find out how to do this)
Historic and archaeological features	Eligible – you must get a SFI HEFER before you do this action (read section 5.6 'Land with historic or archaeological features' in the SFI scheme information to find out how to do this)

Available area you can enter into this action

Total or part of the available area in a land parcel.

Rotational or static action

This action is static. This means you must do it at the same location each year of this action's duration.

What to do

You must:

- establish a diverse grass sward on land entered into this action
- use a seed mix which includes at least 5 grass species

Once the grass sward is established, you must maintain it. To do this, you must manage it in a way that can reasonably be expected to achieve this action's aim. This includes:

- making sure there's an intact sward throughout the year, with minimal bare ground

- grazing or cutting the sward during the spring and summer months, with cuttings removed in late summer after the bird breeding season

You must not do the following on the grass sward:

- graze it with livestock during the autumn and winter months (usually from early October until mid-March)
- apply pesticides, except for herbicides to weed wipe or spot treat to control injurious weeds (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/identification-of-injurious-weeds>), invasive non-native species (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prevent-the-spread-of-harmful-invasive-and-non-native-plants#types-of-invasive-non-native-plants>), or nettles
- apply any fertilisers or manures from late summer until mid-winter (usually from mid-August until the end of January) – this is to reduce the risk of runoff
- apply any livestock manures with 100 kilograms (kg) or more of total nitrogen per ha per year
- where you do not use livestock manures, apply nitrogen fertiliser to supply 50kg or more per ha of total nitrogen per year
- supplementary feed, except for non-energy based mineral blocks

You can maintain an existing grass sward to get paid for this action if it:

- meets this action's requirements
- is not already being paid for under another environmental land management scheme option, such as Countryside Stewardship (CS) option SW7 (arable reversion to grassland with low fertiliser input)

When to do it

If you're establishing a new grass sward to meet this action, you must:

- sow the mix by early autumn, within 12 months of this action's start date

- maintain it at the same location until this action's end date

If you're maintaining an existing grass sward to meet this action, you must do this until this action's end date.

How to do it

It's up to you how you do this action, as long as you:

- follow this action's requirements – these are identified by a 'must'
- do the action in a way that could reasonably be expected to achieve this action's aim

You may find it helpful to read the 'advice to help you do this action', but it's not part of this action's requirements.

Evidence to keep

You must keep written evidence that land entered into this action is either:

- at risk of soil erosion or surface runoff - you can use the soil management plan produced for CSAM1 or SAM1 to identify this
- important for buffering sensitive habitats

You must also keep evidence to show what you've done to complete this action, such as:

- field operations at a land parcel level and associated invoices, including details of the seed mix used
- stocking records to show grazing activity at a land parcel level
- input records of nitrogen application
- photographs and other documentation

If it's not clear that you've done this action in a way that could reasonably be expected to achieve its

aim, we may ask for this evidence.

You must supply this evidence if we ask for it.

Other actions or options you can do on the same area as this action

You can do the following actions or options on the same area in a land parcel as this action. Some actions or options can only be done on the same area if they're done at a different time of year to this action. For example, winter cover followed by a summer companion crop. Read 'What to do' and 'When to do it' to find out when this action must be done.

Scheme	Action or option codes
SFI 2024 actions	OFC1, OFM1, AGF1, AGF2, PRF1, PRF2, CIPM1, CNUM1, CSAM1
SFI 2023 actions	IPM1, NUM1, SAM1
CS options	OR1, OT1
ES options	No ES revenue options
SFI pilot standards	No area-based SFI pilot standards

If an action or option cannot be located on the same area, you may be able to do it on a different area in the same land parcel. Read [section 6 'Eligible land in other funding schemes'](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-scheme-expanded-offer-for-2024/sfi-scheme-information-expanded-offer-for-2024>) in the SFI scheme information for more details.

You can do supplemental action WBD9: Nil fertiliser supplement on land entered into this action.

You can do the following actions or options on the eligible boundaries of a land parcel entered into this action:

- SFI 2024 actions: CHRW1, CHRW2, CHRW3, BND1, BND2 and WBD2
- SFI 2023 actions: HRW1, HRW2, HRW3
- CS option BE3 (management of hedgerows)
- the introductory level of the SFI pilot hedgerows standard

Advice to help you do this action

The following advice may help you to do this action, but it's not part of this action's requirements.

What to sow

This action explains the minimum number of grass species required (under 'What to do').

You can tailor your choice of grass species to your soil type, how and when you plan to cut your sward.

The following species will grow in most conditions and can form part of a basic grass seed mixture:

- timothy (use with care as this is tussocky, vigorous and can become dominant)
- cocksfoot (use with care as this is tussocky, vigorous and can become dominant)
- crested dogstail
- red fescue
- smooth stalked meadow grass

You can increase the environmental benefits by adding wildflowers such as:

- ox-eye daisy
- black knapweed
- bird's foot trefoil
- common sorrel

Managing the sward

Controlling weeds and cutting the sward regularly in the first 1 to 2 years of the sward being established will encourage grasses to grow.

Cutting the grass sward

Before you cut the sward, check it for signs of nesting birds. Birds, nests and eggs are protected by law, so if you see signs of nesting birds, delay cutting until the birds have fledged.

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