



# Arun & Western Rother update

## Winter 2020



### Local Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer Update

Since our last newsletter, rain has been a relentless force resulting in widespread issues for drilling and poor crop establishment. The increasing challenge weather presents for farmers is driving many to consider new approaches to improve farm business resilience and reduce risk of environmental damage.

Farm events are a great opportunity to learn of different approaches and hear first-hand from those who are implementing them. This month there have been many events within the local area which we have promoted, including the AHDB monitor farm in Petworth where we heard how a farmer has benefitted from a joint venture with his neighbours to improve the resilience of his business and reduce variable costs. Collaboration can be particularly useful if wanting to share equipment, for example, a direct drill or a split seed hopper for companion cropping. It can also cut costs when bulk buying seed for cover crops/herbal leys/flower margins. The event was followed by a walk around Moor Farm, led by CFE and RSPB, to see the diversity of farmland birds they'd attracted by use of flower margins, hedgerows, woodlands, and ponds. The flower margins have the added benefit of reducing pest pressure by encouraging beneficial insects that prey on pests.

The Countryside Stewardship (CS) Scheme is now open for agreements starting 2021 ([follow this link to see dates](#)) and provides an opportunity to receive a dependable income over 5 years which compliments and improves your farm system. Many of the options within the scheme, such as herbal leys and cover crops, help improve the sustainability of land by improving soil health and structure which can contribute towards better water retention and drainage, controlled weed and pest pressure, enhanced yields from reduced inputs and minimised soil erosion and runoff, also aiding compliance with the Farming Rules for Water legislation. Additionally, there will be benefits for wildlife and the environment which holds in good stead for the provision of public goods as we begin transition into the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS). Those already in CS can opt for an early exit and transfer into ELMS at any time if a place is accepted.

If you would like advice for choosing CS options that compliment your farming system please feel free to get in touch with us. Additionally if you're not sure if CS is the route for you, we can offer free and confidential advice on how to improve the environment and sustainability of your farm.

From Thomas Edwards & Samantha Read



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## Get in touch with your local officers



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## Companion Cropping – Oilseed Rape

Oilseed Rape over the last few years has become a challenging crop to grow. The main issue arises from the cabbage stem flea beetle pest pressure, which since the loss of neonicotinoid seed treatments has proved near impossible to control. For those who haven't completely given up on OSR, a new approach is needed to combat the flea beetle.

In the words of Albert Einstein 'Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results'. Therefore with the loss of neonicotinoids, other measures should be considered.

Use of companion crops to deter flea beetle pressure on OSR have shown some effective results and there are other additional benefits including:

- Improved soil health and structure (subsequently reducing future pest pressure)
- Reduced risk of erosion and run off
- Reduction of inputs
- Recycling of nutrients
- Assisted development of OSR rooting system and quickened establishment

The idea behind the use of companions with OSR is the flea beetle is attracted by the smell and colour of the OSR, therefore when a companion is sown with the rape it can help to dilute the colour and smell; acting as a decoy.

### Establishment and destruction of companion crop

Companion plants are usually sown with the rape either simultaneously in the same row or separately in a second pass between the rows of rapeseed. Non-leguminous companion plants such as mustard can also be broadcast after drilling the oilseed rape. Due to the UK's unreliability of frost for natural destruction there is an expected dependence upon herbicide to terminate the companion crop.

### Trials

NIAB are trialling the use of the following companions, both alone and in-combination:

- White mustard
- Fenugreek
- Brassica mix
- Spring beans
- Buckwheat
- Legume mix

The best results preventing flea beetle damage so far have come from white mustard. The brassica mix has also had some effect on reducing flea beetle damage.



Photo of OSR and beans. Source: Andy Barr

Andy Barr; a farmer from Kent, has experimented with his own companion cropping trials across his farm which varies in almost every soil type. He has trialled OSR with legumes such as vetches and a mix of berseem and crimson clover, which have added biodiversity and provided the additional benefit of nitrogen fixation. However, Andy has had most success planting beans alongside OSR as they enhanced the OSR yield and the seed cost is low; at under £10 per ha. The companion crop is drilled at the same time as the rape, in two rows, using a split hopper. Years of using legumes has meant N input has been reduced from 30 kg down to 10kg per ha as well as a reduction of herbicide reliance and no pre-emergence application. Andy observed that when using beans as a companion crop there was a reduction of flea beetle larvae on the rape stem, whereas adults still attacked. Overall he is happy with the results of companion cropping beans with rape and will continue to apply this approach within the rotation due to input reduction, yield enhancement and reduced pest pressure.

If you are considering use of companion cropping why not create your own mini trial? There is always a degree of variability due to soil type and weather, so taking research into your own hands can often be the best way forward in finding a measure that works for you.

If you would like support in trialling companion cropping, please get in touch with your local CSFO.



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## Woodland – what advice and grants are available?

Reforestation is not just about regenerating natural forests and creating plantations of native species for harvest, you can also incorporate trees into the way you farm your land. Woodland offers a range of benefits and these are not restricted to carbon capture. For example:

- Reducing flood risk (natural flood management) and can reduce flood peaks by between 5% and 65%
- Can act as shade for livestock
- Trees alongside rivers/streams keep the water cool for fish, stop bank erosion and slow the flow
- Act as shelter belts to disrupt air flow and reduce ammonia emissions near livestock housing
- Can reduce risk of soil erosion and soil blow
- Woodland habitat for wildlife
- Riparian woodland planting reduce pollutant losses to water

Advice options:

- Catchment Sensitive Farming can help with training and advice on tree planting/woodland and how this can reduce water and air pollution from agriculture.
- The CSF specialist advice package includes a topic on 'Woodlands for Water and Air' which we are able to signpost you to, if applicable.
- The AGFORWARD research project promotes the use of agroforestry practices in Europe, as a way forward in developing a sustainable rural system. See their best practice leaflets for more information:  
<https://www.agforward.eu/index.php/en/best-practices-leaflets.html>
- The Forestry Commission <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forestry-commission> have specialist knowledge on woodland. Contact your local Woodland Officer for specific details on grants and support (found on website via office access and opening times).



Avenues to consider for grants, if planting new woodland:

- Countryside Stewardship - Woodland Creation Grant (WCG) is for a two-year capital works programme to plant and protect young trees. More info:  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/woodland-creation-grant-countryside-stewardship>
- Woodland Carbon Fund – funding to support woodland creation on a larger scale and increase carbon storage this fund supplies capital funding for planting trees  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/woodland-carbon-fund>
- Registering for the Woodland Carbon Code and sell Woodland Carbon units from your trees
- HS2 Woodland Fund – funding to create native woodland or restore plantations on ancient woodland within 25-mile zone surrounding HS2 phase one route.

### Did you know?

Trees planted in free range chicken areas can capture 60% of ammonia emissions!

### Did you know?

Woodland planting on agricultural land (agroforestry) can reduce sediment, phosphates, pesticides and faecal microbe losses by 90-100% and ammonia and nitrate losses by 70-90%.

There is more closed nutrient recycling and consequently more efficient use of nutrients.



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## CSF and the impact of Climate Change

### What is the impact on farmers from Climate Change?

Farmers are having to explore the impact of the changing frequency and extremity of weather events. In facing up to the impact of last summer's drought, the Beast from the East and this saturated autumn, the examples are being felt far more widely and intensely than ever before and the predictions are clear that these trends of increased risk will continue.

### What is CSF role in dealing with Climate Change?

Much of the work done through CSF with farmers and landowners, clearly helps to mitigate and adapt to Climate Change. Clean water and air, healthy soils, abundance of wildlife, rewetting degraded peatlands, increasing tree cover and securing long-term diverse grasslands are relevant and necessary to supporting agriculture deliver its responsibilities to the heating climate.

### What could the next steps look like?

CSF are looking at an exciting new project that is considering how to support farmers in making positive steps towards Net Zero by 2050, we are doing this to strengthen the advice we can give in the industry and ensure we are able to respond effectively to the impacts of climate change. We see a crucial opportunity to work with farmers to help them identify what their greenhouse gases emissions are and what they need to do to reduce these at source.

### What do we know about GHG's in the 72% of the UK that is farmed?

Farming produces three main types of gases which are dangerous to the climate:

1. **Nitrous Oxide** (farming is the largest global source of this gas)
2. **Methane**
3. **Carbon dioxide** – CO<sub>2</sub> is the most common greenhouse gas (GHG) globally and because of this, is the measure used to gauge other GHG's potency.

Within agriculture, methane and nitrous oxide are produced in greater quantities than carbon dioxide. This matters because nitrous oxide and methane are more harmful than carbon dioxide, but spend less time in the atmosphere.



CSF is looking to assist farmers to understand the sources of agricultural GHG and once these are recognised, support to positively impact on GHG emissions. In order to do this we will need to be discussing livestock rearing, chemical fertilisers, energy use, transport, waste produced and soil-based emissions from disturbing soils.

### Useful tools:

There are a series of different tools to help with reducing carbon on farm. An example of this it the Farm Carbon Cutting Toolkit (FCCT). This is a farm Carbon Calculator that gives a new opportunity to help understand and act on opportunities at a local level. FCCT is a non-profit farmer- led organisation that fits very well with the CSF ambition to provide practical advice and deliver farm-based actions. Explore more via the link: <https://www.farmcarbontoolkit.org.uk/>

Are you interested in hearing more about climate change and how it affects farming as a whole?

Please contact your local CSFO, details above.



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## Unearth your strengths

### AHDB Farmbench

AHDB has launched a new and free benchmarking business tool called Farmbench. This package allows producers to input either whole farm or enterprise specific data to suit their needs. Costs can be split across beef, lamb, dairy, combinable crop, potato and sugar beet enterprises.

Farmbench will help you to understand and compare your full costs of production, in an effort to manage resilience to risks and to cope with volatility.

The additional value of benchmarking with this tool comes from sharing details and making comparisons. AHDB is uniquely placed to facilitate on-farm group discussions, providing a safe, secure environment in which farmers can share data, compare costs, identify best practice and ultimately learn and grow.

Our industry is likely to experience significantly greater exposure to fluctuating prices, currency swings and adverse climatic events, impacting the resilience of many farm businesses.

This intuitive, user-friendly tool allows you to shine a spotlight on where you can fine-tune your business decisions and provide a comparison either within your own fields, or with anonymous data from local/regional peers.

### AHDB Monitor Farms

These FREE events bring together groups of like-minded farmers who wish to improve their businesses by sharing performance information and best practice, around a nationwide network of host farms. AHDB organises and facilitates Monitor Farm meetings for the farmers who own and operate the scheme.

Monitor Farms are part of the AHDB Farm Excellence Programme. Each Monitor Farm project runs for three years. Learn more via the following links:

[www.farmbench.org.uk](http://www.farmbench.org.uk)

<https://ahdb.org.uk/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NjGybddFmU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSWrw43vOaw>

### AHDB Recommended Lists

AHDB have published a new interactive variety selection tool which makes it easier for farmers and agronomists to select varieties. The tool classifies

by yield and on agronomic benefit (combined disease and lodging resistance scores). It also draws attention to yield response to fungicide application and how it makes both environmental and economic sense to tailor fungicide input depending on the variety chosen.

Currently, versions of the tool are available for winter wheat and spring barley but equivalent versions will be released for winter barley, winter oilseed rape and winter oats in the first half of 2020. The tools and user guide can be accessed at: <https://ahdb.org.uk/vst>

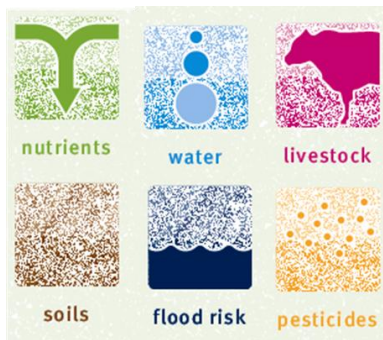


## Key actions for farmers

Update published by AHDB for 'Key Actions for Farmers' <https://pork.ahdb.org.uk/environment-buildings/environmental-protection/>

The Environment Agency's 'key actions for farmers' provides clear and consistent information to farmers to manage environmental impacts and:

- Improve and protect soil health
- Improve and protect water quality
- Secure water resources
- Reduce and manage flood risk
- Protect air quality
- Adapt to a changing climate



Source: Environment Agency, 2020



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## Farming Community Network



### Support through change

For some people, change is an exciting new opportunity; for others it can lead to anxiety and stress. Whatever your view of the next few years in farming, staying resilient, from both a business and a personal perspective, can make a big difference to the performance of the farm and the wellbeing of the people who work there.

This is the view of the charity and voluntary organisation 'Farming Community Network' (FCN) which has launched a free online information hub at [www.farmwell.org.uk](http://www.farmwell.org.uk) containing a wealth of information to help people in farming manage through the complexity of change.

FCN also provides a helpline that is open from 7am to 11pm every day, offering support for anyone in farming who is experiencing difficulties.



Helpline: 03000 111 999

## Connecting beekeepers and farmers

Farmers will often inform beekeepers of their intentions to apply an insecticide, but 'BeeConnected' provides a new way for farmers and beekeepers to keep in contact. This online notification service allows beekeepers to be informed of crop protection activities nearby and when insecticides are being applied to crops, which may present a risk to their bees.

As a farmer, register your details and sign up to this valuable tool on 'BeeConnected'

<https://beeconnected.org.uk/>



BeeConnected

## Countryside Stewardship

The new round of Countryside Stewardship agreements has been confirmed by the minister for 2021 start dates.

- Applications for Mid Tier opened on 11 February and close on 31 July 2020
- Applications for Wildlife Offers opened on 11 February and close on 31 July 2020
- Applications for Higher Tier opened on 11 February, and close on 1 May 2020 for initial applications

It has been confirmed that those who enter into new agreements of Countryside Stewardship from 2021 will be able to exit those agreements, at agreed points, without penalty, if they have a place in ELMS.

Please contact your local CSFO for updates, specifically on capital work approvals.

## Upcoming event

### Cover Cropping – bringing soils back to life

In the face of a very wet autumn, high prices and scarcity of spring seed, waterlogged and damaged soils; this event will explore use of **spring-sown cover crops** as a beneficial practice within the arable rotation in order to:

- Alleviate compaction
- Harvest sunshine; increasing soil carbon
- Increase biological life
- Retain and recycle nutrients

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> February 9:30 – 13:00  
Malshanger Clubhouse RG23 7EY

Book on for free online:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/cover-cropping-2020-bringing-soils-back-to-life-tickets-91290188411>



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## Incentives, schemes and offers

### Southern Water's Farm Capital Grant Scheme available across the Upper Arun and Western Rother catchments

Southern Water offer capital grants of up to £10,000 per holding per year, for infrastructure improvements and other initiatives, which reduce the risk of pesticides reaching surface waters and so help protect and improve water quality in the Western Rother and Upper Arun catchments.

Set funding is available for a range of items including sprayer or applicator filling and washdown areas:

- Sprayer filling & washdown area £1,875
- Biobed £3,375
- Biofilter £1,485
- Roofing up to 50% of costs, as agreed

Farmers / land managers can suggest alternative ideas for reducing pesticide pollution risk (up to 50% of costs, as agreed). Examples of items which could be eligible for funding include GPS and other equipment to apply pesticides more accurately, inter-row hoes or other equipment to facilitate mechanical weed control or monitoring equipment to reduce reliance on routine application of pesticides.

For more information, please contact your Southern Water Catchment Risk Management Officer:

Zoë Fothergill  
07919 487534  
Zoe.Fothergill@southernwater.co.uk

### Slug control incentives

Southern Water is continuing to offer farmers currently using metaldehyde-based slug control the opportunity to substitute this for ferric phosphate-based control for the 2019-20 cropping year, offering a contribution of £1 per kg towards ferric phosphate pellets purchased.

Free slug pelletter calibration and PA4s training is also available to those taking up this offer. Contact your local CSFO for more details.

## How do we use your data?

Your data is only used by us so we can email, call, text or write to you about our Catchment Sensitive Farming work. This will include advice, access to grant, events and campaigns.

You can change your communication preferences by emailing us on:

[catchmentsensitivedfarming@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:catchmentsensitivedfarming@naturalengland.org.uk)

Our Information Charter is at:

<http://bit.ly/naturalenglandinfo>

Our Privacy Notice is at: <http://bit.ly/csfprivacy>



Website:  
CSF pages on gov.uk:  
<http://bit.ly/CSFonline>



Twitter:  
@naturalengland  
@NE\_Thames  
#CatchmentSensitiveFarming



YouTube:  
<http://bit.ly/CSF-YouTube>



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