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How we can help you achieve your EFAs



A recent CAP update presentation from Andersons farm Business Consultants made us aware of various areas where we can help farmers in terms green cover and catch crops (green manures). Potentially you could grow green manures to gain percentage points for ecological focus areas (EFA). Though some farmers will think of using hedgerows because of the heavier percentage weighting, this requires large scale mapping, a large undertaking which may therefore delay payments. As such it may be more convenient to use green manures to make up some of your required percentages.

Due to the lower points available for green manures, you'll need a larger area than for hedgerows but this new incentive to use green manures means you'll also benefit in other ways.

Firstly, you'll need to decide what you want to achieve, which will then influence which green cover and catch crops you'll use. For instance, cover crops can help increase soil organic matter and reduce runoff and erosion over winter by providing a green cover; they can hold existing nitrogen and other nutrients in the soil which reduces leaching and in addition deep rooting species or mixes of species can improve soil structure and break down compaction layers. Finally leguminous cover crops can fix nitrogen in the soil.

From the greening update it appears that cover crops should be in place by 1st October which means they should be planted immediately after harvest. This means that you'll need to take into account which species will grow during the winter months. You'll have more choice next year because of spring planting opportunities, but for now the main options are grazing rye which provides an overwinter soil cover, or a rye and vetch mix which will also fix nitrogen. Alternatively a vetch and westerwold mix provides nitrogen fixation and a grass cover, we are not completely sure as yet if cover crops can be grazed, but if yes the westerwolds will potentially provide autumn and early winter grazing.

The greening criteria has been updated since this article.

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