

Implementation and maintenance of riparian strips

Goal	Buffering water bodies/streams and provide species-rich habitats
Target group	All farms of any production type, managing land adjacent to water bodies/streams, should apply this measure.
Description of the measure	<p>Buffer strips should be at least 10 m wide, but may extend on up to 50m.</p> <p>In general, within (minimum of) 10 m distance to a water body natural vegetation and the development of shrubby structures should be promoted.</p> <p>Alternatively, extensive managed grassland or clover grass can be used. To serve as a buffer, riparian strips must not be fertilized and no pesticide should be used. If riparian strips are managed extensively, they should be cut alternating, i.e. one year the one side, next year the other. Alternatively, one side may remain uncut overall and sides get switched after a few years.</p>
Suitable sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Along streams, rivers, or any other water body
How a good implementation looks like	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum width of 10 m Area must have vegetation which is not at all or extensively managed
Effects on biodiversity (ecosystems, species, soil biodiversity)	<p>Wide diverse vegetated strips along water bodies serve as a buffer zone between managed land and natural ecosystems/water bodies. The prevention of nutrient and pesticide leaching into the water may be the most important effect.</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="margin-right: 20px;">   </div> <div> <p>Buffer strips also provide protection and refuge for insects, hare and partridges during agricultural work on the field.</p> <p>Riparian strips are habitats and wintering grounds for many insects. This vegetation is especially important for the development of many dragonflies and butterflies.</p> </div> </div> <p>Riparian strips also serve as step stones and connect open landscapes for butterflies, grasshoppers and other insects.</p>
Other positive effects/benefit for the farmer	<p>According to EU regulations, a riparian strip of at least 5m needs to be implemented. (Note: national regulations need to be taken in account as well; e.g. in Germany riparian strips need to be at least 10 m wide!) As the use of pesticides and fertilizer is not allowed, those areas are sites with minor yields and may therefore be valuable sites to implement biodiversity measures. Starting in 2019, agricultural use within a 5 m distance to the water body is prohibited over all (except maintenance of flower strips and short-rotation coppices). Taking a strip of that width out of agricultural use is required; to use riparian strips to improve habitat quality for different wildlife may be a win-win situation.</p> <p>Buffer strips are a very important tool to prevent eutrophication of water bodies and thus are a central measure for human health.</p> <p>The permanent vegetation cover in general further contribute to erosion control, especially on steep slopes.</p>

Indicator/key data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimum width of 10 m ▪ Length
Risk and further recommendations	For riparian strips, it is prohibited to cut native shrubs and trees. However, good agricultural practice also includes the maintenance of those structures. Regular maintenance also prevents the invasion of problem weeds or harmful insects.
Timeframe (When to start a measure and anticipated time for implementation)	When to start: with the sowing of crops. It must be implemented latest by 2020
Additional special resources/equipment/skills needed	None
References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ www.landwirtschaft-artenvielfalt.de ▪ www4.lubw.baden-wuerttemberg.de/servlet/is/255462/?shop=true&shopView=9161

Further information: [Knowledge Pool](#)

This Action Fact Sheet belongs to the training package for advisors of standard organisations and companies and was developed within the project LIFE Food & Biodiversity (Biodiversity in Standards and Labels of for the Food Industry). The main objective of the project is to improve the biodiversity performance of standards and sourcing requirements in the food industry by helping standard organisations to integrate efficient biodiversity criteria into their schemes and motivating food processing companies and retailers to include comprehensive biodiversity criteria into their sourcing guidelines.

Editor: LIFE Food & Biodiversity; Lake Constance Foundation

Photo credits: Icons: © LynxVector / Fotolia, © nikiteev / Fotolia

European Project Team
European Project Team



Supported by

Recognized as core initiative by



www.food-biodiversity.eu