


Increasing cultivation of spring crops

Goal	Support of field birds
Target group	Farmers who grow any kind of arable crops or vegetables
Description of the measure	Increasing share of spring cereals, legumes, corn and other species in the crop rotation on 20 % of arable land as a minimum.
Suitable sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total farming site
How a good implementation looks like	
Effects on biodiversity (ecosystems, species, soil biodiversity)	 <p>Spring crops are valuable sites for field birds as sky larks. As the growth height is still low in May (in temperate region) and in April (in Mediterranean region), sites are light and provide breeding habitat for a longer period than winter crops do.</p>
Other positive effects/benefit for the farmer	<p>Because of the late sowing date, labor peaks are avoided.</p> <p>Easier and cheaper management, as, e.g., fertilization can be applied only two times a year as crops are “short-living”.</p> <p>In general: Farming practices based on more than one pillar and extended crop rotation may secure farmers from yield losses due to extreme weather events and pests. It furthermore protects soils from erosion and keeps or even increases soil fertility and enhances the soil food web (bacteria, fungi and other microorganisms).</p> <p>Cereal species and wild herbs are used to grown together on fields and developed a “plant community” whereby mutual interactions arise, resulting in an increase on water availability, improvement of soil by nitrogen bonding and, enhancement of the soil food web.</p> <p>There are hints that the cereals can achieve a better nutrient intake when wild herbs and/or legume companion crops (e.g. clover, medick) are present.</p>
Indicator/key data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area cultivated with spring crops (ha)

Risk and further recommendations	<p>In general, spring crops yield less and show higher variations depending on the weather conditions. In average, between sowing and harvest lie around 140-160 days during which period the weather conditions must be ideal.</p> <p>Crop rotations shall be planned profound considering all crops on farm scale in order to profit from benefits above.</p> <p>Companion crops must be carefully chosen, so that no interference with the harvesting process or competition issues with the main crop are shown.</p> <p>In dry springs, spring crops may need to be irrigated.</p>
Timeframe (When to start a measure and anticipated time for implementation)	<p>Depending on the crop:</p> <p>Temperate region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Spring Barley: March with the first vegetation coming up ▪ Spring Oat: Beginning of February, depending on soil conditions ▪ Spring Wheat: Mid of February ▪ Spring Triticale: November till beginning of April ▪ Spring Rye: Mid of February till end of March <p>Mediterranean region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Spring Barley: December till the beginning of February with the first vegetation coming up. ▪ Spring Oat: December till the end of January, depending on soil conditions. ▪ Spring Wheat: December till the beginning of February. ▪ Spring Triticale: November till the beginning of February. ▪ Spring Rye: January till mid-February.
Additional special resources/ equipment/ skills needed	<p>None</p>
References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ www.landwirtschaft-artenvielfalt.de ▪ www.franz-projekt.de/massnahmen ▪ "Ackerwildkräuter erhalten und fördern" - Netzwerk Blühende Landschaften www.fischermuehle.info/fix/doc/NBL-40-Ackerwildkr%EAuter-0711.pdf ▪ NABU, Fact Sheets – Feldvögel, Kulturfolger der Landwirtschaft ▪ Vögel der Agrarlandschaft, NABU 2004

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.

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