

## Grazing for weeding and soil preparation

<b>Goal</b>	Use livestock for reducing the impact on wildlife from agricultural inputs used for weeding or soil preparation
<b>Target group</b>	Farmers who grow any kind of arable or permanent crop.
<b>Description of the measure</b>	Livestock has traditionally grazed in farms, not only in grasslands but also taking advantage of the valuable resources that can be found in arable land once the harvest is done, or under permanent crops. Wild plants, crop residues and stubbles are just a few examples of the resources that animals can use. The feeding activity is also used for cleaning fields from undesired plants, choosing the appropriate animals and during several times of the year.
<b>Suitable sites</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arable land</li> <li>Permanent crops</li> </ul>
<b>How a good implementation looks like</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No herbicides are used</li> <li>Appropriate densities of livestock are used for avoiding counteractive effects, such as soil compaction, overgrazing of hedges, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Effects on biodiversity</b> (ecosystems, species, soil biodiversity)	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grazing for weeding helps to avoid the use of herbicides.</li> <li>Livestock activity attracts other animals that feed on little insects that are disturbed (such as the cattle egret or passerines)</li> <li>Animal droppings and dung are used by soil fauna and insects (such as dung beetles) which are sometimes endangered due to antibiotics and other products given to animals</li> </ul>
<b>Other positive effects/benefit for the farmer</b>	While feeding, animals leave manure on the fields that is also a very valuable source of organic matter. In general terms, this amount of manure cannot substitute fertilization but it is undoubtedly a valuable resource that improves soil quality
<b>Indicator/key data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>number of animals and days of grazing in the field</li> </ul>
<b>Risk and further recommendations</b>	<p>When the farmer is not the owner of the livestock, some conflicts may arise. In some cases, shepherds' and farmers' interest are not the same. Shepherd will probably want to feed as many animals as possible, while farmers will want to preserve soil from impacts (compaction, erosion, etc.) as well as to keep the crops undisturbed.</p> <p>It is important to have a good understanding of the needed conditions and ensuring that both parts agree on them.</p>

<b>Timeframe</b> (When to start a measure and anticipated time for implementation)	When to start: when resources are available for animals
<b>Additional special resources/equipment/skills needed</b>	None
<b>Reference</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="http://www.northcentralsare.org/Educational-Resources/Fact-Sheets/Sheep-Grazing-to-Manage-Crop-Residues-Insects-and-Weeds-in-Northern-Plains-Grain-and-Alfalfa-Systems">www.northcentralsare.org/Educational-Resources/Fact-Sheets/Sheep-Grazing-to-Manage-Crop-Residues-Insects-and-Weeds-in-Northern-Plains-Grain-and-Alfalfa-Systems</a></li> </ul>

## 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; Fundación Global Nature

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

## European Project Team



## Supported by

## Recognized as core initiative by



[www.food-biodiversity.eu](http://www.food-biodiversity.eu)