

Intensive grassland reversion to zero-input grassland

Funding is offered for reverting whole or part fields from intensively managed grassland to zero-input grassland. This measure should be used for fields or areas of fields that regularly flood / get waterlogged or that experience surface runoff and soil erosion.

Key requirements summary: Do not apply any inorganic fertiliser or organic manure. Limited grazing by cattle and sheep, and multiple cuts for hay/forage are permitted.

Length of agreement available

2½ to 3½ year agreements available starting in either Spring or Autumn 2025. *Longer term agreements may also be available. Please contact the project team for details.*

Requirements

- Where this measure can be used:
 - Across whole or part fields. This measure may be used strategically across slopes, in field corners and at the bottom of slopes.
 - On land that has been intensively managed for the past 3 or more years. Evidence that the field/s have been intensively managed may be requested by a Wessex Water advisor.
 - On land that is adjacent to a watercourse (including ditches) or has high connectivity to a watercourse via a road, track, or any other flow pathway.
- Establish and manage plots according to the specification set out in the project agreement relevant to each plot.
- Establishment
 - Revert from intensive grassland to zero input grassland by ceasing inputs of organic manures and inorganic fertilisers
 - Where reseeding is specifically required by agreement holder:
 - Assess whether there are any issues of soil compaction and, if necessary, plan appropriate timely cultivations such as subsoiling to resolve these before establishing the new sward.
 - If there is a heavy weed burden, spray with a herbicide such as glyphosate before cultivation.
 - Sow the species mix and seed rate specified in the project agreement relevant to each plot. General requirements will be to **establish at least one agricultural grass species**, plus legumes such as clover if desired. Wildflowers and herbs such as yarrow and plantain may also be included.

Cutting and topping

- To control weeds and ensure that a dense sward that reduces runoff is established:
 - Cut the sward at least once each year after 1st July. Farmers are encouraged, but not required, to leave small refuge areas uncut (5% of plot area) to provide overwintering habitat for invertebrates. All cuttings must be removed from the field.
 - Once established, plots should be mechanically topped or grazed lightly.
 - Top or spot-spray any undesirable plants, such as nettles, bracken, injurious weeds, or invasive non-native species as soon as practically possible to avoid them becoming established.

Inputs and management

- Applications of organic manures are not permitted.
- Applications of inorganic fertilisers (N, P, K) are not permitted.
- Applications of lime are permitted.
- Limited grazing by livestock is permitted. Supplementary feeding (except by energy blocks) is not permitted.
- Pesticide applications are not permitted except for spot-spraying of injurious weeds.

Record keeping and payment terms

- Agreement holders will need to keep the following records and supply them with *the payment claim* each year. Payment will only be made upon satisfactory receipt of all of the following records
 - Photographs of the plots before establishment (only required for first payment claim)
 - Photographs of each reverted area
 - Invoices showing the seed mix used to establish the Sward (only required for first payment claim).
 - Soil analysis results (pH, P and K as a minimum) for the relevant fields dated within the past 3 years (only required for first payment claim). A soil analysis result ay also be requested by a Wessex Water Adviser at the end of the agreement term.