

ISS1 Improve Soil Structure With Roots

Why is this good for water quality?

The aim

Deep-rooting plants can significantly enhance aeration, water infiltration, and reduce soil compaction. They also help with nutrient cycling by bringing nutrients to the surface where they are available to other plants. Additionally, deep rooting plants help bind loose, organic poor soils preventing erosion.

Why is this good for my farm?

Improving soil structure by using deep-rooting plants helps naturally suppress weeds and supports healthier root growth in subsequent crops. Together these benefits lead to a more resilient and cost-effective crop production.

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Payment Rate: £150/ha/yr

Specification

- Establish a species mix with a focus on deep rooting plants in a crop or ley mixture.
- A crop or ley mix must be established with at least three deep rooting species such as, but not limited to: Tillage radish, Forage rye, Phacelia, Chicory, Cocksfoot, Sainfoin, Yarrow.
- The crop must be fully established with at least three of the named deep rooting species visible. Other species used within the crop mix are for the farm to decide, however the farm should specify their choice in their application and discuss this with the agricultural advisor
- Farmers must follow seed mix guidance to ensure good establishment and coverage with evidence of seed rate on drill to ensure sufficient density
- Compaction by machinery must be avoided, alongside livestock removal when necessary to avoid poaching – 6-week rest periods must be in place during each year with 2 during the growing period, no overwinter grazing permitted.
- Set stocking is not acceptable
- Nutrient planning is an important feature of soil structure improvement, suitable demonstration of nutrient planning is required.
- Visual Evaluation of Soil Structure (VESS) scoring must be completed to evidence chosen areas
- Deep rooting mix should remain in the same place for 3-5 years, it can be moved after 3 years but this must be discussed with your agricultural advisor.
- Applicants are expected to complete the action in a way that could be reasonably expected to achieve the actions aim.

Evidence to apply

- Maps to show areas included
- VESS images to show identification of compacted layers

Evidence to claim

- Invoices to show seed mixture used and quantity purchased
- Images to show established mixture
- Nutrient planning records