

COV3 Herbal Leys

Why is this good for water quality?

The aim-

Low input leys can improve soil organic matter which can benefit subsequent arable crops. Diverse root systems from mixed species enhance organic matter at different depths and supports soil biology. A period of low input to soils encourages natural processes (e.g. nitrogen fixation), improves soil structure and ultimately less reliance on artificial products which can pollute water sources through leaching and runoff.

Why is this good for my farm?

Low input leys build long-term soil fertility, supporting better yields in subsequent arable crops. This reduces the reliance on external inputs such as synthetic fertilisers and pesticides.

COV3 Herbal Leys

Payment Rate: £300/ha/yr

Herbal leys are temporary grasslands made up of legume, herb and grass species. You can sow herbal leys on arable and horticultural land, vegetable fields and temporary grassland. Herbal leys easily fit into arable and mixed farming rotations.

Specification

- You must establish an herbal ley with a mixture of grass, legumes and herbs on land entered into this action.
- You must use a seed mix which includes all of the following (as a minimum): 1 grass species, 2 legume species, 2 herb or wildflower species.
- You must use establishment techniques which minimise the risk of soil erosion or runoff.
- Once the herbal ley is established, you must maintain it. To do this you must manage it in a way, and for a period of time, that can reasonably be expected to achieve this action's aim.
- You must minimise use of inorganic fertilisers containing nitrogen, by following a nutrient manage plan (NMP) with specific recommendations for this option.
- The sward can be managed by cutting and/or grazing, advice must be sought and demonstrated. A six-week rest period during the growing period is essential.
- Annual evidence must be collected, so grazing and cutting should be managed to retain key species. Applicants should attempt to- eat 1/3, leave 1/3 and waste 1/3.
- Herbicides are only permitted to spot treat or weed wipe injurious weeds and must be discussed with your agricultural advisor.
- Outside of groundwater areas this option can only be placed on areas identified as high risk of erosion and pollution potential. As identified by tools such as EA ALERT.
- This option must reduce the use of plant protection products,
- 2025-2030 agreement period, must be re-established/maintained.
- 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 covered
- Before images to show area of focus and risk
- Proposed seed mix and source of information
- EAALERT mapping

Evidence to claim

- Invoices for seed mix used and amounts
- NMP
- After images showing a well established ley containing a variety of species
- PPP records to demonstrate reduced use