



The Campaign for the Farmed Environment is encouraging farmers and land managers to voluntarily adopt land management practices that will retain and exceed the environmental benefits that used to be provided by set-aside. There is a range of voluntary management measures or ELS options that you can adopt on your farm to benefit the environment, whilst at the same time being agronomically practical.

Name: JSR Farms Limited
Philip Huxtable
(Arable Technical Director)

Region: East Yorkshire

Farm: Based at Southburn Farm, Driffield

Size: 3600 hectares (9000 acres)



Background

A private, family-owned farming company with predominantly arable land located across a number of holdings within a 15 mile radius of the home farm at Southburn near Driffield. The company combines an extensive commercial arable farming business with a national pig production and international pig genetics enterprise. Around 2/3 of the farmed area is typical Yorkshire Wolds land, shallow and free draining over chalk. The remainder comprises medium-heavy soils with significant in-field variation. Cropping across the majority of the farmed area includes winter wheat, winter barley, winter oilseed rape, potatoes, vining peas and beans as well as field beans.

What environmental management do you already undertake on your farm?

Currently some 380 hectares (more than 10% of the overall farmed area) is under some kind of environmental management through either Countryside Stewardship schemes (the last of which will expire in 2012), ELS or joint ELS/HLS agreements. A large proportion of this area is concentrated at JSR's Givendale Farm where a significant amount of arable reversion has taken place and where the company's Beef enterprise is located. Across the rest of the farmed area, all farms feature comprehensive environmental stewardship schemes. At the forefront of these agreements are a small but significant range of key in-field options; 6 metre buffers next to watercourses (EE9), field corner management (EF1), nectar flower mix (EF4) and beetle banks (EF7) can be found at all locations, making the most of awkward or unproductive areas as well as protecting ditches and streams. Anywhere between 40 and 50% of the ELS points on each farm is derived from these CFE options. Winter feed for birds is provided by wild bird seed options in CSS which we hope to incorporate into ELS/HLS agreements next year.

How will you be/are you taking part in the Campaign?

Effective management of all our environmental areas is crucial; we treat all of our stewardship options like any other crop, using locally sourced quality seed and taking care with establishment. The range of options we have in place is addressing the themes of the campaign, protecting water, providing habitat and food for farmland birds and improving the wildlife potential of the farm.

We've hosted a CFE Open Day this year along with many other educational tours of the farm and we're helping to promote CFE to local farmers wherever possible.

Will you be using an adviser?

We've taken advice from Martin Phillips of FWAG, and Sue Ogilvy of Natural England gives us ongoing management advice in respect of our CSS and ELS/HLS agreements and we're also working closely with local CFE co-ordinator, Alison Clayton.

What are the benefits of taking part in the Campaign?

We've been able to successfully integrate agri-environmental measures alongside a highly commercial farming operation but flexibility is key; we don't believe that a compulsory approach would offer us that same flexibility.

How does undertaking voluntary management fit in with your farming business?

With so much already committed to formal schemes, it doesn't leave much room for voluntary measures. We have established 6 metre grass buffers along all watercourse and a proportion of these were voluntary until we went through the process recently of renewing all our ELS agreements. In order to help make up for the loss of management plan points we needed to incorporate them into ELS. We have carried out a lot of voluntary capital works over the years including pond creation and management, tree planting and hedgerow restoration. We also grow 25 hectares of coppice willow which is harvested on a 3-year rotation and provides an exceptional sink for farm wildlife. Bird boxes and Barn Owl boxes have also been sited across all the farms. In addition, we have a lot of pig slurry and pig FYM to utilise and we've put a huge amount of effort into efficient capture of nitrates from these commodities – it makes economic sense but it also helps keeps nitrates where they should be – in the field and helping our crops to grow!

What is driving you to take part in the Campaign?

The CFE initiative is a great campaign which JSR is very happy to support. Voluntary schemes which the farmer has ownership of are so much more effective than Government imposed legislation such as compulsory setaside. After all we are the custodians of the countryside which we farm, and getting the environmental balance correct is a strong part of the ethos at JSR.