



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: James Langley, M D Langley & Sons

Region: East Midlands

Farm: Grange Farm, Wiseton

Size: 411 ha



Background

The farm is on the Wiseton Estate and the family have been there since 1986. It lies on predominately medium clay loam and is mainly a combinable crop enterprise with cereals and oil seed rape as well as a large acreage of linseed. Since I came home from college 20 yrs ago, along with my brother and father we have expanded the farm from a base of 80 ha.

What environmental management do you already undertake on your farm?

The farm is in the Entry Level Scheme which is coming up for renewal in January 2011. In the current agreement we have management plans, hedgerow management, field margins, field corners and infield tree options.

We have retained 4 ha of former set-aside which is managed voluntarily as reverted arable areas.

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

We are renewing our ELS agreement and replacing our management plan points with in-field options. The infield options will include:

- Increased areas of field corners. Where we have 2 or 3 infield trees near each other, we are taking the whole area around them out rather than use the individual in field tree option. We are also taking out more awkward areas to make management easier
- Introduction of sky lark plots. We want to support sky lark populations and this option will also be cost effective
- Increased area of field margins. Where the 6m margins are next to a water course we will be recording them as EE9 to ensure they count towards the campaign
- Introduction of EJ9 (12m to 24 m buffer strips). These are going next to the River Idle to create straight edges and provide protection to the river.

We will be keeping 4ha of the former set-aside land under voluntary management as C3 reverted arable areas. By managing it in a positive way eg not cutting until after 31st July we hope to maximise its environmental benefit and support ground nesting birds.

Will you be using an adviser?

We are using advice from both our land agent J H Pickup and our local FWAG adviser, in putting together our ELS application.

What are the benefits of taking part in the Campaign?

To avoid regulation; we still have the threat of compulsory set-aside hanging over us and need to take it seriously. We have been given the option to pick up the baton of voluntary environmental management and ought to run with and show we can make it work.

There are also advantages for wildlife and for the estates shoot. It's been good to see the increase in bird numbers with local surveys having recorded increased populations for some species.

ELS has financial benefits for the business and will continue to make sense even with the increased use of infield options. We will be taking out a total of about 16 ha of land, with an annual income from ELS of £12,330 that means profits of £770 per ha on our least productive land.

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

Working with the let shoot on the estate, we did use to encounter damage on woodland edges and headlands. By putting margins down it has given the game foraging and dusting habitat along with a good source of insect food.

Taking the less productive areas of land out eg those next to woodland where it was wet, has made management of the remaining land easier and reduced costs even down to lower grain drying costs.

What is driving you to take part in the Campaign?

We can take part in the Campaign and have the option to get paid for it through ELS but if we do nothing we shall have it enforced on us for zero return.