

Using greening features on your farm in 2021

In 2021 the ‘greening’ requirements previously attached to 30% of farmers’ Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) payment will come to an end. In this article, we will provide information on how the existing greening rules can be retained to benefit your business and the environment in 2021.

BPS recipients will still be required to meet 2021 cross compliance rules, but the specific greening requirements for crop diversification, Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs) and connection between greening rules and permanent grassland will no longer apply. There are still non-BPS related rules that will apply to permanent grassland going forward, such as those covered under [Environmental Impact Assessment](#) criteria.

Although actions under greening will not be tied to the BPS payment, it is expected that many farmers will choose to retain former greening options. EFA options in particular because of the environmental and business benefits they can offer.

Here are some examples of the potential benefits associated with retaining and upgrading you options in 2021:

EFA Option	Environmental/business Benefit	Options to ‘upgrade’
Buffer strips and field margins (At least 1 meter wide (however, those greater than 3 meters offer maximum benefits) adjacent to a field boundary, hedge or watercourse.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> biodiverse buffer strips and field margins can provide a habitat for insects, therefore contribute to pest management and pollination; protection for fertiliser and plant protection product overspray; and run-off for drains, ditches and watercourses. 	Sow a pollen and nectar , wildflower or wild bird cover mix to enhance margins for biodiversity.
Hedges or trees in a line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> protect against soil erosion; create shelter belts for crops and livestock; provide habitat for beneficial insects and other farmland wildlife. 	Allow hedgerow trees to grow up within an existing hedge to create additional habitat, shelter and carbon capture.
Nitrogen-fixing crops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reduce N input needs for the following crop; reduce nitrate leaching to ground water. 	Introduce a mix of legume, ideally with different flowering seasons and root system depths, to provide extra food for pollinators and improve soil structure.
Fallow land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> help to address weed burden issues; recharges soil nutrient levels; can be incorporated into a mixed rotation as pasture. 	Further improve soil composition by upgrading fallow land with N-fixing crops.
Catch crops or cover crops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reduce the risk of soil erosion; lock nitrogen into soil; improve soil structure; suppress weeds; promote biological activity in soil, e.g. earthworms; offer grazing opportunities in a mixed farming system; help protect water quality. 	Incorporate companion cropping into your catch and cover crops to harness greater benefits, including pest management and pollination.

Please note, the 2020 greening requirements remain in place for until the end of the 2020 BPS scheme year, with the exception of EFA cover crop requirement which will extend into early 2021 as they have to be maintained between 1 October 2020 and at least until at least 15 January 2021.

This article was produced in collaboration with Championing the Farmed Environment (CFE), if you would like to find out more about what they do, please visit their [website](#).