
Report

Without nature there is no food

Why we need the Fair to
Nature Mark to protect and
restore nature on UK farms





Tomorrow is grown from our actions today

RSPB conservation adviser discussing wildlife habitats with a farmer

rspb-images.com

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Front Cover: Barn Owl, Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

“If UK farms ensure at least 10% of their farmed land is available for a range of high-quality habitats, this can protect and restore biodiversity.”

Sam Turley (rspb-images.com)

Foreword

Business needs nature to survive



Mark Varney, Head of Fair To Nature

Nature underpins our ability to do business. From providing raw materials and energy, to the food, water, and clean air we need to survive, nature is the foundation of every aspect of human life. And the loss of nature means these vital services are under threat. We need to act now.

The situation is serious: but we know what to do. There are concrete actions we can take today to secure the success of our businesses and our planet.

If UK farms ensure at least 10% of their farmed land is available for a range of high-quality habitats, this can protect and restore biodiversity.

That has benefits for business, as nature becomes more able to deliver its key services – from pollination to pest control – to support better yields and improved profit margins.

Strong organisations embrace opportunity and plan for long-term success. Whatever your business, from farming to financial services or retail, you can impact nature positively: either through your direct operations or through your supply chain.

This is key to keeping your customers, clients, employees, investors and other stakeholders happy. RSPB research has shown that over two-thirds of UK adults are concerned about UK wildlife decline and want to support businesses that protect nature. This means you're in trouble if you can't demonstrate concrete, credible action.

Schemes like the ground-breaking food and farming certification Fair to Nature provide an evidence-based and audited framework for farmers to reverse biodiversity loss, at scale, across the UK.

This provides hope. It is exciting. By ensuring 10% of farmed land works as hard as it can for nature, we have a solution we can start implementing today to secure our tomorrow.

Executive summary

Nature-friendly farming: The key to the survival of our wildlife, our food system and our businesses

We are facing two critical global crises: the nature and climate emergency.

Each is urgent, but these crises are intertwined and we have a powerful tool to mitigate both: protecting nature can help address climate change, while preventing dangerous climate change helps protect ecosystems and biodiversity. Nature – if treated carefully – can continue to help us provide food while supporting our planet’s living systems.

We have the power to take action. And action provides business opportunity.

Research consistently shows that people in the UK care about nature and want to support farmers and brands who protect it. This sentiment remains strong, according to consumer research conducted by Fair to Nature.

Nature underpins the production of our food, and it cleans the water and air we need to survive. It also helps to store carbon to keep our climate in balance. But biodiversity loss means these vital services are under threat.

Ladybird climbing up poppy stem, RSPB Hope Farm, Cambridgeshire

The situation is serious, but farmers and businesses can help provide the solution.

Agriculture covers 70% of the UK,³ so it has a huge impact on our environment. Nature underpins the food system and our economy: it is intrinsically linked to the long-term sustainability of farm and business profitability.

Achieving a balance between nature and farming enables businesses to support biodiversity and be financially sustainable. It is critical we achieve this balance. As economist Dieter Helm highlights “that which is unsustainable will not be sustained.”⁴

Ensuring that 10% of farmed land includes high-quality habitats is proven to reverse local wildlife decline. This in turn can boost the pollinator and pest control services that underpin production.⁵ This is the central tenet of the RSPB’s Fair to Nature certification – the only UK certification focused on protecting farmland biodiversity.

It provides the mechanism needed to reverse biodiversity loss at scale across the UK, quickly and credibly. It is a rigorous, evidence – and audit-based certification programme that restores the balance of nature in farming – supporting ecosystems and in turn protecting and improving long-term productivity.



62%

of UK adults regularly use certification labels to help them choose what to buy

RSPB/Ipsos, 2023¹

50%

say protecting wildlife habitats should be an environmental priority in the UK

RSPB/Ipsos, 2023²

67%

are concerned with the decline in the variety of UK wildlife compared to 50 years ago

RSPB/Ipsos, 2023²

“We are now one of the most nature-depleted countries on the planet.”

Sir David Attenborough, Broadcaster and Naturalist, Saving our Wild Isles ¹¹



Skylark on fence post

42%
of farmland bird species have decreased since 1970 ¹⁴

15%
of UK species are threatened with extinction ¹³

10 of the 19
'indicator' species of farmland bird are at risk of extinction in the UK ¹⁵

Over 40%
of UK species are declining ¹²

Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

The context

Food and farming need nature

“We are destroying biodiversity... If we continue this damage, whole ecosystems will collapse.”

The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review, HM Treasury ⁶

Our food system needs nature. Everything we need for our survival relies on an abundance of nature. The biggest threats to medium and long-term food security are biodiversity loss and climate breakdown, and they are already inhibiting food production in the UK, and beyond. ⁷

75%

of all major food crops globally rely on pollinators and more than a third of total crop production is pollinator dependent ⁸

Yet while the food and farming system is the biggest cause of biodiversity collapse, ⁹ it can also be part of the solution.

Biodiversity is the foundation of human life

A biodiverse ecosystem is the engine that provides our basic necessities, including food, water, fibres, timber and medicines. It sequesters carbon that would otherwise be released into the atmosphere and helps keeps our climate stable. ¹⁰

Soil fertility, clean water, pollination, pest control and the recycling of organic matter can all happen if farmland nature is given the chance to thrive. They are fundamental to a sustainable, long-term food supply. From insects recycling crop residues into nutrients to the microorganisms in our soil sustaining crops, we need nature.

But the science is clear: nature in the UK, and beyond, is in crisis.

“We’re seeing, increasingly, crop failures because of biodiversity loss.”

Ken Murphy, Group Chief Executive, Tesco ²⁴

Wildflowers and wheat crop on a Fair to Nature farm

William Shaw

The UK has lost:



This biodiversity loss places increasing pressure on the UK farming industry. It threatens the health of our land, the longevity of farming businesses and the stability of supply chains.

The need to transform an outdated system

“What we realise now is that in creating those huge yields, we have driven nature off the land, and we have crashed our ecosystems.”

Henry Dimbleby, author of the National Food Strategy ²⁸

As noted by the RSPB report *A world richer in nature: getting nature positive in the UK by 2030*, only 5% of the UK’s land is both protected and effectively managed for nature. This is well short of the 30% target all UK governments committed to achieve by 2030. ²⁵

Since the 1940s, farming policy, practices, technologies and incentives have prioritised feeding a growing population, increasing self-sufficiency through increased domestic production, and rewarding intensive farming practices over environmental outcomes. ²⁶

UK farm policies, and then the Common Agricultural Policy, encouraged farmers to increase the productivity of farmland and turn all available land over to food production, ²⁷ even if that meant removing hedgerows and turning wetlands and habitats over to farmland.

And our farmers did exactly what was asked of them, to provide abundant, affordable food.

But there is compelling evidence it’s possible to farm productively and profitably in a way that supports nature, biodiversity and helps address the climate crisis.

Farmers can again come to the rescue. Habitats that are essential to productivity – such as well-maintained hedgerows, farm ponds and flower-rich field boundaries – also support biodiversity.



Harvesting a crop of Fair to Nature oats alongside a seed-rich field margin

“It’s not just about biodiversity – it’s about the economy. The moment to act is now.”

Gianni Ruta, Lead Environmental Economist, The World Bank ²⁹




White-tailed Bumblebee on Field Scabious flower

A collapse in ecosystem services could cause annual losses of
\$2.7 trillion
to the global economy by 2030 ³¹

 **50%**
of plant species require animal pollination ³³

3 million
The UK’s peatlands can sequester more than three million tonnes of carbon dioxide every year ³⁸

 **Peatlands supply over a quarter of our drinking water, at a value of £888 million** ³⁷

Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

What happens if we don’t tackle biodiversity loss?

A changing climate, biodiversity loss and skyrocketing commodity costs have exposed the fragility of the farming system, and the unthinkable costs of continuing business as usual. ³⁰

Defra’s 2021 report on food security concluded, ‘The biggest medium to long-term risk to the UK’s domestic production comes from climate change and other environmental pressures like soil degradation, water quality and biodiversity.’

From a financial perspective, healthy ecosystems provide services worth trillions. According to the World Bank, a collapse in ecosystem services such as wild pollination, and provision of food from marine fisheries and timber from native forests could cause annual losses of \$2.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030 if countries fail to invest more in protecting and restoring nature. ³¹ It concluded:

“The economic damages are greater if the global economy is unable to quickly adjust to the loss of ecosystem services.” ³²

Costs and impacts stack up quickly. To feed people, we need pollinators – a whopping 87% of plant species require animal pollination. ³³ In the UK, pollinators alone are worth £603 million a year to farmers. ³⁴ Dung beetles – who play an essential role in recycling nutrients from waste while destroying the gut parasites in that dung, neutralising the threat it would otherwise pose to livestock ³⁵ – are worth £350 million. ³⁶ Another example is peatlands. They provide invaluable support to the quality, quantity and rate of supply of over a quarter of our drinking water, at a value of £888 million. ³⁷ And, if healthy, the UK’s peatlands can sequester more than three million tonnes of carbon dioxide every year ³⁸

– a service worth an estimated £100 billion. ³⁹

Conversely, damaged ecosystems come with an eye-watering price. Soil degradation costs £1.2 billion per year; ⁴⁰ invasive species £1.84 billion. ⁴¹ As Dave Goulson, Professor of Biology at the University of Sussex, notes in his book *Silent Earth*, “Insects are important biocontrol agents. Were it not for predators such as ladybirds, ground beetles, earwigs, wasps and hoverflies, among many others, pest problems on our crops would be much harder to manage and we would be forced to apply more pesticides.” ⁴² The danger, Goulson argues, is that we don’t truly understand many of the vital services that a huge proportion of insect species deliver, or even the vital medicinal cures – from anticoagulation to antihistamines – that they may harbour. Their services go largely unnoticed until they cease to provide them, and humans are forced to find ways to replace them – such as hand-pollinating crops. This already happens – for example in China where fruit is hand pollinated, ⁴³ or in Southern California where growers transport hundreds of honeybee hives to pollinate almonds. ⁴⁴

Prevention is better than cure. Nature can sustain agriculture, hold vast stores of carbon, and reduce the risk of extreme weather events such as flooding and heatwaves. ⁴⁵

“The costs that we are incurring as a result of destruction of biodiversity are significantly higher than what it would cost us to prevent the issues in the first place. And that makes it such an attractive business opportunity for all of us.”

Paul Polman, Business Leader, Campaigner and Former CEO, Unilever ⁴⁶

The need for transformational change

The Dasgupta review concluded:

*“To pursue a sustainable future will require a transformative change in our mode of thinking and acting... the causes of biodiversity loss mean that ushering transformative change requires not only action by governments, but also businesses, intergovernmental organisations and communities.”*⁴⁷

Businesses across the economy, from retail to financial services, increasingly recognise the economic imperative of addressing biodiversity

loss, and the substantial benefits that can result. These include those listed on the following page.

Our current system is contributing to climate change and biodiversity loss, while failing to provide a financially secure future for our farmers.

We must act on the precautionary principle – a core component of Defra’s Environmental Principles. Defra stipulates that where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, we must take measures to prevent environmental degradation, even when there is a lack of scientific certainty.⁵³ But, as discussed later there is plentiful evidence of the benefits of nature-friendly farming practices.



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)



Shelley Abbott

Alignment with consumers who are increasingly pushing for action on nature

“If you are not planning to reduce your impact on this planet, you are already in trouble, because the consumer is not going to accept being fobbed off. They want to understand what lies behind the goods or services they buy.”

Deborah Meaden, Business leader and investor⁴⁸

Ability to help business and society achieve net zero and reduce the greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere

“The trees and the landscape, and the soils and the peatlands, they all soak up carbon... If we lose those habitats, [it] makes the problem a heck of a lot worse.”

Bryony Worthington, Crossbench Member, House of Lords⁵⁰

Reductions in the use of insecticides and pesticides

“We haven’t sprayed an insecticide on this farm for four years. It is possible to have a farming system that balances wildlife alongside food production”

David Barker, farmer⁵²

Opportunity because supporting biodiversity costs less than the losses that result from its destruction

“This is one of the biggest opportunities that we are sitting on this century”

Paul Polman, former CEO, Unilever⁴⁹

Long-term business viability, by operating within environmental constraints

“As climate change gets worse, as nature and biodiversity loss gets worse, those... ecological services ... become sacrificed in a way that we then have to pay for.”

Maria Carvalho, Head of Climate Economics and Data, Natwest Group⁵¹

Strong customer demand for food that's good for nature

Nature-friendly farming provides commercial opportunity. Consumers want products that are the result of practices that address, rather than exacerbate, the biodiversity and climate crises. And they are using their spending power to support them.

RSPB research, undertaken in 2023 demonstrates that, even in a cost-of-living crisis, UK citizens care passionately about the natural world, and regularly use certification to help them make responsible food choices. These findings are in line with other research on UK adults, which indicates people are deeply concerned about biodiversity loss. They seek out and are willing to pay more for sustainable products.



67%
of adults are concerned about UK wildlife decline
RSPB/Ipsos, 2023 ⁵⁴

78%
are concerned about biodiversity loss
RSPB/nfpResearch, March 2023 ⁵⁵

50%
say protecting wildlife habitats should be an environmental priority in the UK
RSPB/Ipsos 2023 ⁵⁷



70%
believe we can now see the effects of climate change in the UK
RSPB/nfpResearch, March 2023 ⁵⁶

Starling perching on shopping trolley

When choosing food and drink to buy:

62% regularly use certification labels
RSPB/Ipsos, 2023 ⁵⁸

60% say eco-labels would influence their choice when eating out-of-home or buying a takeaway
Footprint 2023 ⁵⁹

The research suggests that, for some people, purchasing responsibly produced food may be a way of taking direct action. For example, when making a purchase:

Over half feel more positive about brands that have a food or drink certification that helps to protect UK wildlife and nature
RSPB/Ipsos, 2023 ⁶¹

38% would be willing to pay a premium for products that are part of a scheme that helps to protect UK wildlife and nature
RSPB/Ipsos, 2023 ⁶⁰

Despite this desire, there is confusion about which labels can be trusted to confirm that food is produced in a way that protects and restores nature on farmland.

Labelling as a key lever

Food eco-labelling is identified as an important lever in driving emission reduction and providing agency for citizens by enabling them to make positive choices – in MP Chris Skidmore’s Independent Review of Net Zero,⁶² a look at how the UK could better meet its 2050 net zero commitments.

An Eating Better survey found almost three-quarters of the UK public would like to do more to support farmers that have high animal welfare and environmental standards. 71% said they wanted information displayed on product packaging.⁶³

Around half of UK adults already choose food with environmental sustainability labels.⁶⁴ They understand that biodiversity is a key element of sustainability – and a quarter would pay more for products that protect and support it.⁶⁵ Yet they crave more information: almost half say that a lack of information is the main barrier to them supporting a sustainable lifestyle.⁶⁶

Targeted, credible accreditation

The agriculture sector is broad and complex. This has meant different, and sometimes confusing, certification schemes have evolved to ensure complex key issues – such as fair trade, sustainable fishing and forestry, animal welfare and biodiversity loss – can be tackled meaningfully with appropriate focus and expertise.

Strength in nature

Effective organisations are those that focus on their core capabilities. The RSPB’s strength lies in nature, science and advice, and its brand awareness is linked to the natural world. Delivering certification in the planet-critical area of a biodiversity label enables the charity to provide the market with an urgently needed, rigorous, well designed and well managed scheme. One that is founded in science, and that supports and empowers farmers to take the necessary steps to restore and protect biodiversity. Designed and delivered by the RSPB, Fair to Nature draws on the organisation’s expertise, developed over 120 years of campaigning for and caring for nature.

When adopted widely, the scheme can provide the mechanism to drive meaningful change quickly and at scale, across the industry, protecting biodiversity in farmland before it’s too late.



Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)



Brown Hare

Consumers want trusted information:

49%

regularly choose food products with environmental sustainability labels or certifications

Changing Markets Foundation, 2023⁶⁷

38%

want clearer information on the sustainability of products and services

Deloitte 2023⁶⁸

52%

think a product is sustainable if it supports biodiversity

Deloitte 2023⁶⁹

48%

say a lack of information is the main barrier to them supporting a more sustainable lifestyle

Deloitte 2023⁷⁰

70%

believe manufacturers should be more transparent about what goes into their products

Kantar, 2023⁷¹

Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

“Fair to Nature... stands head and shoulders above all others by having a whole farm assessment done by a trained ecologist who understands what should be present in your area and assessing how well you are doing in ensuring that it does.”

Lesley Prior, RSPB Fair to Nature-certified specialist wool farmer

Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)



An RSPB conservation officer and a farmer discussing wildlife habitats, West Sussex



Colin Wilkinson
(rspb-images.com)

Food and farming businesses view the RSPB as a credible and trusted brand, able to have a positive impact on improving biodiversity and sustainability. They perceive it to be well respected in the public domain, according to in-depth industry research conducted for the RSPB.⁷²

Fair to Nature’s expert, in-person biennial audits are central to the certification’s credibility. These encompass two key elements:

- All members receive a rigorous Fair to Nature Habitat Assessment, from a trained farm conservation advisor, every two years. This advisory process works with farmers to provide detailed, tailored actions to help them update and improve their farm plans to support the delivery of nature-friendly habitats.
- Farms that supply Fair to Nature licensees undergo independent verification audits every two years. Undertaken by external assessors, these occur in the alternative years from the Fair to Nature Habitat Assessment (described above) to ensure supplying farms are audited annually. Assessors check progress against the farm plan and review broader sustainability elements of the Standard.

75%

of UK citizens are aware of the RSPB

RSPB/nfpSynergy, 2023⁷³

70%

trust the RSPB (of those that are aware of the RSPB)

RSPB/nfpSynergy, 2023⁷⁴

94%

of RSPB members would select a Fair to Nature certification product over an equivalent product without certification

RSPB, 2023⁷⁵



Shelley Abbott



rspb-images.com



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

The Solution

The case for nature-friendly farming

It's time for a new narrative.

Currently, 70% of land in the UK is farmed,⁷⁷ and the food system is the predominant cause of biodiversity loss.⁷⁸ Farmers – and the businesses that buy from them – can be a critical part of the solution.

A solution that enables farmers to:

- Produce plentiful food.
- Protect and restore biodiversity
- Run profitable and rewarding businesses
- Help tackle the 10% of UK greenhouse gas emissions for which agriculture is responsible

Ensuring 10% of farmed land provides high-quality habitats – via means such as the RSPB's Fair to Nature certification scheme – provides the solution for farmers to help do this at scale.

Certification also provides an opportunity for food and drink brands to thrive in a marketplace increasingly subject to environmentally conscious consumers.

“The only sustainable way forward for us as a business, indeed I would argue for any business, is to be nature positive. Because without being nature positive, ultimately, you can't be profit positive.”

Sharon White DBE, Chairman, John Lewis Partnership⁷⁹

“Farmers are one of the best tools that the Government has to deliver on food security, biodiversity and climate targets.”

Martin Lines, UK Chair, Nature Friendly Farming Network⁷⁶



Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

Yellowhammer, known as the canary of the countryside, singing whilst perched on bramble bush, Bedfordshire

“The more we put nature at the forefront of what we did, [the more] we realised that the profitability of the farm improved”

Neil Heseltine, beef and sheep farmer ⁸⁰

Patrick Cashman (rspb-images.com)



Dexter cattle grazing new chalk grassland at RSPB Winterbourne Downs, Wiltshire

Farming for the future

Amid a proliferation of labelling in the food system, Fair to Nature is the only certification to focus on restoring and protecting the farmland habitats that are key to addressing the nature and climate crises.

Analysis of data published by Pywell and Heard et al (2015) shows that turning 3% or 8% of lower-yielding land at fields' edges from food production to nature-focused habitat increases the yield in the cropped areas. ⁸² This suggests, say the report's authors, “that over a five-year crop rotation, there would be no adverse impact on overall yield in terms of monetary value or nutritional energy.” The RSPB's work at Hope Farm is a great example of this. They have demonstrated improved yields and farmland bird numbers alongside reductions in key greenhouse gases (Field et al 2015).

Other ground-breaking research – funded by the RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts and the National Trust – shows that shifting farms to less intensive systems can improve economic and environmental outcomes. ⁸³ Intensive systems often increase outputs beyond the limit that nature can sustain. That means additional inputs – such as fertiliser and feed – are required to sustain volumes. For pastoral farms, bringing output back to a level where it can be supported by the naturally available grass increases profits (or reduces losses), because of the savings made in variable costs (such as fertiliser). Reducing overgrazing also has wider environmental benefits, such as enhancing biodiversity.

This evidence from varied farming environments is why, working with the Nature Friendly Farming Network, with partners at Farm Wildlife and with farmers – the Fair to Nature Standard has been expanded to be used across the wider farming sector.

If all UK farms commit to Fair to Nature certification by ensuring 10% of their farmed land supports ecosystems, biodiversity loss should be reversed, and yields and resilience improved. And land will be fit for future generations.

The Nature Friendly Farming Network report Nature Means Business presents the powerful business case for nature-friendly farming. Farmers involved in the research consistently reported a range of benefits, including:

- Increased yields
- Increased resilience
- Increased profitability – with a greater amount of profit coming from the farm itself (rather than agricultural payments, for example)
- More secure long-term financial viability
- Reduced reliance on inputs such as fertiliser and feed, reducing exposure to commodity price volatility
- Improved soil health and productivity
- Improved resilience to variable weather
- Fewer pests, weeds and diseases, and increased natural predators
- Carbon sequestration
- Increased self-sufficiency in feed and straw for livestock
- Improved quality of life, mental health and feelings of fulfilment (as a result of integration with nature and enhancing biodiversity)
- Increased provision of food and habitat for wildlife such as farmland birds
- Noticeably improved wildlife and biodiversity

Delivering policy goals and qualifying for incentives

“Nature-smart policies can reduce the risk of ecosystem collapse and are ‘win-win’ policies in terms of biodiversity and economic outcomes.”

The Economic Case for Nature, The World Bank ⁸⁴

Protecting and restoring nature, to build food supply and financial resilience, are central to the UK and devolved governments plans and strategies for the environment. And while the approaches for each nation – when finalised – may be different, all have indicated support for nature-positive actions and environmental-related payments for farmers, wherever they are located.

The Westminster Government is developing a new set of agricultural policies and spending in England, as the UK moves from the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). A central component is a new set of Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes. The CAP subsidy was based on the amount of land owned or managed, but the new ELM schemes pay farmers and land managers to provide environmental goods and services alongside food production, such as adopting nature-friendly practices and restoring hedgerows.

Plans are still being finalised for Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, but Fair to Nature follows the same principles as many government-backed land stewardship schemes. This means it should help farmers to identify appropriate measures and support them in undertaking the work needed to qualify for those schemes.

“The proposed Environmental Land Management scheme will – if properly implemented – reward those farmers who manage their land sustainably and work to restore biodiversity. But it won’t be enough on its own.”

Henry Dimbleby, National Food Strategy

Funding for nature-friendly farming in England

Farmers in England will receive funding for over 280 different actions that protect nature and improve the environment. ⁸⁵

Within the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP), Defra has set a target to encourage

65-80%

of farmers to adopt nature-friendly practices on at least

10%

of their land by 2030.

Defra has also set targets to create or restore

30,000

miles of hedgerows by 2037 and

45,000

miles of hedgerows by 2050.

In addition, a multimillion-pound Species Survival Fund will protect our rarest species, from hedgehogs to red squirrels.

Take action now

Support Fair to Nature

Founded in science and certified by the RSPB, the Fair to Nature standard is designed to help address the biodiversity crisis.

Fair to Nature farmers ensure at least 10% of their farmed land, including areas difficult to farm productively, provide a range of high-quality wildlife habitats. Habitats such as seed-rich crop areas, hedgerows and wildflower areas have been scientifically proven to reverse wildlife declines.

Farmers also commit to managing their soils and inputs in more sustainable ways. The standard can be implemented in conventional and organic systems and can be applied to all farm types, including livestock, dairy, cereals, mixed cropping and horticulture.

Fair to Nature certification enables brands to demonstrate to clients, consumers, society, shareholders and other stakeholders that they are taking the tangible actions needed to protect and restore nature for today and tomorrow.

“The RSPB really understands biodiversity in our country and is very good at working with farmers to make sure we know what we’ve got and how to look after it.”

Lesley Prior, RSPB Fair to Nature certified specialist wool farmer

What are the impacts?

Farming in a way that is Fair to Nature at RSPB Hope Farm ⁸⁶ has resulted in:



226%
increase in
breeding birds



213%
increase in
farmland
butterflies



2x
floral diversity



19x
more bees than
typical farms



Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)



(rspb-images.com)

What does Fair to Nature certification involve?

Fair to Nature’s rigorous, evidence- and-audit-based certification requires farmers to:

- Ensure a good range of quality wildlife habitats on at least 10% of farmed land
- Conserve priority species and habitats
- Restore soil structure and enhance organic matter
- Minimise the use of inorganic nitrogen and other fertilisers
- Minimise the use of pesticides through progressive integrated pest management
- Adopt the integrated management of livestock parasites
- Minimise the use of water and energy
- Undertake regular carbon audits

What are Fair to Nature’s habitat requirements?

The type and number of habitats required by Fair to Nature to make up the 10% area are based on scientific research and the six key elements advocated by the Farm Wildlife partnership:

- Semi-natural habitats in good ecological order (no minimum percentage but counts towards the 10%)
- Flower-rich habitats (minimum of 4%)
- Seed-rich habitats (minimum of 2%, unless the farm has less than 10% cropped land)
- Wildlife-rich field boundaries and margins (minimum of 1%)
- Wet features (1 per 100 ha, with an average size of 25m2)
- Other in-field habitats (no minimum)

Appendix

- 1 On behalf of the RSPB, Ipsos interviewed a representative quota sample of 1,117 adults aged 16-75 in the UK. Interviews took place on the online Omnibus in October 2023. Data for all adults 16+ interviewed have been weighted to the known offline population proportions for adults aged 16+ in the UK.
- 2 On behalf of the RSPB, Ipsos interviewed a representative quota sample of 1,128 adults aged 16-75 in the UK. Interviews took place on the online Omnibus between 17-20 March 2023. Data for all adults 16+ interviewed have been weighted to the known offline population proportions for adults aged 16+ in the UK.
- 3 Defra (2022) Agriculture in the UK Evidence Pack September 2022. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1106562/AUK_Evidence_Pack_2021_Sept22.pdf
- 4 Helm D. Legacy: How to Build the Sustainable Economy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2023
- 5 The type and number of habitats required by Fair to Nature to make up the 10% area are based on scientific research (e.g. Pywell RF, Heard MS, Woodcock BA, Hinsley S, Ridging L, Nowakowski M, Bullock JM. 2015 Wildlife friendly farming increases crop yield: evidence for ecological intensification. *Proc. R. Soc. B* 282: 20151740. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2015.1740>; Winspear R, Cruickshanks K, Evans P. 2017. Partners in reversing wildlife decline. *British Wildlife* 29.1. <https://www.britishtwildlife.com/article/article-volume-29-number-1-page-34-36/>) and the six key elements advocated by the Farm Wildlife partnership.
- 6 HM Treasury (2021) The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review Abridged version. Available at: (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/957292/Dasgupta_Review_-_Abridged_Version.pdf)
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