

Wild Bird Cover Plot

Specification extract · Pages 61–64

What this document is

This is an extract of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) document “ACRES Co-operation Non-Productive Investments Specification”, Version 2.2, July 2026. It contains the pages covering the Wild Bird Cover Plot action (pages 61–64 of the full specification).

Because the specification runs each action straight into the next, the first and last pages of this extract may also show the end or beginning of a neighbouring action. The section for this action starts on page 61 (the printed page number matches the page number in the full document).

Always check the current version

DAFM updates the specification from time to time. The full document is the authoritative version and should be consulted before undertaking any work. It is available from:

Full specification (PDF, opens at this action):

https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/f8e2ccf8/NPI_specifications_July_2026_2.pdf#page=61

ACRES NPI page on gov.ie:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/f5a48-agri-climate-rural-environment-scheme-acres/#non-productive-investments>

About this action on the ACRES CP website

<https://acresireland.ie/action-projects/npi-wild-bird-cover-plot/>



Source: ACRES West Connaught

Wild Bird Cover Plots

Objective:

To support pollinator species during the summer months, to provide a source of insects for small birds to feed their chicks and to supply cover and feeding opportunities for birds and small rodents during the winter. In turn this provides hunting opportunities for Barn Owl, Hen Harrier and Kestrel.

Background

The absence of tillage from upland areas and from most high nature value farmland reduces the feeding opportunities for many species at critical times of the year. Wild Bird Cover can compensate for this by introducing small areas of high value crops to otherwise largely grazing based agricultural systems.

Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on both CP parcels declared as arable and on Non-CP parcels, therefore not available on any CP Parcel that has a scorecard assigned.
- In Non-CP parcels this action is not available on areas that are SAC/SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs or Annex 1 Grasslands.
- This action is not suitable immediately adjacent to watercourses or drains. If within a Freshwater Pearl Mussel catchment or within a high-status water objective

catchment, use Wild Bird Cover Split Parcel (SP) to ensure a buffer of 12m is maintained between the edge of the wild bird cover plot and any watercourse/drain.

- The location should not be within 50m of houses, schools, or public buildings.
- Wild Bird Cover Plots should not be located within 30m of major roads, such as motorways and busy national or regional roads due to risk of collision of birds with traffic.
- This action is not suitable in areas where established scrub or rocky outcrops are present.

Requirements

1. Establish a Wild Bird Cover Plot by the 30th of June following approval.
2. If the NPI AWP is approved on or before the 15th of May, it is taken that this NPI will be delivered in the approval year, unless withdrawn before the 30th of June or before any notification of inspection. If approval is issued after the 15th of May, this NPI can only be delivered the following year and the same rules of withdrawal apply.
3. To be eligible for this action, the minimum area to be delivered is 0.04 ha. The participant can apply for more than one plot around the farm annually.
4. To be eligible for payment for the NPI action Wild Bird Cover Plot, the participant must declare the parcel where the crop will be located and the associated area, on their Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) application, in the year of establishment.
5. There must be at least a 2-metre uncultivated/unsown zone between the edge of the crop and the field boundary (i.e. a hedgerow, stone wall/bank, or stream/drain). This 2m zone does not have to be additional where a mandatory buffer is in place for applicable watercourses under S.I. No. 113 of 2022 (as amended) and GAEC 4.
6. The NPI Wild Bird Cover Plot can be delivered on a full or split LPIS parcel. Where the action is selected on a split parcel, choose NPI Wild Bird Cover Plot SP. To select on a whole parcel, Create WP and select NPI Wild Bird Cover Plot -WP.
7. The Wild Bird Cover crop must contain:
 - a. At least one or more of these cereals: spring oats/ triticale/wheat/barley
 - b. At least two or more of the following: linseed, oil-seed rape, phacelia, fodder radish, mustard, spring vetch, lucerne, chicory, or birds-foot trefoil.
8. Harvesting of the crop is not permitted and must remain in situ until the 1st of March of the following year.
9. Only certified seed must be used and all receipts/labels for the crops sown must be retained by the participant for the duration of the ACRES contract and for twelve months after the date of submission of any claim for payment.
10. No Plant Protection Products can be applied post sowing. Only the spot treatment of noxious and invasive weeds is allowed. Pre sowing weed control is permitted.
11. Where necessary the Wild Bird Cover plot must be protected from livestock using a fence that is fit for purpose.
12. Only one claim for payment is allowed per approved NPI-Annual Works Plan. This action can only be claimed for payment once crop is established in accordance with NPI Specification.

Additional Guidance

- Triticale is the preferred cereal due to its tolerance of low soil pH, relatively infertile soils and its resistance to lodging. Triticale along with Linseed and at least two other species (Mustard, Forage Radish, Phacelia and Vetch) is the recommended mix for this NPI.
- Preparation of the soil is key. Carry out pre sowing weed control to aid good establishment. Cultivate the soil by ploughing, light cultivation, power harrowing etc. to generate a fine seedbed. Roll the plot/strip after sowing.
- To ensure crop establishment lime and fertiliser is recommended. Fertiliser can be applied up to a maximum of half the fertiliser rate for Nitrogen and Phosphorus on spring oats as described in Statutory Instrument Number 113 of 2022.
- Livestock damage to the crop may result in the crop not being certified as delivered.
- Additional guidance and useful information and courses on Ireland's farmland bird species can be found at [Biodiversity Ireland](https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/).

Table 14. List of prescribed species for Wild Bird Cover

Species	Monoculture seed rate kg/ha
Spring oats	150kgs
Spring triticale	180kgs
Spring wheat	180kgs
Spring barley	160kgs
Linseed	50kgs
Spring Oil-seed rape	6kgs
Phacelia	8kg
Fodder Radish	10kgs
Mustard	15kgs
Spring Vetch	40kgs
Lucerne	25kgs
Chicory	10kgs
Bird's foot Trefoil	12kgs

Note 15: To ensure successful establishment of the Wild Bird Cover crop, the minimum seed rate should be at least one third of the monoculture rate (see **Table 14** above) for each of the chosen prescribed species for a three-way mix. For a four-way mix, the minimum seed rate should be at least one quarter of the monoculture rate for each of the chosen prescribed species. See examples in **Table 15 and 16** below.

Table 15: Example 1 of Wild Bird Cover Plot Mix (kg/ha)

Spring Triticale	50
Linseed	14
Mustard	3.75
Phacelia	2

Table 16: Example 2 of Wild Bird Cover Plot Mix (kg/ha)

Spring Triticale	50
Linseed	14
Forage Radish	4
Vetch	18

Wild Bird Cover Strips

Objective

To support pollinator species during the summer months, to provide a source of insects for small birds to feed their chicks and to supply cover and feeding opportunities for birds and small rodents during the winter. In turn this provides hunting opportunities for Barn Owl, Hen Harrier and Kestrel.

Background

The absence of tillage from upland areas and from most high nature value farmland reduces the feeding opportunities for many species at critical times of the year. Wild Bird Cover Strips can compensate for this by introducing small areas of high value crops to otherwise largely grazing based agricultural systems.

Site Suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action can only be selected on CP fields that have a scorecard submitted and is only available on the following scorecard types: Grassland and Rough Grazing
- This action is not appropriate for fields with a medium or high cover of positive indicators.
- This action is not suitable immediately adjacent to watercourses or drains. A minimum of 6m is required between the edge of the strip and any watercourse. 12m should be maintained between the edge of the wild bird cover strip and any watercourse/drain within a Freshwater Pearl Mussel catchment or within a high-status water objective catchment.
- Wild Bird cover strips cannot be drawn in parallel. Each strip must run along its own boundary.