



Hedgerows and wildflower strips

Stronger crops, healthier soils and more biodiversity

Farming is never just about what happens inside the field. **Healthy crops depend on healthy landscapes.** The edges, margins and boundaries around fields play a key role in protecting soils, supporting pollination and keeping pests under control.

By planting hedgerows and wildflower strips you can turn these spaces into **natural allies**, making your farm more **resilient and productive**, while also giving wildlife the space it needs to thrive.

The cost of fragmented habitats

How habitat loss affects both wildlife and crop productivity

Intensive agriculture

Intensive agriculture simplifies landscapes. Farms grow bigger, fields are larger, boundaries are fewer and natural features such as hedgerows, trees and wildflower strips are disappearing.

Habitat fragmentation

Habitat fragmentation makes it harder for wildlife to move, feed and reproduce. Species become isolated in small patches, pollinators and soil-protecting plants decline, and natural pest control is weakened.

Why does this matter for farming? Because when this living network disappears, **your fields lose their natural allies.** Crops become more vulnerable to erosion, pests, and extreme weather.

The good news? By reintroducing wildlife corridors, such as hedgerows and wildflower strips, farmers can **reconnect the landscape.** This leads to healthier soils, more pollinators and **stronger fields**, while also preserving the biodiversity that keeps the whole landscape alive.



What hedgerows and wildflower strips bring to your farm...

Securing productivity while restoring nature



- Protect crops and stabilise yields:**
 Hedgerows shelter fields from wind and reduce erosion on slopes. Wildflower strips help soils hold water and nutrients.
- Support pollination and pest control:**
 Flower strips attract pollinators and beneficial insects, while hedgerows provide shelter and hunting grounds for birds and bats that feed on pests. Together, they can help reduce reliance on chemicals.
- Reconnect habitats across the landscape:**
 Linking fragmented patches creates continuous routes for wildlife and strengthens the whole ecosystem.
- Aesthetic and cultural value:**
 Hedgerows are part of Europe's farming heritage. They enrich the landscape, increase farm attractiveness, and can enhance community support for farming.





... and how to make them work

Practical steps to fit them into your fields

A study with 471 farmers from 10 European countries showed clear patterns in how they prefer to place hedgerows and flower strips. The goal is simple: **minimise disturbance** to fieldwork while **maximising ecological benefits**. You can do the same in your farm:



Use field edges and low-yield areas:

Place hedgerows or strips where soil quality is poor or where crops grow less anyway. Align plantings lengthwise with tramlines or field edges so they don't interfere with machinery operations.



Follow natural or existing features:

Plant along slopes to control erosion, or beside roads and forests to shield crops and connect habitats. This can help species move and thrive and support your farm's resilience.



Think short- and long-term:

Hedgerows take years to grow but last for decades. Wildflower strips bring quicker benefits and can be renewed after several years. Combining both creates the strongest impact.



Context matters:

The best placement may depend on local farming traditions and conditions. What works in northern Europe may look different in Mediterranean or Eastern regions.

Attitude also counts:

The study shows that farmers' views on biodiversity strongly influenced their choices. Those who saw biodiversity as part of their farm's strength were more willing to adopt placements that connect habitats, even if this meant slightly adjusting their fieldwork.

Working together pays off

Across Europe, policies are starting to recognise **the role of farmers in connecting habitats**. Future schemes within the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) could include extra payments when hedgerows or wildflower strips link up with neighbouring habitats, or when several farmers coordinate their efforts to create larger ecological networks.

This means your investment in biodiversity can bring even greater returns when planned together with others. By joining forces with neighbouring farms, you can not only strengthen wildlife corridors, but also bring wider benefits for soil, crops and the community around you.

