

# ENVIRONMENT

October 2022

## Will ACRES count for you?

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Help biodiversity, water quality and climate mitigation on your farm alongside food production, with possible support from the Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES). The deadline for the submission of applications for tranche one is expected to be mid November. Examples below focus on scenarios for different livestock farming systems. If proceeding with an ACRES application, consider all options including traditional orchard, archaeology, barn owl nestbox, hedge laying/coppicing, low-emission slurry spreading, and rare breeds.

### Extensively managed non-ryegrass grassland

Have you old grassland with little or no ryegrass (<30%)? The next question is whether it is flowery grassland in summer or not. Fields with a high cover and high number of flowering plants will score well on the low-input grassland (LIG) field assessment next summer and could get up to €400



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per hectare. These can be grazed or cut with an additional bonus of €50 per hectare if cut in July or August. There is a limit of 10ha of LIG, but such flowery grassland could also get €200 per ha under the action-based extensive grazing for an additional 10ha (**Table 1**).

Non-ryegrass, non-flowery grassland is ideal for 'Extensive Grazing', but can also be scored under LIG, and while it will not score as well as flowery grassland, it can make €250 per ha provided there are no negative aspects present (**Table 2**).

**Table 1: Extensively managed flowery grassland.**

| Action   | Minimum | Maximum  | Extent | Payment rate       | Payment |
|--|---------|----------|--------|--------------------|---------|
| Low-input grassland (results based)  | 0.25ha  | 10ha     | 10ha   | € 300/ha (score 6) | € 3,000 |
| Extensively grazed pasture   | 0.25ha  | 10ha     | 10ha   | € 200/ha           | € 2,000 |
| Riparian buffer (6m)   | 10m     | No limit | 1,095m | € 2.11/m           | € 2,311 |
| Maximum  |         |          |        |                    | € 7,311 |
| 1. Flowery grassland can suit either LIG or extensive grazing – can get up to €450/ha in LIG.<br>2. Likely to have watercourses on farms with flowery grassland – if not replace grass margins.<br>3. Length of riparian buffer chosen in example to meet maximum of €7,311. |         |          |        |                    |         |

**Table 2: Extensively managed non-flowery grassland.**

| Action   | Minimum | Maximum  | Extent | Payment rate       | Payment |
|--|---------|----------|--------|--------------------|---------|
| Low-input grassland (results based)  | 0.25ha  | 10ha     | 10ha   | € 250/ha (score 4) | € 2,500 |
| Extensively grazed pasture   | 0.25ha  | 10ha     | 10ha   | € 200/ha           | € 2,000 |
| Grass margins (6m wide) – cut after September 1 or grazed in September   | 10m     | No limit | 2,052m | € 1.37/m           | € 2,811 |
| Maximum  |         |          |        |                    | € 7,311 |
| 1. Non-ryegrass, non-flowery grassland can suit either LIG or extensive grazing.<br>2. Length of grass margins chosen in example to meet the maximum of €7,311.<br>3. If watercourses present – replace grass margins with riparian margins. |         |          |        |                    |         |

## Ryegrass

Are you farming more extensively on ryegrass fields? The presence of ryegrass (over 30%) means the LIG and Extensive Grazing are not suitable actions under ACRES. However, you can almost maximise your annual payment of €7,311 with linear margin actions delivering high payments of over €2,000 per hectare for fencing off the least productive land along field boundaries, creating linear habitats to provide space for flowering grasses and herbs and associated bees, bats and butterflies, which are not present in the centre of ryegrass fields (Table 3). While there is a fencing

cost, such margins are likely to be valued into the future. Where there are watercourses, the grass margins should be replaced with higher-paying riparian margins, which give additional benefits to water quality. Where land is available, the option to grow up to 3ha of wild bird food crops at €1,000 per hectare may suit.

On intensively managed farms, hedges and trees are likely actions, which can be placed effectively along wire fences and roadways to provide shelter for livestock, as well as sequester carbon and provide habitat for biodiversity alongside the most productive land (Table 4).

**Table 3: Extensively managed improved grassland (with >30% ryegrass).**

| Action  | Minimum | Maximum | Extent | Payment rate | Payment |
|---|---------|---------|--------|--------------|---------|
| Grass margins (2m) – cut after September 1 or grazed in September         | 10m     | 2,500m  | 2,500m | €1.37/m      | €3,425  |
| Ryegrass seed set   | 10m     | 2,500m  | 2,500m | €1.37/m      | €3,425  |
| Trees   | 10      | 300     | 75     | €6.21/tree   | €466    |
| Maximum   |         |         |        |              | €7,311  |
| 1. If watercourses present – replace grass margins with riparian margins. |         |         |        |              |         |

Table 4: Intensively managed grassland.

| Action  | Minimum | Maximum | Extent | Payment rate | Payment   |
|---|---------|---------|--------|--------------|-----------|
| New hedges  | 10m     | 750m    | 750m   | €5.29/m      | €3,967.50 |
| Tress   | 10      | 300     | 300    | €6.21/tree   | €1,863    |
| Grass margins (2m) – cut after September 1 or grazed in September | 10m     | 2,500m  | 1,000m | €1/m         | €1,000    |
| Ryegrass seed set   | 10m     | 2,500m  | 365    | €1.37m       | €500      |
| Maximum   |         |         |        |              | €7,311    |

1. Grass margins needed to get to tier 2 (minimum 500m of 2m margin at €1/m = €500).  
2. If watercourses present – replace some grass margins with riparian margins.

Please note ACRES may still be subject to change pending the finalisation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Strategic Plan.

## MESSAGE FROM ASSAP

# Protect water quality through ACRES

There are a number of steps landowners can take to protect water quality on their farms:

- riparian margins or zones – any surface water;
- management of intensive grassland next to a watercourse – water (purple) line or single (green) stream on the Generic Land Management System (GLAMS);
- grass margins – along permanent boundaries, including watercourses;
- extensive grazing action – where no natural barrier exists, the watercourse must be fenced at least 1.5m from the top of the bank when

bovines are present (drinking points are not permitted);

- high status water on GLAMS – must undertake one of eight possible actions for tier 1 access;
- vulnerable status on GLAMS – must undertake one of eight possible actions for tier 2a access; and,
- plant 10 trees in riparian buffer zones for tier 2c access.

Follow best practice and put the right action in the right place – ask your ASSAP advisor.