

Cover crop grazing by sheep: successful partnerships between sheep and arable farmers

Problem

Sheep and arable farmers lack insight into each other's work and viewpoint on cover crop. This lack of knowledge can hold back the formation of successful partnerships.

Solution

Facilitating a discussion of key points between potential partners to provide the minimum knowledge about the other's work necessary to ensure a successful partnership.

Outcome

Based on the experience acquired by facilitating partnerships, a list of key and optional terms of agreements that support a successful partnership have been drawn up.

Applicability box

Theme: Barriers and Enablers, Cropping system, Actors, Learning

Geographical coverage: Europe

Application time: Before cover crop sowing

Required time: Around a half day

Period of impact: Partnership duration (from one to several years)

Equipment: Guide on cover crop grazing by sheep (weblinks, picture 2)

Best in: Situations where crop and sheep farmers are interested to cooperate

Practical recommendation

The list of key points established here (Table 1) should be the subject of face-to-face discussions (Picture 1) between sheep and arable farmers. For each key point, the tool provides a choice of two possible solutions to discuss. If these choices do not meet the needs of the partners, the tool proposes that they agree upon an alternative third option. What the partners cannot do, without risking problems later, is not decide on a solution.

Table 1- Table summarising key issues and their proposed solutions

Key issues to discuss	Proposed solutions to resolve the key issues		Alternative option
Which fields should be used each year	Fixed in advance	According to vegetation and pedoclimatic conditions (specify)	Another (specify)
Cover crop seed mixture	Species to include	Species to exclude	Both / Another (specify)
Seed purchase	Arable farmer	Sheep farmer	Share / Another (specify)
Sowing	Arable farmer	Sheep farmer	Share / Another (specify)
Type of cover crop and grazing period	Rapeseed, frost sensitive cover - Summer to Autumn	Frost resistant cover - Winter and Spring	Another (specify)
Herd size	Minimum	Maximum	Another (specify)
Cover crop destruction	Sheep have grazed everything	Sheep have grazed 50% of the cover crop	Another (specify)
Schedule of engagements (from the sheep arrival to leaving)	Defined dates	Flexible dates	Another/by plot
Grazing mode	1 week-rotational grazing	3 weeks-rotational grazing	>3 weeks/Another (specify)
Writing of the legal grazing contract	Sheep farmer	Arable farmer	Another (specify)
Putting up fences	Sheep farmer	Both	Arable farmer/ Another (specify)
Sheep monitoring	Sheep farmer	Arable farmer	Both / Another (specify)
Compensation	By arable farmer	By sheep farmer	No compensation/ Another (specify)
Duration	1 year	1-5 years	Another (specify)

Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 1: Discussion between farmers partners (Photo: Cyril Régibeau, Collège des Producteurs).

Picture 2: Cover of the guide on cover crop grazing by sheep (Réseau Wallon de Développement Rural, Centre wallon de Recherches agronomiques and Collège des Producteurs)

Further information

Video

- Video RWDR (French with English subtitle) - DiverIMPACTS
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljbZPeN9yQE&t=3s>

Weblinks

- Guide on cover crop grazing by sheep- <https://www.reseau-pwdr.be/> - Carnet du Réseau n°9
- Filagri: <https://filagri.be/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/10/Des-couverts-et-des-moutons-WE-02-19.pdf>

About this practice abstract and DiverIMPACTS

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Intercropping, Multiple Cropping, Promoted with Actors and value-Chains towards Sustainability - is to achieve the full potential of diversification of cropping systems for improved productivity, delivery of ecosystem services and resource-efficient and sustainable value chains.

Project website: www.diverimpacts.net

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