



FAQs

Wildlife Friendly Farming in the East

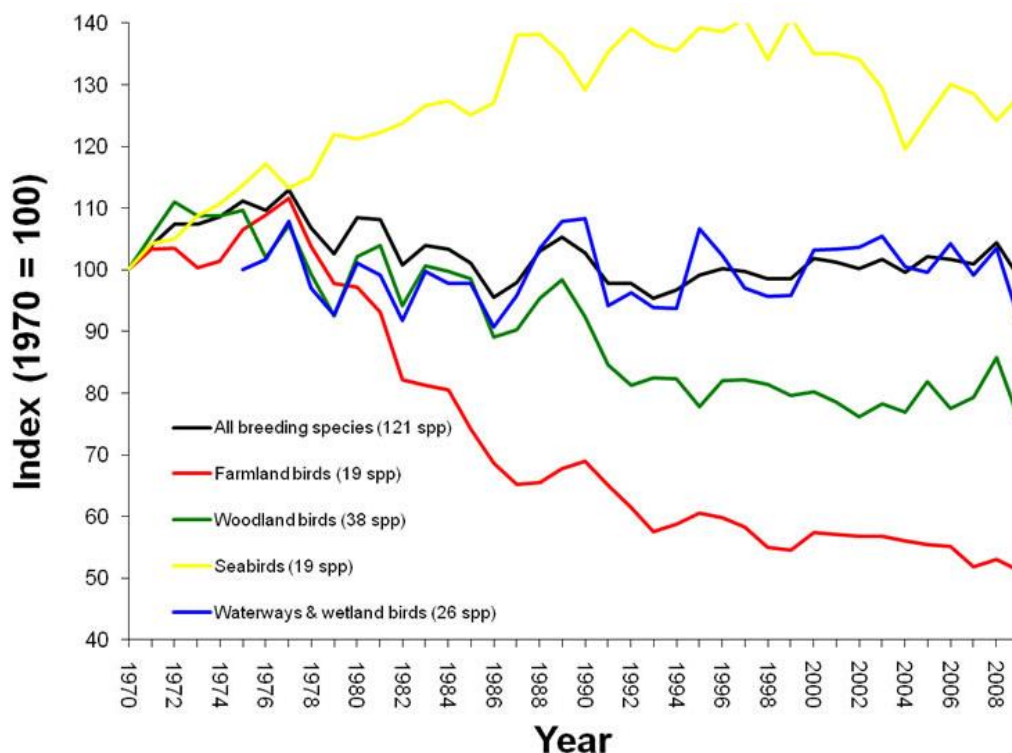
1. Wildlife on Farms in the East

Some of the important species in the farmland ecosystem include: turtledove, skylark, yellowhammer, stone curlew, bees, and wildflower species.



2. Wildlife is in Trouble

As well as being important for widespread but declining species such as the skylark and yellowhammer, agri-environment schemes are essential for less well-known species, including stone-curlew. It is possible that without this funding that species like the turtledove could be lost from our countryside within a decade. It is not only the birds that are in trouble as they are the barometers of the countryside and indication of a broken or functioning ecosystem.



Zoe Liddiard Giles, RSPB in the East Facebook follower:

“It worries me that at 30-something I have only recently knowingly seen: fieldfare; redwing; linnet; yellowhammer, brambling and I have not knowingly seen: siskin; waxwing; serin; redpoll; twite [in my lifetime].”

3. What is the solution?

When agri-environment schemes are deployed well they make a real difference. The RSPB has done just that at its own arable farm where you can see yellowhammers and linnets as a result of using these schemes to help them and other wildlife on the farm whilst still making a tidy farm profit. At Hope Farm the population of farmland birds has risen 200% whilst across England as whole they are now half of their population levels found in the 1970s. The solution is clear we know what to do and how to do it, it doesn't cost that much (comparably) and its now time for the CAP to adequately resource these schemes making sure public money goes to support the provision of public goods not supported by market i.e. more skylarks! Other farmers are showing how this can be done such as those within the Thorney Farmland Bird Friendly Zone.

Jargon Buster:

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

The CAP dates back to the early days of the European Community. It was designed to boost European food production in the face of post-war shortages and increase farm incomes. These short-term aims were achieved through market price support, but an enlarged EU and changing agricultural objectives mean the CAP has had to evolve.

CAP has undergone a number of major and minor reforms since its origins, the last one being the CAP Health Check, which concluded in 2008. Over the years, CAP has moved away from traditional subsidies of the past, like coupled payments and market price support, and moved towards the provision of public goods, particularly environmental ones, with the rural environment playing an increasing role. However, CAP still accounts for over 40% of the entire EU Budget, with over one third spent on Direct Payments alone.

Direct payments to farmers (CAP Pillar 1)

Direct payments to farmers account for around three-quarters of the CAP Budget – that's a lot of money! They are a direct subsidy to farmers, currently allocated to EU Member States based on a mix of historic criteria i.e. how much you produce and area i.e. how many hectares you have. To receive direct payments (75% of the EU CAP expenditure!) you don't really have to do to much apart from 'cross compliance' these are certain measures farmers have to adhere to if in receipt of direct payments in the form of the **Single Farm Payment** in England. These measures are best practice or quite often legal requirements in any case so don't really deliver value for public money.

Rural Development (CAP Pillar 2)

Just under one-quarter of the CAP is spent on rural development measures under three broad categories:

- improving competitiveness
- improving the environment and countryside e.g. through **agri-environment schemes**
- improving quality of life and economic diversification for rural communities.

As farmers manage over 70% of EU land and are intricately linked to the environment, there is real **public benefit** in ensuring farmers manage EU land sustainably. That is why Pillar 2 is so important because it's currently poorly resourced and isn't where you can make any meaningful savings in the budget. In fact it's the one area of the CAP that receives praise for its worth and should have a little more of the wasteful money redirected into it to deliver better value for money.

4. What is happening in Europe?

David Cameron met his European counterparts in Brussels on **22 and 23 November** to discuss the future European budget.

As the CAP makes up over 42% of the EU budget its going to be quite a major item of discussion (the biggest single policy in Europe).

Worryingly there has been a proposal to cut Pillar 2, that important bit that makes farming more resilient (protecting the natural environment that agricultural relies upon) and should ensure our wildlife is protected and enhanced for the future.

The proposal to cut the Pillar 2 by 9.1% follows no logic as it comes at a time when that area of the policy needs to grow whilst others decline and ensures that EU really do meet their own target to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2020 – did they forget about that target?

In the UK over 70% of the UK is farmed and that is why it is of pivotal importance for our wildlife. However these funds don't just effect farmland but also nature reserves and other protected areas so its pretty major stuff when it comes to wildlife.

5. What you can do to help

Step up with wildlife friendly farmers (like Janet, below) and ensure that we don't have a future of silent fields and absent skylarks. Write to your MEP and MP and let them know you want the CAP to reward Wildlife Friendly farming.

Janet Herbert, Cambridgeshire Farmer:

“One can only hope that Mr. Cameron will resist this gross short-sightedness.

Mohandas Gandhi once said, “The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated”. I believe we can extend ‘animals’ to include the whole spectrum of our natural environment. If, as first world countries, we are in such a poor way that we can only consider ourselves, then we are surely on a hiding to nothing, for without biodiversity our future will be a very short one!

Such tremendous progress has been made over recent years, that it would be absolute madness to reduce our payments now. The consequences will, without doubt, have devastating effects on the British countryside.”

Call on David Cameron to get more for our money from the EU budget to invest in our countryside and our future. Fill out the form to send your email (you'll have a chance to personalise your message too). Just visit:

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/steppingup/>

6. What can WE do to help you?

- Practise what we preach – everyone in the office here as signed the e-action.
- Give you updates from our insiders in the EU.
- Answer any questions you may have however big or small.

Questions my Dad would ask

My Dad is a clever fellow and often asks the questions that we should all be asking, even when we don't want to hear them. He either does this to be devil's advocate or just to wind me up – either way I like his thinking.

1. Why should we pay farmers to “do the right thing”?

Providing for wildlife, the wide farmed environment and the protection of soil and water isn't supported solely by any markets currently and to create habitats costs money and time. As these provisions of services for the public cleaner water or more biodiversity are public goods (we all benefit from) then it's right to ask for a public payment to make this integrated into normal farming operations.

Here a wildlife friendly farmer Adam Glover from Norfolk said: “Pillar 2 is not money for nothing, it is a payment that provides real public benefits and enables me to farm with the public interest at heart.”

2. With all the countries struggling in the EU, there is a need for cuts so why should wildlife friendly farming be immune to these cuts? Are they not just a luxury we can not afford to pay for?

Essentially cuts are inevitable to the overall CAP budget but you have to look at where money is allocated currently in the budget, where it is being wasted, where it delivers for the public for its public investment and where it's needed most. Clearly there is a real urgent need for Agri-environment from Pillar 2 and it delivers massive public benefits. Therefore you don't cut the bits that are needed most for the future but you ensure that you analyse where its needed most and make cuts where it isn't and transfer some of the savings back into the areas of agri-environment – simples!

3. If CAP is supposed to work so well then why have we lost so many birds in recent decades?

The CAP in the past has been geared to production not wildlife and environmental protection and that has lead to a radical reduction in our countryside wildlife. However the CAP can also be its saviour but to do that we need well resourced agri-environment schemes across the EU to make a difference. Clearly it can be done and we can with an effective reform of the CAP realise the EU's target to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2020. Let us not forget that the RSPB's Hope Farm looks pretty good with 200% more farmland birds!

4. If I don't get out into the countryside to see this wildlife then why should I bother taking action?

A healthy countryside provides wildlife, helps maintain clean water supplies, stores carbon, and provides access to the natural world for everyone. But farmers don't get paid by the market for providing these services to society.

Even if you sat indoors all day every day (please don't, there's some amazing wildlife to go and see!) the lack of wildlife on farms would effect you, as farmers and society rely upon pollinating and predatory insects, birds, clean water and healthy soil to name a few, none of which get protection or enhancement from the market – so if that was all broken or absent you would end up paying for those services we get currently from the natural world for free and that would be a lot of money on your supermarket shop its far cheaper to protect those resources or “eco-system services” through agri-environment schemes.