

Light fields – low seed densities

Goal

Support of wild herbs in the field
Support of food supply and breeding grounds for field birds

Short description of the measure

Sowing densities shall be reduced to 50–60 % of the conventional densities on at least one plot by one or two working width (5–6 m). Also possible and biologically particularly valuable is a larger implementation of the measure in terms of area. From an implementation width of 20 m or an area-wide implementation of the measure sowing densities may only be reduced to 70–80 % in order to prevent severe yield losses.

To promote growth of wild herbs, the farmer has to consider the following points in addition:

- No harrowing on the target area, as this could destroy the wild herbs on the field and the nests of the field birds
- No catch crop
- Grass herbicides should only be applied before March
- Usages of herbicides for broadleaf weeds should be avoided
- If possible, no N fertilizer application.

Timeframe

(When to start a measure and anticipated time for implementation)

When to start: with the sowing of winter or spring cereal until harvest

How auditors can assess if the measure has been implemented in a good quality?



Pic. 1: Visually noticeable lower crop density in comparison to the rest of the plot



Pic. 2: During vegetation period: presence of wild herbs

Additional information the auditor need for verification (if any)

To verify the success of the measure it is advisable to do the audit during vegetation period of the wild herbs.

Please note: in certain cases no wild herbs will appear on the plots even though the farmer has implemented the measure in good quality. This depends on the low seed potential of wild herbs in the soil and/or in the surrounding. However, that wild herbs will not appear on the plot can only be determined after several years of implementation of the measure.

Effects on biodiversity

(ecosystems, species, soil biodiversity)



Promotion of **light demanding wild herbs** (rare species are more common in winter crops): They have more light and less competition in the part of the area without sowing and can develop better there.



Promotion of the **field birds**: they avoid high growing and dense cultures. For breeding, they need light cereal stands with low height of vegetation. If wild field herbs will settle within the drill gaps then the birds will find food and can build their nests under the herbs.



Through a wider range of flowering plants, more **insects** will be present.



Promotion of **hare**: it likes to eat herbs and finds protection within the drill gaps.

Indicator/key data

- Total size of area (ha) with low seed densities
- Frequency (every year, two years etc.)

References

- www.landwirtschaft-artenvielfalt.de
- www.franz-projekt.de/massnahmen
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Further information: [Knowledge Pool](#)

This Action Fact Sheet belongs to the training package for auditors of standard organisations and companies and was developed within the project LIFE Food & Biodiversity (Biodiversity in Standards and Labels of for the Food Industry). The main objective of the project is to improve the biodiversity performance of standards and sourcing requirements in the food industry by helping standard organisations to integrate efficient biodiversity criteria into their schemes and motivating food processing companies and retailers to include comprehensive biodiversity criteria into their sourcing guidelines.

Editor: LIFE Food & Biodiversity; Lake Constance Foundation

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