

## News from the Farm Advisory Service:



### Stock Talk podcast: Cattle EID with David Kerr

In this episode of Stock Talk, we speak to David Kerr of ScotEID about EID tags and their importance in the future for food traceability and disease control. David explains the technology behind the tags, the difference between tags used for cattle and sheep, and the use of EID readers and performance recording.

To find this episode, scan the QR code below or visit [www.fas.scot/sounds](http://www.fas.scot/sounds)



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## Pollinators and beneficial insects for arable farms

There is a whole ecosystem of insects which are valuable but are seldom fully considered. Providing a variety of habitats for insects can provide a benefit to your crop with potential to reduce pests, reduce pesticide usage and potentially increase yields.



### Pollinators

Pollinators have the ability to help enhance the yield of the crops, particularly in legumes, oilseed rape and vegetables. Enhancing pollinators requires a food supply throughout the year, a suitable nesting site and a suitable place for queens to hibernate. Pollinators range in size from bumblebees down to hoverflies each with different habitat requirements.

### Beneficial Insects

Beneficial insects are likely to be working hard without being noticed, each offering different services. Ladybirds, hoverfly larvae and parasitic wasps attack aphids and leaf beetle in the canopy. Spiders trap falling aphids and flies in the lower canopy whilst ground beetles, rove beetles and wolf spiders patrol the soil surface eating fallen aphids, fly larvae and slug eggs.

### Habitats

Traditionally a beetle bank is established by ploughing into the beetle bank each year allowing for a gradual build-up of soil higher than the crop, providing a semi-permanent drier habitat for biodiversity. A mixture of grasses along with a wildflower component will provide a varied environment. Species could include Cocksfoot, Red Fescue, Common Knapweed and Oxeye Daisy.

Field margins can include a variety of species to provide a diverse habitat. Cutting margins lower than 10cm should be avoided to protect tussocks which provide a valuable habitat.

An annual wildflower mix could include crimson clover, vetch and phacelia to provide food for pollinators before being used as a green manure. Long-term mixes can be used. Shrubs like gorse, blackthorn and hawthorn provide nectar and habitats, as does leaving nettles or thistles along a fence line.

Wild bird seed cover provides seeds for farmland birds during the winter and into spring whilst also providing habitat for ground nesting birds and supporting invertebrates. Providing 3 crops provides a better seed supply throughout the winter.

Hedgerows offer a key overwintering area by providing shelter and buffering temperature extremes. Allowing hedges to grow wider and thicken enhances the habitat and allows for more biodiversity to use the area for survival.

*Tiffany Stephenson, SAC Consulting*

This article is part of June's Crops & Soils Bulletin. To read the full bulletin, please visit: [www.fas.scot/crops-soils/crops-and-soils-bulletin/](http://www.fas.scot/crops-soils/crops-and-soils-bulletin/)



If you'd like to learn more, why not listen to our CropCast episode on Biodiversity on Arable Farms? Find the episode by using the QR code or by visiting [www.fas.scot/sounds](http://www.fas.scot/sounds)

## Free Events

At the Farm Advisory Service we run a range of events both online and in-person. Visit [www.fas.scot/events](http://www.fas.scot/events) to sign up or contact the advice line and we'll help you get booked on.

**Organics in Scotland - Organic Crop Production & Marketing**  
Mains of Thornton, 18th July, 10:45am - 3:30pm

**Ayrshire Women in Agriculture Visit to 'We Hae Meat'**  
Girvan, 23rd July 10:30am - 2:00pm

**Farm Wildlife Walks - Ayrshire**  
Dalmellington, 24th July, 5:00pm - 7:00pm

## Discover the future of food in Scotland: The role of local and short supply chains



Recent global disruptions have spotlighted vulnerabilities in food security, renewing interest in local supply chains. Scotland, like the rest of the UK, imports a significant portion of its food. Nonetheless, Scotland is also leading the charge in sustainable food production and consumption, championing local food and short supply chains through policies like the National Good Food Nation Plan and the Local Food for Everyone strategy. These efforts aim to boost the Scottish economy while promoting a more sustainable future.

Understanding the distinction between 'local' and 'short supply chains' is crucial. While local food focuses on proximity, short supply chains emphasise reducing intermediaries. This means that local food can still involve complex supply routes, whereas short supply chains might include products from afar with fewer stops along the way. Ultimately, sustainable food depends on production and processing methods as much as on locality. Thus, support for local businesses and provenance must be paired with regulations and science for environmental health. Moreover, not all crops are suitable for Scotland's climate, and products marketed as local may not always use local ingredients.

The reasons for engaging with local and short supply chains are numerous, a few being that a multiplicity of supply-side actors can share costs, producers may retain a higher percentage of final product sale, and it may enhance resistance to the large retail sectors' price setting capacity. Some barriers to consider might be that of burdening consumers with higher costs, a lack of supply chain intermediaries in rural areas, and a missing food culture and awareness to support this transition.

*Sterre Vester, SAC Consulting*

This article is part of July's Agribusiness News. To read more, please visit: [www.fas.scot/publication/agribusiness-news-july-2024/](http://www.fas.scot/publication/agribusiness-news-july-2024/)

Scotland's Farm Advisory Service is funded by the Scottish Government. It is delivered by SAC Consulting, part of Scotland's Rural College, and Ricardo Energy and Environment.



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If you need more advice on any topic, the Farm Advisory Service has a range of support and help available:

### Advice line

For free telephone advice on a wide variety of topics including cross compliance, water framework directive requirements, climate change and other technical issues call us on **0300 323 0161** or email [advice@fas.scot](mailto:advice@fas.scot). The advice line operates between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

### Bespoke Advice and Grants

FAS can also help you to increase the profitability and sustainability of your farming business through Scottish Government grants including Integrated Land Management Plans (ILMPs) – worth up to £1,200.

The ILMP will identify opportunities and cost savings for your business, based on an independent and confidential assessment of your business by an experienced farm business adviser of your choosing. As part of your plan you can choose to benefit from up to two further specialist advice plans.

### Online

Our website contains articles, videos and much more at [www.fas.scot](http://www.fas.scot)



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