

10.2 Conservation Cereal

Definition: conservation cereals are cereals on which the use of pesticides is restricted with the aim of allowing a greater range of broad-leaved weeds in the crop. They are established as a whole field or as a field margin.

Aims: to increase the diversity of habitats and species within farming systems. The option is designed to benefit weeds of arable land, many of which have declined over recent decades, invertebrates and farmland birds that feed on invertebrates and weed seeds.

Biodiversity objectives: this option contributes to the NI Biodiversity Action Plan targets for the Irish hare, Chough and Yellowhammer. The NI priority species – Twite, Skylark, Reed bunting, Tree sparrow and Linnet – will also benefit.

Management requirements

- Must not be sited on land used to fulfil set aside requirements.
- Conservation cereal must not be harvested as whole crop silage.
- Conservation cereal must not be undersown with grass and/or grass/legume mixture.
- Herbicides must not be applied to the growing crop, except for:
 - approved wild oat herbicides (but those, such as isoproturon, that also control broad-leaved weeds must not be used);
 - approved herbicides containing amidosulfuron as the sole active ingredient which are permitted for control of cleavers
 - Spray application records must be kept if using these products.
- Application of molluscicides or nematicides is **not** permitted.
- Insecticides must not be applied after 15 March.
- Remove straw after harvest. Burning of straw/stubbles is not permitted.
- Where grown as a margin, the option must be established as a margin, between 6 and 12 metres wide, alongside field edges. The minimum length of conservation cereal margins per field is as follows:

Field size (ha)	Minimum percentage of field perimeter as conservation cereal margins
0-5.99	50%
6-10	67%
More than 10	100%

Further advice

Conservation cereal may be established as a margin of between 6 and 12 metres wide or as the whole field on winter or spring cereals. Whole fields on which the conservation cereal option is used may also qualify for payment through the Retention of Winter Stubble option. Provided the minimum area is maintained this option can move from field to field within the normal arable rotation. Fungicides and plant growth regulators may be applied to the growing crop.

Management plans are provided for
participants in the
**Environmentally Sensitive Areas and
Countryside Management Schemes**

