

SOURCE CONTROL MEASURES

6. CATCH CROPS

Catch crops utilise residual nutrients in the soil following the harvest of a cereal or oilseed crop, thus maintaining soil biology and preventing leaching of soluble nutrients such as nitrate. With their vigorous root systems, these crop species condition and break up the soil, making it more friable for ease of cultivation, while the residual herbage that remains greatly enhances the organic carbon content and structure of the soil. Catch crops generate a large mass of herbage which helps protect the soil from exposure to heavy rainfall during the winter period. This reduces the potential of leaching of nutrients, soil erosion and surface run-off while also increasing water infiltration.

REQUIREMENTS

- Establish a catch crop using non-inversion techniques (ploughing is not allowed) where it will provide a water quality benefit.
- For Option 6A (Other Cropping Systems), the crop should be sown as early as possible, ideally by mid-August but no later than 1st September annually each year. This catch crop must remain in place until 1st January annually.
- For Option 6B (Winter Cropping Systems), the catch crop should be set by the 1st August and remain in place until 30th September.
- The minimum area to be delivered is 0.5 hectares. The maximum area for payment is 40 hectares, cumulative between Measures 6A & 6B.
- Area for payment may be increased based on scientific justification. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis in conjunction with the FFW EIP Project Team.
- When sowing the catch crop, the under sowing or sowing of a grass crop is not permitted.
- The main cereal crop cannot be under sown with catch crop species.
- The seed mixture should consist of at least 2 species. Suggested mixtures in table below:

Brassica Mix (4kgs Mustard & 4 kgs Leafy Turnip)
Non Brassica Mix + Graze (30kgs Forage Rye, 2.75kgs Winter Vetch (hairy) 3.75kgs Spring Vetch)
Best N Capture (less club root risk) (black oats & oilseed radish)
Rotation Friendly (15kg Vetch, 4kg Phacelia)
- After 1 January, light grazing or incorporation is permitted. Participants should ensure grazing only takes place where soil erosion is not considered to be an issue. Intensive strip grazing/zero grazing is not permitted. Grazing of a catch crop in situ requires a 4m buffer (grass/vegetated margin) from the surface water edge (GAP Regulations). Ensure to comply with all GAP regulations when setting Catch/Cover Crops.
- Where a watercourse is present on or adjacent to the parcel, bovines are not permitted to access the watercourse. Where no natural barrier exists, the watercourse must be fenced at least 1.5m from the top of the bank when bovines are present (drinking points are not permitted.) In tillage settings, riparian buffer measures must be fenced off if livestock graze the cover crop at any stage.
- Annual Declaration plus map must be submitted to EIP Project Team outlining the following:
 - Map outlining area sown with Catch Crops under EIP
 - Completed Annual Catch Crop declaration form.
- A farmer participating in the ACRES programme for catch crops (or any other scheme involving catch crop measures) cannot simultaneously overlap Water EIP catch crops on the same land area designated for ACRES during any given programme year. This ensures compliance with programme rules and prevents double funding for the same measure on the same parcel of land.

11. EIP Catch Crops do not qualify for GAEC 7 (crop diversification rule) which is required for BISS payments.

12. All EIP docket should be separate to ACRES.

PAYMENT

- 6A: Other Cropping System: €229/ha/yr.
- 6B: Winter Cropping System: €173/ha/yr.
- The minimum area to be delivered is 0.5 hectares. The maximum area for payment is 40 hectares cumulative between Measures 6A & 6B. Allowances to these limits can be made for research purposes.

VALIDATION

Option 6A: Signed annual declaration submitted by 1st October annually and map clearly showing where the catch/cover crop was planted.

Option 6B: Signed declaration submitted by 1st September annually and map clearly showing where the catch/cover crop was planted.

Proof of seed purchased (showing type of seed purchased plus kgs i.e. seed bag labels including ACRES catch crop seed dockets should be kept for five years in case of inspection.

For more information on Catch Crops:

- <https://www.teagasc.ie/media/website/environment/climate-change/signpost-programme/The-Soil-is-Alive—Willing-to-Help.pdf>
- <https://www.teagasc.ie/media/website/publications/2023/Catch-crops-yield-multiple-benefits-if-you-get-them-in-early.pdf>
- <https://www.teagasc.ie/crops/crops/cover-crops/>



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Speak to your advisor today or check out the Farming for Water website www.farmingforwater.ie for further information. Phone our office on **062 33063** - Office hours 9:00am - 4:30pm.



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