

PRACTICE ABSTRACT

## SHARING EXPERIENCES FROM: UNITED KINGDOM

# Grazing cover crops for Livestock Farmers

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A local network of arable and livestock farmers who had come together through attending the Lothians and Borders monitor farm projects, were keen to examine the challenges and benefits of grazing cover crops for both the arable farmer and livestock farmer. The benefits of cover crop grazing for the livestock farmer include having a source of nutritious feed that is free from internal parasites and therefore ideal for young stock, and that is available during the leaner winter months. Collaborating with arable farms to graze cover crops is novel for most livestock farmers and three different trials generated some key lessons learnt for the livestock farmer.

When engaging with an arable farmer:

**1. Pre-inspection** - Potential grazing fields should be inspected prior a grazing agreement, particularly for the standard of fencing, water availability and crop yield/biomass. An assessment should be made as to whether the cost/benefit to the grazier is sufficient to pay a rental. i.e. if there are no fences and no water then the costs are likely to be too onerous, similarly if there is insufficient biomass then there will not be enough gain to make the activity worthwhile.

**2. Species Mixture and Palatability** – there are many cover crop mixtures that are chosen particularly for their potential benefit to the arable crop, e.g. soil structure, rather than grazing benefit. For example, phacelia is often used for its rooting benefit, but although it has a potential high nutritional content it is unpalatable to sheep due to its strong taste and spiny stems.





## ABOUT MIXED IN UK

In United Kingdom the MIXED project is implemented by SRUC, Aberystwyth University, SAC Consulting and SAOS in collaboration with two groups of farmers practicing Mixed Farming and Agroforestry Systems (MIFAS) in Scotland.

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

**MIXED** (Multi-actor and transdisciplinary development of efficient and resilient MIXED farming and agroforestry systems), an EU-project, is supporting the development of European Mixed Farming and Agroforestry Systems (MiFAS) that are more efficient and resilient to climate changes.

<b>7M€</b> BUDGET	<b>19</b> PARTNERS	<b>10</b> COUNTRIES
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Agriculture in Scotland includes both specialized and mixed farming. Traditionally mixed systems include cereals, beef and sheep. In the most productive cropping areas very few farmers have livestock anymore. East-West Cattle Grazing Project – a network of farmers trialing the out wintering of breeding cattle, that aims to evidence the financial and environmental value of moving breeding cattle to lower cost natural resources.



## MIXED partners from United Kingdom:

