

Trees on farms - what are the benefits?

With over 30,000 miles of hedges in the county, the network of hedgerows provide a living link with our past and habitats for the counties wildlife. They also deliver tangible benefits to your farm, helping save money and increase productivity



Image courtesy of PTES

Soils: Being deep rooted, trees aerate soils and increase water infiltration, helping to decrease run-off and soil erosion. Trees help increase organic matter, recycle nutrients and can help increase livestock live weight gains by 10–20% introduces organic matter which improves soil structure and its water holding capacity.

*Further info: **Protect your soil & improve its productivity** Agricultural & Horticultural Development Board*

Water quality: Planted as buffer strips alongside waterways or cross-field planting, trees intercept run-off, limit erosion and reduce pesticide drift. Bringing benefits to water quality, helping ensure your farm is compliant with regulations (Farming Rules for Water & Cross Compliance rules) now and in the future.

*Guide: **Soils and natural flood management , Devon & Cornwall** West Country Rivers Trust*

Forage: Hedges or in-field trees can be a valuable source of forage for stock, containing key minerals and protein for improved animal health. Keeping stock healthier and supplement costs down.

*Link to further info: **Could trees supplement forage?** Soil Association*

Fuel and biomass: Hedges can be planted with tree species suitable for woodfuel for home use, or woodchip or boilers, composting and soil enhancement.

*Link to online guide : **Harvesting woodfuel from hedges** The Organic Research Centre*

Pest control and pollination: Trees and flowering hedgerow species attract beneficial pollinating insects, helping to increase yields in-field. Many insects which breed, overwinter or feed in hedges or grassy strips can also act as natural pest control on-farm, feeding on prevalent crop pests.

*Link to online guide: **Managing hedges to benefit pollinators** CFE Online*

Shelter: of crops or stock from winds or exposure to sun. With climate change likely to bring more extreme weather events, this may become a more pressing concern into the future.

Case study: Tree shelter for livestock -the benefits for sheep and beef farming - Woodland Trust

Screening: Plan tree or hedge planting around farm use to provide a natural screen for farm enterprises: for example planting around farm buildings can screen noise and filter ammonia pollution from manure or slurry stores, a hedge can provide a useful practical boundary against public rights of way.

Wildlife: Hedges and trees on farm provide wildlife corridors for a wide range of native species: by enhancing and linking these up you will be helping to support local wildlife.

Carbon: Tree stock on farms can bring opportunities for carbon budgeting under current and future schemes, offsetting farm business activities and helping farms become carbon neutral.

Further Guidance: Increasing the value of hedges for wildlife with relaxed cutting regimes

Centre for Ecology & Hydrology

Payments for public good: We can expect many of these benefits will be rewarded via the new Environmental Land Management scheme, due to be launched in 2024. The scheme will provide payments for sustainable farming practises, and practices that encourage nature recovery on local and landscape scales. Although details of the new scheme are currently being trialled, trees and hedgerows have a large part to play towards these aims: for carbon, soils, water and wildlife.

Link to further info: Environmental Land Management scheme: overview gov.uk



Image courtesy of PTES 'Healthy hedgerows'. For more information on hedgerow structure and related management visit the [Peoples Trust for Endangered Species](https://www.peoples-trust.org.uk/) website.