

Skylark plots

Goal

Support of food sources and breeding habitat for skylarks

Target group

Farmers who grow any kind of arable crops, such as cereal, corn and canola. Most effective on sites with the cultivation of winter crops.

Description of the measure

Skylarks are ground-nesting birds. Ideal nesting sites are distinguished by sparse and low vegetation (vegetation height of 15–25 cm and 20–50 % vegetation cover). A successful measure to protect skylarks is a so called skylark plots, which can be applied in different manners:

Plots between the arable crops:

1. Strip-shaped gap:
 - Per hectare 2 x 40 m or 3 x 25 m strips.
2. Patch-shaped gap:
 - The plots should have a minimum size of 20 m².
 - 2–3 plots per hectare.

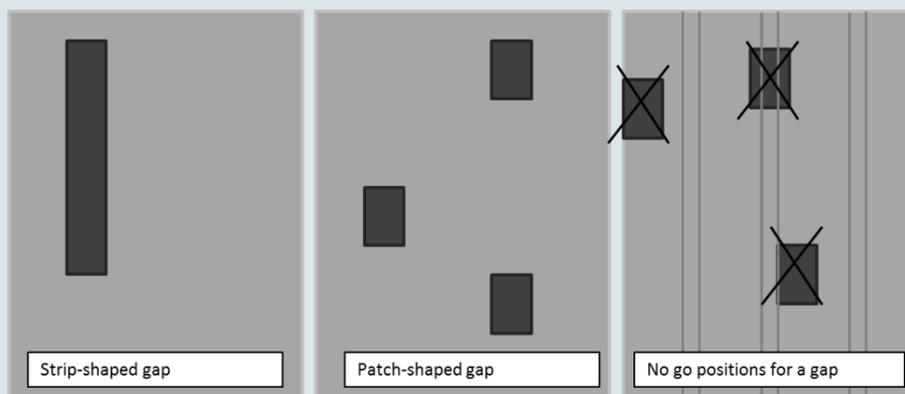
The plots are set up by lifting of the seed drill machines in that target area. Spontaneous vegetation should be promoted.

Skylarks avoid vertical structures. Plots may therefore be placed in a distance of at least 50m to higher bushes/trees, power lines or buildings.

Furthermore, it is important that plots are not situated close (> 25m) to field margins or in farm lanes to avoid predators and disturbance.

Further attention should be paid to:

- No harrowing which could destroy nesting sides and wild flora.
- No catch crop in the gaps.
- Grass herbicides should only be applied until 31th March.
- Usages of herbicides for broadleaf weeds should be avoided.
- If possible, do not apply N fertilizer.



Schematic illustration adapted from a illustration of IP Suisse

(Source: www.ipsuisse.ch/CMS/ModanFileHandler.axd?DateiGUID=16668391-cb00-443f-b81f-cfef5af3efc6)

Suitable sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Medium to good soils with relatively dense seeded rows ▪ Winter crops
How a good implementation looks like	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More than one plot per hectare ▪ Minimum size of the gap 20m² ▪ Area must not be sown in, however, wild vegetation cover should be present ▪ Not situated near by or in driving lanes
Effects on biodiversity (ecosystems, species, soil biodiversity)	 <p>Support of skylark populations</p>
	 <p>Promotion of wild herbs with high light requirements in case nothing is sown in</p>
Other positive effects/benefit for the farmer	An effective measure with very low costs. Apart from the skylark plots, arable land can be managed in the usual manner, no additional adjustments are needed.
Indicator/key data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of skylark plots
Risk and further recommendations	<p>Problem weeds such as corn thistle (<i>Cirsium arvense</i>), bearbind (<i>Convolvulus spec.</i>) and dock (<i>Rumex spec.</i>) may be combated locally with a backpack sprayer or by hand.</p> <p>Skylarks use field margins or late mown flowering strips for foraging and nesting sites as well. Furthermore, the application of flowering- or cyclic fallows may improve the habitat for these birds. It improves the conditions for flora and fauna likewise and supports many beneficial animals.</p>
Timeframe (When to start a measure and anticipated time for implementation)	Depending on the crop, it starts with the corresponding sowing period (November for winter crops, February/March for summer crops (refers to temperate regions)) and may be managed until harvest of the crop.
Additional special resources/equipment/skills needed	None

References

- Maßnahmen der IP-SUISSE zur Förderung der Artenvielfalt im Ackerbau, 2011, www.ipsuisse.ch
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- Vögel der Agrarlandschaft, NABU 2004
- Stiftung Rheinische Kulturlandschaft, DBU: Abschlussbericht Maßnahmen- und Artensteckbriefe zur Förderung der Vielfalt typischer Arten und Lebensräume der Agrarlandschaften, 2018

Further information: [Knowledge Pool](#)

This Action Fact Sheet belongs to the training package for advisors of standard organisations and companies and was developed within the project LIFE Food & Biodiversity (Biodiversity in Standards and Labels of for the Food Industry). The main objective of the project is to improve the biodiversity performance of standards and sourcing requirements in the food industry by helping standard organisations to integrate efficient biodiversity criteria into their schemes and motivating food processing companies and retailers to include comprehensive biodiversity criteria into their sourcing guidelines.

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