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## Cover cropping – the way forward in your field this year

Establishing a cover crop this year could be one answer to the difficult weather conditions that last autumn and winter brought...along with the slugs and pigeons. The majority of oil seed rape crops have got patches that have failed and there remains land in the catchment still waiting to be drilled.

Whilst there is time yet for getting a crop in the ground, there are areas or fields, which may well be left fallow this year – it is these areas, where considering a cover crop could be worthwhile and will pay dividends when starting with your next crop in the autumn.

“Cover crops used as part of an integrated rotation to **increase organic matter will also improve soil water management, improve soil biology and in turn increase fertiliser efficiency**. Using one this spring in very wet areas will be essential for improving soil structure and getting rid of some water”, says Nick Green, agronomist, at Harlow Agricultural Merchants (HAM).

“A cost effective mixture, which would both help to drain soils and take up water from waterlogged areas, would be to use a calculated mixture of mustard and phacelia. For more challenging sites that are extremely wet the mustard should be substituted for fodder radish as it has a better rooting system”, says Nick. “The easiest way to establish these mixtures would be to broadcast (unless adding a legume component as these will need to be drilled)”. Where herbicides have been applied to failed rape crops, the growth of some cover crops may be limited and advice should be sought on the best crop to grow in this instance.

Cover crops also reduce surface run-off from fields left fallow and ensure that essential soil and nutrients are retained on your land. Furthermore, some cover crops can help weed control and add nitrogen. For more information or further details about which mixtures to use, please contact Teresa on the numbers above or Nick Green, HAM, on 07798 701064.



Fodder radish and phacelia mix



Phacelia



Fodder Radish

## Capital Grant Scheme 2013/14 – Application Deadline 30<sup>th</sup> April 2013

The application deadline for this year's Capital Grant Scheme is fast approaching. This provides a 50% grant, up to a maximum of £10,000 for a variety of items to improve water quality in our catchment. The items include:

- Watercourse fencing
- Hard bases for livestock drinkers and feeders
- Sediment ponds and traps
- Yard works for clean and dirty water separation
- Resurfacing of gateways
- Rainwater storage tanks
- Livestock and machinery tracks and associated livestock fencing
- Pesticide handling, roofing, biobed and biofilter options
- Roofing of manure storage and livestock gathering areas
- Roofs for slurry and silage stores including self feed silage stores

There is £15.5 million of funding available nationally this year and if your application is successful, work will need to be completed by the end of February 2014.

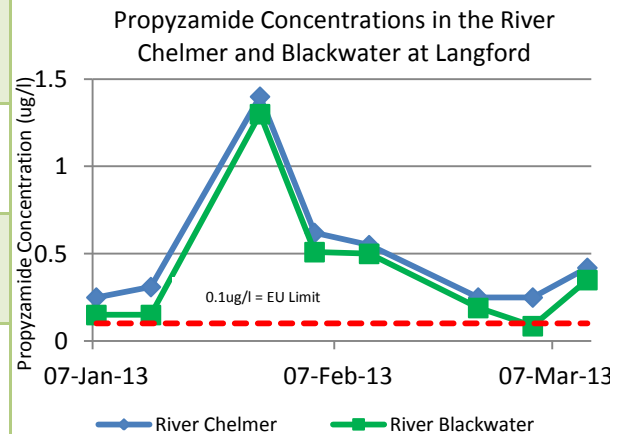
Order your application pack from the grant scheme team in Nottingham, by phoning 0300 060 1111 or give Teresa, your Catchment Advisor, a ring for advice and guidance on filling out the form to best effect.

**Application deadline: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2013**



## What has been found in the rivers of the catchment since January?

Active Ingredient	Product Examples	Location
<b>Clopyralid</b>	Shield	River Chelmer, Pant, Blackwater and Roxwell Brook at 5-6 times the limit in March 2013
<b>Carbetamide</b>	Crawler	River Chelmer (4.6µg/l = 46 times the EU limit recorded on 12 March 2013), Wid, Pant and Brain
<b>Propyzamide</b>	Kerb	Concentrations have been high across the catchment, in line with the application period – see graph.
<b>Metaldehyde</b>	Allure, Gusto, Trigger etc	Metaldehyde levels have remained elevated in the rivers across the catchment during this period – please take good care to keep the product out of watercourses with spring applications.



With fertiliser and sprays being applied again now in earnest – have you noticed the odd prill in the headland or where the spray has drifted into your margin? Would you like your fertiliser spreader or sprayer calibrated to make sure that your **crop is getting the maximum benefit and your business margins** are being looked after rather than your environmental margins? Perhaps it would be a good time to find, brush down and make use of your **calibration trays** or give Teresa a ring to arrange a free visit at a time to suit you, for a calibration through the Partnership.

### Upcoming Events in the Catchment

#### Essex Young Farmers Show – Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> May

The Chelmer and Blackwater catchment will have a stand at the Young Farmers Show – do come along for a refreshment and catch up with Teresa Meadows on the day.

#### Summer Soils Event – June

We will be holding an event in June with practical advice on the best way to get your soils back into condition after harvest following this difficult season – keep your eye out for an invite in the post.

### Free One-to-One On-Farm Visits Available

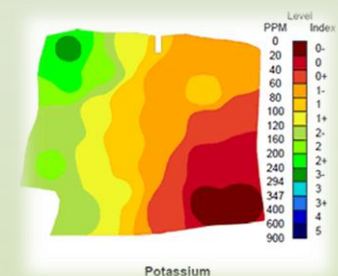
- Pesticide Handling Area - including design and drawings
- Nutrient Management Plan – preparation or review
- NVZ Compliance Check
- Soil Protection Review Check
- Slug Pellet Applicator Calibration
- Fertiliser Spreader Calibration
- Sprayer Calibration

To book any of these visits, please call Teresa Meadows on 01268 664403 or e-mail [teresa.meadows@nwl.co.uk](mailto:teresa.meadows@nwl.co.uk).

### Soil Mapping Opportunity

Have you thought about trialling precision soil mapping on your farm? Are you interested in levelling out your soil indices or seeing where the differences are across your fields?

We are offering the opportunity to have 20ha of your farm mapped, sampled and recommendations provided for the next four years...for FREE. This could be the right time to trial this method for your farm business and save £440 in the process.



To sign up or for more information, please contact Teresa on 07792 169545 or Mike Neale on 07771 504879.

Look out for the next catchment newsletter: Summer 2013

The Chelmer and Blackwater Catchment Partnership is supported by:

