

# Agricultural field margin projects



Agricultural field margin with wild herbs. © Jan Freese/ pixelio.de

## Involved sectors

Agriculture, Tourism and leisure, Nature protection

## Affected habitats

Arable land

## Description

Agricultural field margins are managed strips, a few metres wide, along agricultural fields. They are cultivated without the use of pesticides so that wild herbs and the fauna adapted to them are able to disperse and survive. In some cases, the strips are sown with a mixture of flowering plants (“blossoming belts”) or planted with shrubs and trees. The agricultural field margins not only provide a habitat for rare species of plant and contribute to the protection of soils and water resources; they also constitute important linear transit routes and form buffer zones between various forms of use.

## Impact

### Impact in particular on

Small mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians, Birds, Insects

### Ecological impact

Improvement or preservation of habitats

They form buffer zones between various forms of use, especially along well-used field paths and adjacent to ecologically valuable biotopes, and provide habitats for rare species.

Element of ecological network

Along fields and paths, the field margins form a network of linear connecting elements. Inclusion of these areas in local plans increases this impact significantly.

Other	On soils at risk of erosion or on cropland near waterways, positive impacts can be achieved in terms of soil and water protection and lowering of flood peaks.
<b>Time of realisation for measure</b>	Months: Field margins provide habitats all year round. Their main role, however, occurs after the cultivation of the fields in the vegetation period, when the wild herbs on the agricultural fields have achieved full growth.
<b>Impact scope</b>	Very localised (plot): The development of a local plan for the creation of agricultural field margins can greatly increase the impact of the measure by integrating individual sites into a broader network.

## Implementation

<b>Implementation period</b>	Days: The management and development of field margins can be well-integrated into routine land management. It is important to select site-appropriate species and to use indigenous seeds and plants of local origin.
<b>Frequency</b>	Non-recurring, Recurring: Long-term programmes are desirable, but an individual measure can be effective as well.

## Economic and legal aspects

<b>Costs</b>	Very low (less than 1'000 EUR): The subsidy rates are established regionally. They mainly cover the loss of revenue resulting from set-aside and possible costs of seeding.
<b>Socio-economic impacts</b>	Medium: With their net-like structure in cleared agricultural landscapes, they create an appealing and diverse landscape appearance with increased recreational value.
<b>Sources of financing</b>	Public: local, Public: regional, Public: national, Public: European
<b>Legal situation</b>	Agricultural field margin projects exist in numerous regions. Regional or local guidelines specify the funding rates, application process, conditions for participation, contract period, monitoring procedures, sanctions etc.

## Further information

<b>Evaluation</b>	Implementation of the projects often fails due to excessive red tape. In many regions, however, these projects are being implemented very successfully, also as part of biotope networking initiatives, and adding value to tourism.
<b>Information</b>	Germany: Further information can be obtained from regional agencies (nature conservation and agriculture), e.g. in Baden-Württemberg (Germany).