



How to start FAB monitoring on your farm

FAB (functional agro-biodiversity) measures can support benefits for the whole farm system. Collecting some simple information will help you to understand how FAB measures are performing on your farm. Below are a few tips and links on how to plan change and track impact.

Mapping and Planning



Have you mapped your farm? A simple map that identifies habitats can be a good starting point. You can use this to plan where to best place FAB measures. Even just 3% of land managed for wildlife can deliver impact. Things to consider:

- How much variety of habitats - cropped and uncropped (semi-natural) - is on your farm?
- How connected are the semi-natural habitats on your farm (i.e. do hedgerows run uninterrupted between them)?

Managing
just
3%
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deliver impact

If you don't already have a digital map you could try using a tool like [LandApp](#) or [Field Margin](#), or just use a paper map.

The E-Tools developed by UKCEH can help planning and monitoring. The [E-Planner](#) helps farmers to plan where to put environmental interventions on their farm, [E-Surveyor](#) helps farmers to monitor the quality of the habitats they create, and [E-Viewer](#) allows farmers and other stakeholders to explore what future farming landscapes might look like.



Soils



Compaction & Erosion: Simply look at your field, especially in key areas like tracks, gates and feeding areas; are there any signs of erosion or damage?

Soil Structure: [A Visual Evaluation of Soil Structure \(VESS\)](#) can help you understand soil structural condition simply by visually inspecting a spadeful of soil.

Soil life: A [Worm Count](#) in a spade of soil is a great simple test of soil health.

Soil Health: Soil organic matter and pH are great indicators for tracking healthy soil. Soil labs can be used to provide such measures. Sample a field at least once every three years to track change. A good sampling method takes ~25 samples based on [walking a W](#) across a field. Bulk the sample into a fully labelled bag (date, field, sampler name) to send to a laboratory. Keep a record of how it is changing. Try this new [benchmarking tool](#) to set context for your measurements.

More soil information, including tools for farmers is available from the [UK Soil Observatory](#).

Biodiversity



Hedges: Try using the [PTES Great British Hedgerow Survey Guidelines](#) to keep track of the condition of your hedges.

Birds: Join in with a [BTO bird survey](#) or invite a [local bird group](#) to help monitor birds on your land.

Butterflies and pollinators: On a warm day, you could follow the [UKBMS monitoring protocols](#). Alternatively, use the [iRecord Butterflies](#) app.

Plants: Adopt a monitoring scheme like the [National Plant Monitoring Scheme](#) that returns to the same location each year to measure change in

a small 1m² area. Apps such as [PlantNet](#) and [Flora Incognita](#) can help you to identify species.

How to record & report: When monitoring change, the key is to be consistent and keep records clear. Sampling at similar times each year (particularly in relation to management practices and, as far as possible, the weather), using the same approaches is important. Consider using a digital recording system like [iRecord](#) or SoilMentor to help you assess how well you are managing your land for soil health and biodiversity.

Developed by David Robinson, Alan Radbourne & Lisa Norton (UKCEH) for the EU Interreg FAB Farmers Project

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