

THE SUSTAINABLE REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE SCHEME (SRAS)



“A framework for sustainable, productive ,regenerative farming written in the full knowledge that it is possible to increase food production while protecting the environment, enhancing animal welfare and increasing biodiversity and wildlife numbers. With the overall aim of improving the nutritious content of the food we eat to become more self-sufficient as a food producing nation.”

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on behalf of

BYAG

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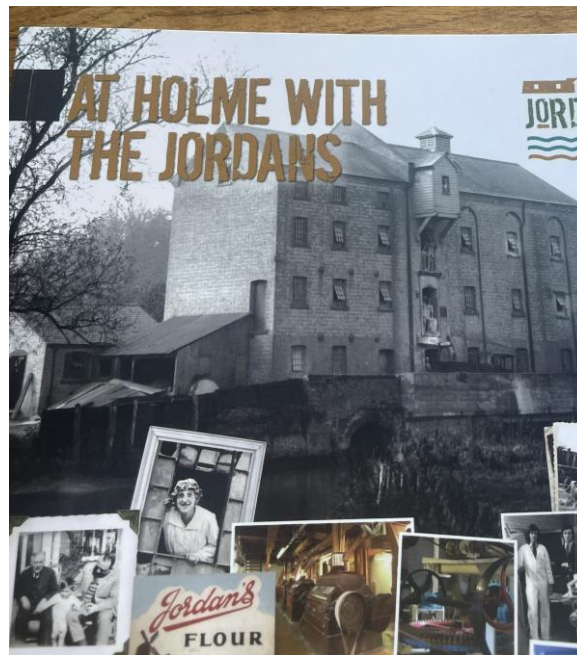
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The Inspiration

With acknowledgement to Bill Jordan whose foresight and dedication with his Conservation Grade Scheme launched in the last century at the advent of farm assurance laid the foundations for regenerative farming as we know it today. A true pioneer who was well ahead of his time and remains the inspiration behind this standard.

We also recognise the drive and foresight of the owners of The Green Farm Collective who recognised earlier than most the need to rethink the way we farm if we are to meet the increasing demand for food and match consumer expectation and break yield plateaux in arable production.



Conservation Grade was not only one of the first regenerative farming schemes it was also wonderful marketing for the Jordan's brand.

Background

The Sustainable Regenerative Agriculture Scheme (SRAS) has been written in the belief that, in truth that while productivity in livestock and horticulture enterprises has vastly improved in recent years, yields in the arable sector of farming have plateaued and have remained largely stagnant for over 40 years.

At the same time costs of production have risen sharply and disproportionately and the only savings in this key sector have come through economies of scale which has increased productivity through larger equipment, better technology and reduced labour costs. The inconvenient truth, in reality, is that many cereal yields are no better than in the 1980's.

In the same period there is increased independent evidence of the decline in habitat, biodiversity and pollinators which has in turn resulted in a fall in wildlife numbers and species in many areas. Coupled with this is the decline in soil health which has exacerbated the situation and contributed to the flatlining yields which is in stark contrast to milk yields and livestock growth rates which in comparison over the same period have outperformed their arable counterparts.

Therefore, as support mechanisms change, there is a recognised need to rethink the way in which we farm, which can lead to not only an increase in production but also a corresponding increase in biodiversity and wildlife if certain practices are adopted.

The scheme is based on not only producing safe wholesome food as now demanded even more by today's discerning consumer but also meets expectations with regard to increasing production, the environment and welfare standards as well as the all-important concept of improved taste, nutrient content and improved quality of the food we eat from naturally healthy crops and livestock.

Ultimately, we believe output on farms can increase at the same time and at comparable levels as biodiversity and wildlife, allowing us as a nation to feed more people with more nutritious food.



Bill Jordan and the Jordan's family were well ahead of the game when they launched Conservation Grade



The Long Term Vision -Sustainable Regenerative Agriculture to feed the nation and increase exports.

Mission Statement

"Using our collective knowledge, experience and expertise to create a Sustainable Regenerative Agriculture Scheme (SRAS) which can help shape and change the future of farming and food production. Our goal is to increase the availability of regional food sources while increasing biodiversity, improving soil health to boost wildlife species and numbers, and increasing livestock welfare standards through sustainable mixed farming for the benefit of the next generation and the population as a whole.

Our aim is not only to increase output of safe wholesome, nutritious, healthy food but at the same time providing us with quality, sustainable but affordable, tasty, local, high in animal welfare, nutrient dense produce to give us greater food security and better health to us as a nation".

Measuring and Scoring

The SRAS is risk scored to give a compliance-based transparency and measured according to success for each question (1 – 10) and section, with every farm and farm business given an overall grade (Bronze, Silver and Gold) as to the level achieved.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is used in the creation of the annual report for each member to get to the final score, which will measure the improvement, short comings, barometers of success and gains on that business and farm.

Independent audits and scientific measurements will also be required to monitor progress or declines in key areas such as species and biodiversity counts, organic matter and soil activity.

The SRAS also recognises achievement with an earned recognition scheme, reducing the need for inspections, and rewards farmers for improvement. Awards and certificates will be given annually to the best and biggest improvers in the SRAS, whilst the weaker areas will be targeted in future inspections or unannounced spot audits.

The scheme owners recognise that it is easier and more viable for landowner farmers to meet the standard. However, the scheme is also targeted at those who share farm, rent or have Farm Business Tenancies and that will require landowners and agents to recognise the demands and benefits of The Scheme and accept the need for longer agreements and tenures to encourage the farmers to buy into the scheme. Longer partnerships can incorporate the key standards into agreements with the potential for a win:win for both landowner and farmer.

To be in the SRAS, the farm must be a member of the appropriate scheme such as Red Tractor Assurance Scheme , FAWL (Farm Assured Welsh Livestock), SQC (Scottish Quality Cereals), QMS (Quality Meat Scotland) and Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Quality Assurance in all the enterprises on the farm. Suspension from these schemes as identified on the membership checkers will also result in automatic suspension from the SRAS and will need a spot check to be re-admitted.

Membership of other high tier assurance schemes, such as LEAF, Waitrose, M&S, Morrisons, PepsiCo, Arla Garden, The Green Farm Collective, Pasture For Life and RSPCA Assured, will also be recognised and will contribute to the final grade to give earned recognition.

An annual report for the farm business will be prepared using the findings of the inspection will be produced using AI to grade score all members. Each member will be awarded a score on the door and overall grade achieved and awarded a farm gate/driveway plaque to recognise achievement marked pass, good and outstanding.

Member Benefits

The SRAS is designed to help open other income streams to accredited farms. These will come from:

- Access to more markets unlocked by scheme accreditation and resultant buyer recognition.
- Regenerative Premiums paid for by buyers for the accredited certified regenerative produce.

Carbon measurement is a requirement of the scheme, undertaken through a recognised and accredited framework. Verified increases in soil organic carbon, biomass, or emissions reductions can be converted into carbon credits, each representing one tonne of CO₂ removed or avoided. Credits can then be traded annually, creating a recurring income opportunity for farms that improve soil health and adopt low-emission practices. This approach rewards members for measurable environmental improvements and aligns with the UK's net zero objectives.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) provides an opportunity for farmers and land managers to receive annual payments for creating or enhancing habitats that deliver measurable biodiversity improvements. Under the Environment Act 2021, developers must achieve at least a 10% net gain and can meet this requirement by purchasing biodiversity units from accredited landowners. Payments are typically made over multi-year agreements (up to 30 years) and verified using the Defra Biodiversity Metric. This enables SRAS members to benefit financially from habitat creation, restoration, and long-term management, while contributing to wider environmental targets. SRAS members will be in pole position for such payments.

Nutrient credits provide a financial mechanism for farmers and land managers to be rewarded for actions that reduce nutrient pollution entering rivers and catchments. Developers in areas affected by nutrient neutrality requirements can purchase verified nutrient reductions — typically nitrogen or phosphorus credits — from accredited landowners who implement mitigation measures such as wetland creation, cover cropping, buffer strips, or changes in land use. Payments are made through long-term management agreements, with reductions calculated using approved catchment models (e.g. Natural England, Environment Agency guidance or privately funded schemes from companies such as water providers). This approach allows SRAS members to generate income while improving water quality, soil function, and habitat condition across their land.

It is expected that members will also benefit from earned recognition, meaning they are more likely to be prioritised for Government capital grants and environmental schemes as they become available. This reflects the credibility, compliance, and environmental assurance achieved through membership of the SRAS, which demonstrates proactive management and alignment with recognised standards of best practice. Emerging corporate disclosure frameworks such as the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) are driving demand for verified environmental data from land-based projects. Participation in a recognised regenerative scheme enables farms to provide auditable, spatially referenced evidence of carbon storage, soil health, biodiversity, and water management improvements. These verified outcomes can be integrated into corporate sustainability and nature-positive reporting,

positioning members as credible delivery partners for businesses seeking to demonstrate environmental stewardship and compliance with international sustainability standards while producing food.

Measures adopted on farm to increase and enhance traceability in the food chain and offer lifetime livestock assurance may command buyers' premiums as a direct result of improved adopted practice from end users or retailers.

Members of the SRAS will thus be in a better position in 2028 when direct payments and support are scheduled to come to an end and will have other income streams in place which could ultimately replace direct subsidies. They will also be in pole position to take advantages of other Government supported funding schemes owing to their own SRAS recognition.

There will be an element that SRAS certified farms will occupy the moral high ground and command respect for their achievements and be better prepared for the challenges ahead.



Traceability and supply chain integrity: a key benefit of SRAS membership.

Branding is a key tool in promoting trust and consumer confidence throughout the supply chain

The Scope

Introduction

The Sustainable Regenerative Agriculture Scheme (SRAS) has been written and designed based on our years of knowledge in practical farm production in most agricultural areas, and decades of experience in farm assurance and the genuine belief that it is possible to improve agricultural and horticultural production after over 40 years of treading water yield wise. It is noted that in recent years livestock advances have been far more significant than those in arable production.

We believe livestock is a key part of the equation and the demonisation of both ruminant and monogastric production systems by certain pressure groups has had a negative impact on soil structure and agricultural production in general and puts in doubt our ability as a nation to produce enough food of the right quality, taste and nutritional content for the population as a whole and puts our national food security at risk.

Organic matter from agricultural manures, grazing livestock and even anaerobic digestate or treated sewage sludge applied sensibly at professionally advised legal rates have a huge role to play in the future of agricultural production as they have always done in the past. The resultant organic matter is the key to breaking the wheat plateau, along with better and unprecedented levels of soil management. Livestock thus has a key role to play in sustainable regenerative farming.

While mixed farming combined with proper rotations is seen in this scheme as the salvation of agriculture rather than a curse, it is the resultant benefits that are going to enable an increase in production. While there is a reduction in the use of fertilisers and pesticides and the levels of wildlife and biodiversity increase and pollution risks diminish to provide a true win:win scenario.

SRAS recognises that many UK farmers have been careful and committed stewards of their land for generations. SRAS membership acknowledges this and is building on the successes and good practice of the past to take agricultural production to the next level.



Countryside Stewardship and SFI fields with managed headlands have become a feature common on UK farms - but are they actually increasing wildlife activity?



Mixed livestock systems play a vital role in regenerative agriculture by boosting soil fertility.

The Standard

Area of Agricultural Production

The cornerstone to the scheme is to take at least 10% of agriculture land out of production on total farmed acreage (arable and rotational crops including non-permanent pasture). The aim is to reach the same levels of production or more from 90% acreage while wildlife and species count levels increase.

The 10% taken out of production is at the discretion of the farmer and landowner but is more likely to be difficult corners of fields, unproductive poorer land or even whole blocks or farms where multiple farms under the same management are entered into the scheme together.

Of the 10% taken out, at least 30% must be sown with pollen and nectar mixes, 30% in recognised bird food mixes with the other 40% or balance coming in the form of grass managed headland, planted trees, beetle banks, created wetland areas or farm tracks. This is the key standard to the scheme and failure to comply is therefore a critical failure point (CFP1).

Those who take more than 10% out of agricultural production will be recognised and scored positively for the SRAS but penalised if overall average yields decline. Those who actually increase overall production levels above those achieved before the additional land was taken out of production will be recognised accordingly under the points scoring system used by SRAS. Optimal costs of production will also be taken into account in this calculation and diminishing returns penalised when inorganic matters and pesticides are over applied.



Pollen and nectar mixes contribute to margins and habitat requirement.

Soil Health

The second key cornerstone in SRAS is the health of the soils which will be assessed and scored by four independently assessed key barometers:

- Improvement in organic matter
- Earthworm count
- Increased soil biological activity determined through CO₂ burst measurement and/or designated probes.
- Improved soil infiltration with reduced compaction, runoff and erosion.

All four are expected to show continual and ongoing improvement (CFP2) annually and this is reflected in the scoring.

Improvements in documented soil health (CFP2) are expected to be achieved by:

- Rotation (CFP3) including fertility building crops, with farmers rewarded for longer rotations with break and cover crops.
- Mixed systems using home produced manures produced and/or grazed livestock on rotational pastures. Where livestock is not present as an enterprise on the SRAS farm manures, digestate or sewage sludge must be imported from another assured farm or source and spread at professionally recommended levels at a suitable time and point in the rotation.



Soil run off has become a problem in recent years

Grazing Animals

The grazing of animals on permanent pasture, rotational leys and extensive grazing on poorer pastures is positively encouraged but overstocking and poaching will be penalised under the overall scoring scheme when detected during inspection or satellite imagery.



Soil poaching caused by livestock overstocking — a critical failure point under the SRAS scoring scheme.

Well managed and maintained leys on friable soils with no signs of poaching or gateway runoff are a positive in the scoring system.

Grazing can be intensive or extensive or zero grazed but managed and judged accordingly. Zero grazing does offer greater windows to spread manures in better conditions.

Geofencing to help grazing animals to maintain habitat, control invasive weeds and woodland areas naturally is deemed a positive.

Properly controlled mob grazing and the grazing of arable crops to encourage tillage, thin out and add to soil fertility to improve yield is viewed positively.



Cattle fitted with GPS technology support precision grazing management.

Manure Management, Fertiliser, Composts, Digestate and Spreading

Farmers, where not FACTS qualified, must use a qualified professional adviser to help or oversee the spreading and applicants of nutrients. Farmers must be prepared and able to adopt a standard over and beyond baseline schemes with all applications calculated on the back of comprehensive soil testing programmes and rotational policies. This must be backed by a documented comprehensive and professionally backed nutrient management plan produced by a suitably qualified individual (CFP4).

The use of organic fertilisers and compost is actively encouraged but can be complimented by inorganic compounds where proven to be needed. All must be applied based on soil indices, professional advice, and weather forecast, and over wintering of manures is encouraged to allow natural incorporation if nutrient runoff is not a problem. All efforts to reduce compaction using measures such as lighter equipment, flotation tyres, central tyre inflation systems (CTIS), dual / wide tyres, and tracks and controlled traffic farming where appropriate is positively encouraged.

Members are expected to be able to demonstrate over the course of their membership a reduction in the use of inorganic fertilisers through better nutrient advice and practice to improve soil quality and without a demonstrable drop off in both yield and margin. The relationship with their professional adviser is pivotal and viewed as a partnership.

The use of home derived compost and imported certified brown waste is encouraged to improve soil fertility and organic matter on the farm and the use of biochar to enhance compost and its water holding ability is seen as a positive. Biochar used can be home produced or purchased.

Anaerobic digesters will go on playing an important role in the disposal of slurry, manures and food waste. The scheme acknowledges the efficiency of AD plants in general and the resultant reduction in methane emissions and the all-important energy spin off. SRAS is therefore in favour of carefully monitored and professionally advised spreading of digestate providing regular testing is carried out to monitor heavy metal content.



Figure 2. Anaerobic digestion supporting renewable energy and nutrient recycling.

The use of whole crops grown specifically to power AD Plants is not encouraged as it is deemed detrimental to national food security and the scheme favours roof top

solar and strategically placed wind turbines, hydroelectric and the largely untapped harnessing of tidal power as preferred sources of power.

Soil condition is the key to our future prosperity and ability to feed the world's increasing population.

Welfare and Traceability

High welfare standards are essential, and members must set their own levels which are over and above baseline Red Tractor standards. These will be monitored and inspected with lameness levels, stockmanship, stocking rates, body scores and general health key barometers to back up a professionally prepared animal health plan (CFP5). A fully qualified veterinary adviser is deemed essential and seen as the key to delivering good welfare on the farm. The partnership must be proactive and include realistic and progressive targets for key outcome measures. The measures must include lameness, body condition, comfort (measured by the absence of injuries and lesions), mortality and cleanliness. These must be reviewed annually and recorded to show an improvement trend. All finished animals should be slaughtered in approved licenced premises and fully non-recoverably stunned before slaughter and meat must be labelled as such to give consumers choice. Where animals are religiously slaughtered again they must also be clearly labelled to inform consumers.

Where buyers are prepared to pay a regenerative premium and show a desire for full traceability, the scheme is fully supportive and encourages such incentives and premiums as just producer reward. The SRAS is an advocate of lifetime assurance status on all livestock on SRAS accredited high welfare farms. Healthy contented animals perform better in today's farming systems.



Full traceability on quality produce is essential to gain customer confidence and repeat purchases



High welfare standards from birth to slaughter are central to the SRAS ethos.

Biosecurity and Professional Advice

Disease risk is an ever present on modern day farms from viruses and contaminants in both the livestock and arable sectors which often arrive due to illegalities and failures in our supply chain. Good biosecurity is an essential weapon in combatting this and members must have a full biosecurity and contaminants action plan which is implemented daily but can be beefed up if circumstances dictate. There is a clear link to high welfare and good biosecurity and the two go hand in hand.

Members must work alongside professionals such as veterinary surgeons, agronomists and biosecurity experts to actively reduce the likelihood of outbreaks and contaminants on farm and carefully source all inputs and feeds from approved or assured sources to reduce the risk of disease outbreaks on farm. (CFP15)

Rotational Policy

A strong rotational policy is essential and monocropping, with the exception of established permanent pasture or perennial crops, is not permitted (CFP3). Rotations must not be less than four crops (CFP3) and ideally more as long as overall productivity from the farm is maintained or increased. In all cases, rotations must include a fertility building crop.

Longer multi crop rotations including break crops, leys (where applicable) and cover crops are a positive attribute and scored accordingly, the more the better but output must be maintained. The rotation must include both spring and winter sown crops.

Measures must be taken to manage fruit trees and vines using regenerative and permaculture techniques that improve soil health, conserve water, and enhance biodiversity. Interrow cropping or living ground cover should be established to fix nitrogen, stabilise soil, and reduce erosion. Mulches or compost must be used to retain moisture and increase organic matter, and water-harvesting features such as swales or contour planting applied to minimise runoff. Shelterbelts or hedgerows should protect from wind and support pollinators, creating a resilient, low-input perennial system that sustains soil function and productivity.

Hedgerows and Wildlife Strips

The planting and maintenance of hedgerows is essential as they create vital habitat. Hedges should be cut between 1st September and end of February, after the nesting season and cut in a way that provides vital winter shelter, wildlife nourishment and wildlife corridors.

Likewise, wildlife and pollen and nectar strips should only be cut when it causes minimal wildlife impact and never when in flower and during the ground bird breeding season.

The planting of mixed native species hedgerows accompanied by field margins used for habitat creation can count towards the 10% area taken out of production.

The use of hedge laying techniques to support structure, biodiversity and livestock management are recognised as positive measures within the scheme.

Ditches and Watercourses

Ditch maintenance as a drainage enabler to higher yields is a positive. Ditch maintenance can be sacrificed in order to deliberately create wetland areas, slow waterflows, store water, or for nutrient filtration with reed beds as a part of the 10% area taken out of production.

Watercourses passing through the farm must leave in an equivalent or an improved condition and scored accordingly and will be inspected visually.

Baseflow and periods after heavy rainfall should be monitored at point of entry and exit to the farm, and where increased turbidity or nutrient content is identified, points up and downstream of potential sources of pollution, not only from the farmyard but also from livestock crossings, leaking dams and drains. As a minimum, tests must be carried out for:

- Sediment
- Nutrients such as nitrates, potassium and certain trace elements.
- Organic pollutants
- Pesticide contamination where possible.

Where potential sources of contamination occur, corrective action must be taken (CFP13), and nutrient neutrality is the desired goal and a key measure of success (CFP10).

The creation of riparian habitats to protect watercourses from soil erosion and nutrient run off can count towards part of the 10% area of land taken out of production.

Livestock should be excluded from watercourses using conventional physical fencing or GPS-collar technology, to reduce bank erosion, nutrient contamination, and habitat loss.

Water Usage and Management

Water has now become the most influential factor in agricultural production. With the extremes in weather with more floods and drought it is essential that scheme members manage and store water effectively using rain harvesting, reservoirs and wetlands as well as mulched areas on the farm to alleviate flooding in populated areas.

The use of irrigation is becoming more prevalent and vital to modern day production. Farmers who store water for this purpose and use modern technology to apply water and slurry to the correct areas and crops will be recognised under the scheme and efficiency rewarded in the scoring mechanism. (CFP 14). Drought resistant crops can also be a way forward in the correct areas. In some years irrigating cereals is likely to become an essential in The UK as in the South Island of New Zealand as a way to increase yield..

Cultivation Methods

While the scheme holders appreciate Direct Drilling has significant benefits in carbon emission reduction, it does not suit all farming systems or crops. However, it is strongly encouraged and recommended (R) owing to the longer-term soil benefits and dramatic reductions in carbon output. Min tilling and ploughing where deemed necessary for good agricultural practice (GAP) is also acceptable according to the farming regime and soil conditions. It is viewed that you have to "earn the right to plough". With shallow ploughing permissible when soil situations permit and is not detrimental to soil structure.

Likewise efficient usage of nitrates is essential with measures in place to prevent run off and wasting of valuable inputs through erosion is essential.

Farm Output, Pesticide and Chemical Usage

The SRAS is committed for members to show a continual reduction in pesticide usage over time on account of the regenerative practices employed and the adoption

of a professionally advised (if grower not BASIS qualified) and documented Integrated Crop Management Scheme.

Over the course of time SRAS members must be able to prove a reduction in the amount of both fertilisers and pesticides used per hectare as ongoing proof of regenerative success, improved soils and hopefully better yields and output (CFP15).

Liquid fertiliser and the use of slow-release urea is encouraged. Liquid is viewed as easier to apply more accurately and therefore more environmentally friendly.

GPS mapping and accurate, variable rate application of fertiliser is recommended (R), ensuring that each part of the field receives exactly the amount it requires rather than blanket treatment and the scheme scores accordingly.

The use of insecticides, chlormequat and organo-phosphates is discouraged but permissible if deemed necessary by a professionally qualified person or adviser.

Organic Production

Organic producers are equally welcome to join SRAS as many of the principles are overlapped or entwined and many organic farms are farming regeneratively but without regenerative certification or accreditation.

Carbon Calculation

Members must calculate their carbon usage (CFP6) through an approved and recognised scheme using IPCC methodology and have a documented score. Carbon neutrality is a goal of The Scheme. Those who achieve carbon neutral or above will benefit from the scheme scoring mechanism. They will show an ongoing improvement trend.

Sustainability

All members of SRAS must be sustainable and that means profitable. An unprofitable farm is not sustainable. The measure of sustainability is defined by the farmers ability to hand on the farm to the next generation or incumbent in a better condition than the farm they took on. SRAS will help document and prove the ongoing sustainability and improvement of the farm or business and recognise farmers who add social and environmental values to their operations in a true cost accounting system.

Pollinators and Natural Predators

Insect pollinators are vital to the success of agriculture and members are strongly recommended to encourage them along with natural predators to reduce pesticide expenditure and protect our environment. Farmers who monitor insect populations, have beehives on their land, beetle banks, grow natural habitat and instigate measures to encourage more species will benefit in the scoring mechanism.

Bees are essential and farms are encouraged to monitor bumble bee populations and have active populated beehives in situ and if possible farm without the use of insecticide sprays and excessive seed treatments.

Reducing Emissions

As a score based scheme, measures that are taken to improve efficiency will add value to the final accreditation score and grade. Home grown feeds are encouraged as it reduces imports and transport costs.

Production performance, feed conversion ratios, fertility indexes, and lifetime productivity are all assessed alongside welfare outcomes. Consideration must also be given to feed sourcing and sustainability, including the use of locally grown or home-produced protein crops, replacing imported soya with legumes or herbal leys, and avoiding feeds that compete with human food supply. Novel, low-impact protein sources such as mealworms for poultry may also be appropriate. Efficiency improvements that reduce waste, emissions, and food miles while supporting local markets are recognised as positive indicators within SRAS membership.

Accurate spreading of all pesticides, fertilisers and manures is essential and modern techniques and technologies should be applied where possible to encourage accurate application. Liquid is preferred to granular application in the case of fertiliser.

Measures must be taken to reduce emissions from agricultural machinery and equipment. Engines should be well maintained and, where possible, replaced with lower-emission or alternative-fuel models meeting current efficiency standards. Unnecessary idling must be avoided, and field operations planned to minimise passes and fuel use. Machinery sharing, precision guidance, and variable-rate technology should be adopted to optimise efficiency, while staff must be trained in fuel-efficient operation and maintenance practices.

Taste and Nutrition

Nutrient density and food quality are becoming increasingly important in farm and food system performance. SRAS recognises the increasing public and scientific interest in how regenerative and low-input systems can enhance the nutritional value, flavour, and health-promoting properties of food. Practices that improve soil biology, mineral availability, and crop or forage diversity are closely linked to higher micronutrient and phytonutrient levels in plant and animal products. The scheme encourages members to demonstrate and record practical measures such as diverse sward and herbal ley management, reduced synthetic inputs, balanced trace element supplementation, and grazing systems that promote natural forage nutrition. Any documented evidence, whether through feed or product testing, consumer feedback, or collaboration with research initiatives, will be recognised and rewarded. SRAS views improvements in nutrient density as a key outcome of regenerative farming, offering both public health benefits and market differentiation through higher food quality and provenance.

Food Security

Food security is regarded within the scheme as one of the greatest challenges facing the UK. SRAS aligns with the WWF "Triple Challenge" — to produce sufficient, nutritious food, reduce environmental impacts, and support healthier diets. Members are encouraged to contribute to national food resilience by increasing the home consumption of UK-produced foods and supporting the export of high-quality,

traceable produce. Those who demonstrate the ability to increase production while simultaneously enhancing biodiversity, wildlife habitat, animal welfare, and soil health, and minimising pollution and emissions, are achieving the core aims of the scheme and will be rewarded accordingly. This integrated approach recognises that food security, environmental stewardship, and public health are interdependent outcomes of sustainable, regenerative land management.

It also recognises that in the future, nutrient content and density along with calorific value maybe as important as overall yield is today and we may be able to eat less but higher quality more healthy food. In short, production maybe measured on the number of people we can healthily feed from a hectare of production and that may not be solely down to output and yield.



Public and schools engagement are vital to get the message out

“Young People Cannot Be What They Cannot See”

Protecting The Environment

Improving the environment is as important as increasing the yield, profitability and sustainability of the farm by farming regeneratively. The controlling business must take every step they can to reduce pollution and lessen the environmental impact of farming.

To document the measures employed, the farms must have bespoke farm specific plans in the following key areas (CFP7). The more comprehensive and far reaching the implemented plans are, the more the business will score:

- Farm policy to document the measures taken to reduce the environmental impact of farming such as equipment choice, rotation, investment in facilities, GPS/controlled traffic farming and any other means.
- Waste Management – fully documented plan to cover all farm waste and the methods employed to reduce or minimise waste and reduce the chances of pollution from day to day farming activities.
- Water Management and usage – to prove the efficient usage of water including storage, harvesting and measures employed to reduce the amount of water used annually.
- Integrated Crop Management – documenting all measures taken to demonstrate the efforts taken to reduce the amount of pesticides and inorganic fertilisers used.
- Grazing Management – the measures taken to reduce poaching, runoff and efficient use of grass for grazing such as measuring grazing sward height and forage to reduce compaction and efficiency.
- Crop Storage Management – measures taken to reduce environmental impact to cover choice of fuel for drying and cooling, rodent control policy and cleaning regimes.
- Biodiversity Action Plan – including baseline assessment of habitats and species on the farm, management practices to be adopted, plans to create / expand, manage and monitor habitats, and encourage native species.
- Carbon Reduction – documented carbon plan score and status.
- Energy – full policy covering measures taken to reduce energy consumption across the farm through choice of farming policy, documented costings on key barometers such as fuel usage in Litres/Ha and renewable energy investments and success stories with identified areas for improvement.
- Professional Advisors – list of advisors and biographies to prove their suitability and expertise. These include agronomists, fertiliser, nutrition, biosecurity and animal nutritional advisors. Farmers and their staff are actively encouraged to undergo professional qualifications themselves and accrue CPD points over and beyond the requirement in other assurance schemes.

Independent Indicators

Improvements in yield and performance can be monitored and verified in house in terms of tonnes produced, yields and cost of production. Likewise scientific tests and instruments as well as visual inspection can be used and recorded to show improvements in soil conditions (CFP8).

However, monitoring increases in biodiversity, natural predators and wildlife needs to be independently verified by committed experts to gain credence, giving naturalists and nature enthusiasts the opportunity to measure and buy in to The Scheme and work with the farmer for the common goal.

Measuring Success

Continuous and ongoing improvement is a vital part of measuring the success in SRAS as tangible proof that year on year improvements are being made and documented to silence doubters and detractors, promote the gains of The Scheme and improve revenues and gain public support. The following documentation is required in a presentable usable slide format:

- Farm statistics to document key information such as yields and output by crop per hectare with the base year being the one before joining SRAS. Or a mean average in the immediate years prior to joining. Applicable to arable and forage crops equally. Livestock figures are as important as arable trends. As the scheme evolves, nutrient output per hectare maybe the preferred mechanism of measurement rather than overall physical yield.
- In addition to this, key barometers of pesticides used per ha (£), fertiliser used per ha (kg) and fuel per ha (lt) all need recording for each harvest year. (CFP9)
- Nutrient Neutrality – where possible farmers are required to monitor the quality of water as it arrives on farm and where it leaves. This allows the grower to identify possible causes of pollution and allows preventative measures to clean up and filter water before it leaves the farmed area. This can be extended to include water quality from boreholes and irrigation reservoirs where applicable. (CFP10)
- To achieve this properly neighbouring farms should cooperate to achieve the common goal and reduce duplication in testing around farm boundaries.
- Evaluate the success of the management plans. Annually monitored and updated as standards are improved.
- Annual carbon audit from recommended list of providers. Measured in units produced per tonne or per kilo. (CFP6) and tonnes per hectare.
- Annual earthworm organic matter and soil tests combined with yield mapping to give year on year trends.
- Annual independent species counts to include plant counts, mammals, invertebrates (butterflies, honeybees, bumblebees, ladybirds and moths), reptiles, bird counts by number and species. To demonstrate independently verified trends and progress as a direct result of scheme membership and change in farming policy.

- Visitor Book and recorded entry to document visitors and educational visits.
- Farmers who sell produce locally and uncover niche premium will be rewarded under the scoring system and shorter transport distances seen as a benefit. Long hauls to processors and abattoirs are a negative.
- Nutrient Density – It is viewed that nutrient quality in time may become as important as overall yield and output per hectare and maybe measured by the number of people a crop can healthily and efficiently feed and the calorific value rather than actual yield will be the overriding factor in determining farm output and profitability.

Engaging with Local Community and Educational Learning

Members should positively engage with the local community and schools. Suggested methods of engagement are:

- Participate in events like Open Farm Sunday
- Host local school visits, farm and forest schools
- Maintain and sign footpaths and add stopping points and guided tours where it is practically possible providing it does not have a detrimental effect on the running of the farm
- Speak to local community groups, societies and Parish Councils about the work you are doing and farming philosophy.
- Engaging with the next generation is vital to promote the SRAS philosophy.
- Cooperating and working with neighbours, both farms and industry.



Engaging with schools and local communities builds public understanding of farming.

Scoring Membership and Certification

Inspections Frequency

Inspections will take place annually in person with over half the inspection taking place outside. Inspecting the farm's compliance to the standard is carried out by a team of self-employed assessors professionally trained by the scheme owners to audit the standard.

The scheme certification team will also use satellite imagery, artificial intelligence and unannounced spot inspections to help reach the right certification grade and to ensure standards are adhered to.

Earned autonomy will be granted to gold standard farms who score well under the risk scored system and subsequent inspections will focus on weakest areas following the initial or last inspection.

Critical Failure Points

A non-conformance against a critical failure point will mean that the farmer will not gain admittance to the scheme until the non-conformance(s) has been signed off by a chargeable re-visit.

A critical non-conformance against an existing member will result in immediate suspension from the SRAS Scheme.

Readmittance will only be granted from a chargeable re-visit to check that it has been corrected according to the standard.

Scoring

Farms will be assessed on a risk scored basis using artificial intelligence which recognises annual improvements resulting in farms being given a final percentage score resulting in a pass, good, outstanding to give bronze, silver and gold status awards signified by a driveway plaque.

Certification

Where no non-conformances are identified, certification will take place within 7 days of inspection or non-conformances being corrected and is overseen and controlled by the scheme owners with non-conformances certificates e-mailed to members or accessed through The Schemes portal along with all other correspondence.

Charging and Membership

Scheme charges will be banded based on size, number of enterprises and turnover of the farm and charged on a per farm basis. Contracted or shared farms linked to the main holding will be subject to a discount and where possible be visited in one hit on the same day by the same auditor.

Appeals

All members will have right of appeal against certification decisions or make a complaint by following the documented process and time scales. This will be monitored by an independent Governing Board of suitably qualified professionals whose skills complement each other.

Not For Profit Scheme

Assessments will be conducted inhouse on a not-for-profit basis or through a licenced certification body with all profits being returned to the UK agricultural industry. These include donations to a rural charity such as those mentioned in the acknowledgements (Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust, The Worshipful Company of Farmers or The Farmers Club Charitable Trust) as decided by The Scheme Governing Board. They should be donated for a research or educational project which will benefit the agricultural industry.

Discounts in membership fees will be offered to farms showing continual annual improvement and to those who score well will benefit from reduced inspection intervals known as earned autonomy.

BYAG Ltd reserves the right to charge a modest royalty (£10). Any profits made from this royalty will be returned to the UK Agricultural industry as stipulated above. It will be collected on behalf of the scheme owners by any licenced certification body and will always be pegged at a rate below equivalent or similar assurance schemes.

Training rights owned by BYAG Ltd to ensure correct interpretation of standards.

Any surplus will be returned to members as a bonus or invested into British agriculture.

The scheme will never be corporatised and become a cash cow for corporate investors.

The scheme will be overseen by a fully independent governing board picked to compliment skill sets and identifiable knowledge gaps and to give robustness and balance to The Scheme.



Appendices

Critical Failure Points (CFP)

- CFP 1 - Failure to take at least 10% of agricultural land out of production.
- CFP 2 - Failure to have and adhere to an up to date, annually reviewed and functional Soil Management Plan.
- CFP 3 – Failure to have a workable adequate rotation and mixture of spring and winter crops with cover crops.
- CFP 4 – Failure to have a bespoke manure management plan.
- CFP 5 – Failure to meet welfare standards and appropriate stockmanship standard by being in a baseline scheme and visual inspection during SRAS inspection.
- CFP 6 – Failure to have a recognised annually conducted Carbon Audit in place.
- CFP 7 – Failure to have a bespoke Environmental Protection Plan with accompanying and complimentary sister plans including biodiversity, energy, waste, integrated crop management, crop storage, grazing and water conservation in place.
- CFP 8 – Failure to have an appropriate soil testing regime in place including earthworm counts and organic matter with sufficient monitoring.
- CFP 9 – Failure to maintain key farm trend statistics to show results of scheme membership. Failure to have demonstrable trends on yields, profit, pesticide and fertiliser usage.
- CFP 10 – Nutrient Neutrality to test water quality regularly where it enters farm and as it leaves.
- CFP 11 – Failure to conduct annual independent species counts and record results and trends.
- CFP 12 – The member is not a full member of The Red Tractor Schemes for the enterprises on the farm or not a member of The Green Farm Collective.
- CFP 13 – Insufficient measures taken to reduce water contamination or to correct a recognised pollution.
- CFP 14 – Insufficient measures to capture, store and use water on the farm.
- CFP 15 – Full action plans to improve biosecurity and prevent disease outbreaks and contaminations on all farms both with livestock and arable.

The Author

Bill Young — Biography



Bill decided he was going into agriculture-related business at an early age and graduated from Harper Adams in 1983 with a HND in Agricultural Marketing and Business Administration. His first job was as a grain buyer and then trader for W J Oldacre. In 1991, he was appointed Sales Manager at the UK's largest farmer cooperative, Midland Shires Farmers (later Countrywide) who became the first compounder to implement a full, two-year traceability programme in feed ingredients. In 1997, Bill was appointed as the first Scheme Manager for the new National Assured Combinable Crops Scheme employed by CMI (now part of NSF International). For the 18 years he has held various senior positions and overseen the growth of the business to 35,000 UK customers in covering all areas of agriculture and the supply chain.

In 2015, Bill was appointed Head of Agriculture at SAI Global the leading livestock assurer in the UK to lead their European Agricultural Team delivering agricultural assurance schemes for key stakeholder such as Red Tractor and Global GAP and grew the business significantly.

In May 2018 he took up the post of Chief Executive of The Addington Fund based in Warwickshire. Part of the Farming Help umbrella the Fund was set up in 2001 to offer disaster relief to the many farmers who were affected by the foot and mouth outbreak. Since then it has been on hand to help with other disease outbreaks and losses through inclement weather. The Fund also has a very clear mission to relieve rural poverty by providing both affordable and strategic retirement homes to fight rural depopulation and to help keep the next generation in a sustainable country

environment. The Fund now owns or has a share in over 70 houses with many more in the pipeline and has recently launched a young entrant scheme for first generation farmers. Under his leadership Addington flourished with the turnover tripling and net worth rising by nearly 50% to nearly £20m which has enabled them to help more people.

He then went on to be CEO at The Organic Farmers and Growers which is the largest UK certifier of organic produce in the UK. In his time he has now delivered well over 100 Farm assurance schemes in the UK and now runs his own Agribusiness Consultancy Bill Young Agriculture Ltd (BYAG) with a mission to "put back" into the UK agricultural industry which has been so good to him throughout his career.

Bill is a 2001 Nuffield Scholar and studied the world grain trade and the implications of quality assurance and is a massive fan of team sports. He loves team sports as a supporter of West Bromwich Albion, Worcestershire CCC, Northampton Saints and a former Chairman of the RFU SW Under 18's, he is a Liveryman and Court Member at The Worshipful Company of Farmers and sits on the Committee of The Farmers Club and has served Risk and Audit Committee at Harper Adams University and is also Governor at The Warwickshire College Group and local past Parish Councillor, School Governor and fund raiser. He lives in Warwickshire.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/agriculturalgaspecialists/>

Food For Thought

“Politicians of every creed and Government Departments need to realise food Security is National Security and we need to capitalise on our natural advantages in climate and geography. We must increase the amount of home produced food on our plates whilst our close proximity to ports and high standards of production means we should be able to export top quality products competitively backed by a convincing and genuine sales story”.

“Our supply chain is both “just in time and fragile” and we need to change it sooner rather than later while we can or it will be too late.”

“It is possible to increase food production while protecting the environment, improving biodiversity and increasing wildlife at the same time and to help the population eat healthily, as less can mean more.”

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All photos from Bill Young's personal library.

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