

ANDREW BERGIN



GENERAL INFORMATION

Location of farm	Athy, Co. Kildare
Name of the farmer	Andrew Bergin
Size of farm	90 hectares
Permanent staff	1, with temporary harvest help.
Main products of farm	Peas- canning, oil seed rape- animal feed and oil, winter wheat- animal feed and bread, spring wheat- milling for bread, spring barely- beer, oats- animal feed and porridge, sometimes grown for seeds



CURRENT REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE PRACTICES ON THE FARM

Farmland cultivated with RA practices	100%
Crops produced with RA practices	All
Duration of using RA practices	Since 2013



Erasmus+

Description of RA practices used in the farm

Practices Zero Ploughing, Minimum Tillage and Direct Drilling.

After the harvest, Cover crop is sown. A mix of species is sown for biodiversity and to maintain a living root all the time. He establishes this cover crop as fast as he can after harvest. This cover crop protects the soil and supports a lot of wildlife.

Chicken manure is used as a natural fertiliser to Feed the cover crop.

Cover crop sprayed off before replanting as cover crop must be suppressed for feeding. Andrew is Trying to find non-herbicide ways of doing this. He has tried many ways of trying to suppress the cover crop without herbicide but hasn't found a technique that suits him yet.

When asked about this struggle of trying to find a more natural way of suppressing the cover crop before resewing for harvest, Andrew said, *'Don't let perfect get in the way of good'* - a nice quote for Farmers who are trying to be more regenerative on their farms.

His aim is to try to minimise physical disturbance of soil; Rather than ploughing the soil. Andrew suggests to farmers looking to get into regenerative to Try to reduce synthetic fertilisers as far as possible.

General management: Hedgerows and field margins for biodiversity and wildlife are staples across his farm. He takes part in a Farmland pollinator EIP- Protecting farmland pollinators, run by the National biodiversity data centre of Ireland. Pollinators for Andrew, are an indicator of the health of the environment 'if you've pollinators there a lot of other things going right'.

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STARTING AND MOTIVATION BEHIND REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

Main motivation	After seeing a demonstration for Strip Till machines back in 2013, he could see the immediate advantages of this way of farming: the crops and soil seemed happier - he decided to give minimum tillage a try and read into regenerative farming as a result.
Learning the RA farming practices	Through trainings, demonstrations, reading and talking with other farmers.
Did the farmer receive training?	Yes, Andrew has attended Regenerative Farming trainings an by the National Organic Skillnet training centre. He took a course with Regenerative farming experts Gabe Brown, Joel Williams and David Wallace. He learns from other farmers through the irish farmer-led organisation "BASE".
Did the farmer receive financial support?	<p>Yes, indirectly. The Irish 'TAMS' grant allowed him to purchase a new Direct Drill, and GPS Autosteer for his tractor which he uses for minimising soil disturbance.</p> <p>The Irish environmental 'GLAS' scheme financially supported him for cover crops and arable grass margins, where originally he would have farmed up to the hedgerow, he was now financially incentivised to leave a margin for biodiversity and wildlife. He has noticed an increase of pollinators on the farm as a result.</p>



Image 2: direct drill machinery

RESULTS OF REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

Benefits of using RA practices

- *He says; "Farming is a lot more engaging and interesting now"*
- *RA is Keeping it fresh and engaging for the farmer*
- *RA has allowed Andrew to Meet a lot of interesting people and younger farmers*
- *Huge social side to RA: the community aspect*
- *Huge social benefits and personal development*
- *Andrew finds it Exciting to convince other farmers about RA.*

Obstacles of using RA practices

- *Initially information and knowledge around RA was hard to obtain.*
- *Having to take risks at first: Everything new is a risk*
- *Farmers in debt may be much less likely to take part in RA*
- *Lack of research in RA in Ireland.*
- *Reluctance and inability of research and advisory bodies in Ireland to see this way of farming as something good that adds to conventional agriculture.*
- *He would love to see:*
 - *more open-minded attitudes towards regenerative and new ideas in farming*
 - *Advisory service that was less patronising to farmers*

These obstacles can be overcome by being confident to make mistakes in order to learn. A change in attitude is important for this way of farming; trial and error and owning up to your mistakes are key to success.



Image 3: Diverse Cover crops

Is the farmer happy overall with RA?	Yes
Does the farmer intend to continue RA?	Yes
Does the farmer intend to introduce changes in RA methods or crops?	Of course, Andrew is all the time striving to find better ways of farming.



Image 4: Meadow Butterfly



Image 5: Strip Tilled Arable Land



Image 6: Spreading chicken manure on cover crops

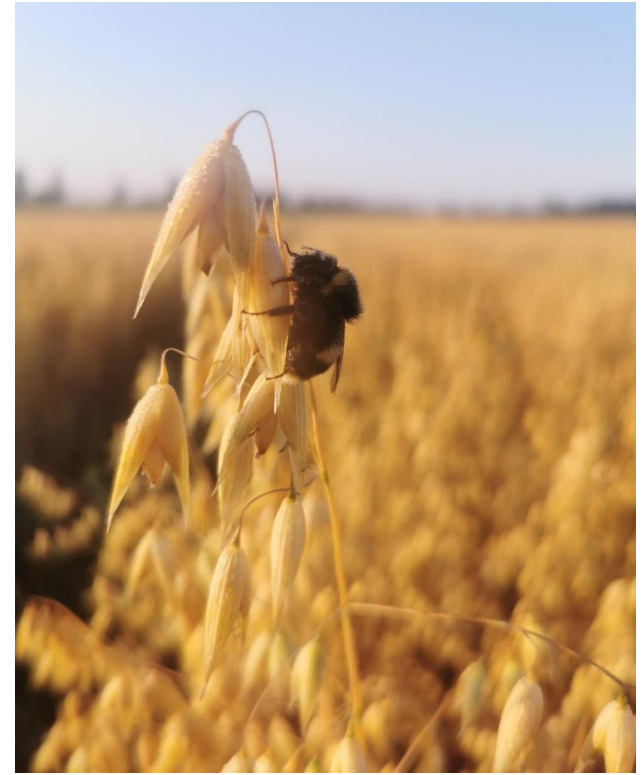


Image 7: Bumblebee



Image 8: Sunflowers and cover crop

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