

Farming for a Better Climate



Soil Regenerative Agriculture Group Farmers Supporting Scottish Soils

Case Study - Ben Barron, Leitfie, Near Alyth.

Ben farms over 200 hectares in Perthshire with his family. Leitfie is a mixed arable and beef unit, growing grass for livestock plus barley, wheat, oats, beans and oil seed rape, with the intention of trying linseed in 2020. The rotation at Leitfie will be a diverse 7 crop 9 year rotation with 3 break crops.

No-tillage

Ben has a keen interest in managing, protecting and improving farm soils, investigating regenerative agriculture techniques that he can successfully use on the farm. Tillage was one area where he felt benefits could be gained, and in 2015 converted all his land to a no-tillage system. The benefits of reduced or no tillage are well documented, for example reducing soil erosion, nitrate leaching, increasing soil organic matter and supporting activity of soil life, however there are also challenges. Ben found the first year produced excellent results, but yields in year two suffered and were not as promising. Year three was much better, and Ben is hoping to see continued improvements from this approach.

Crop choice

Some cover crops have been grown on the farm, but Ben believes its difficult to justify the more expensive mixes when benefits can be limited by a short growing window, however anything growing in the ground is better than bare soil. Ben has moved away from growing vegetables as he saw the negative impact the cultivation and harvesting of these crops can have on soil quality.

What's next?

Ben wants to see how far fertiliser and chemical use can be reduced, whilst maintaining yields and measuring and monitoring the effects of this new strategy. Ben said *"Its going to be quite a challenge and we will need both Government and research behind us!"*.

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| Name: | Ben Barron |
| Farm: | Leitfie Farms |
| Locality: | Perthshire |
| Farm type: | Mixed |



Ben is one of five farmers taking part in the Scottish Government funded Farming for a Better Climate Soil Regenerative Agriculture Group. You can read more about the other farmers participating in the initiative and some of the practical ideas they are taking forward at www.farmingforabetterclimate.org Facebook and Twitter @SACFarm4Climate.



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