

Creating and maintaining small water bodies



Authors:

Nejc Suban (nejc.suban@gozdis.si),
Kim McCall and Saorla Kavanagh



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Agricultural intensification has led to the drainage of wetlands and the removal of small water bodies threatening many aquatic species.

Establishing and maintaining small water bodies (ponds, streams, wetlands) on farms increases biodiversity while delivering agronomic benefits. Densely distributed water bodies increase habitat connectivity, strengthening the populations of aquatic species, many of which contribute to natural pest control (e.g. frogs, dragonflies). Riparian vegetation (vegetation growing next to water bodies) filters nutrients and pesticides, reducing runoff to surface streams and groundwater. Ponds retain surface water, buffer heavy rainfall, reduce erosion, improve water availability, reduce daytime temperatures, and maintain higher air humidity which can reduce plant and animal stress during dry periods. They also reduce pressure on irrigation sources and support compliance with CAP environmental schemes.



Photo credit: Claudia Barry

Practical Recommendations

Construct along natural depressions, runoff collection areas and sites with clay soils. Be sympathetic to contours. Manage soil carefully. Never put topsoil back in the pond, use along margins. Protect functioning wetlands or wet grasslands and be careful not to damage during construction. Create clean water ponds away from streams or drains. Bring back "ghost ponds", e.g. where they were before. Create grass margins at least 2 meters wide. Unmanaged or lightly managed margins create connectivity, stabilise banks, and filter nutrients. Keep South and West sides open of tree cover for maximum light to the pond. Integrate multiple small ponds rather than a single water body.

Further Information on farmbionet.eu

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