Reducing Inputs
Integrated Pest Management

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a whole-system approach encompassing a wide range of options, which can be incorporated into a tailored strategy to optimise productivity whilst minimising negative environmental impacts. Adopting an IPM approach can play a crucial role in reducing reliance on pesticides, maximising productivity and improving farm resilience.

IPM is an iterative process of:
- Prevention (e.g. cover crops)
- Monitoring/detection
- Intervention (e.g. biological control)
- Evaluation.

**Further advice and information**
- Integrated Pest Management for Sustainable Farming [VoluntaryInitiative.org.uk](http://VoluntaryInitiative.org.uk)

**Acknowledgements**
We would like to thank our webinar speakers Dr Henry Creissen, SRUC; Dave Bell, Fairfield Farms; and Graham Elder, Chapel Farm, for their valuable input.

This project has been funded by the Scottish Government through the SRDP Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund (KTIF)
Make a Plan
Planning is key for a successful IPM strategy. An IPM Plan can help identify key threats and possible prevention measures; establish a baseline to benchmark against going forward; and track improvements. Different components of IPM are weighted and give a farm a total score between 0 and 100. Some assurance schemes already require an IPM Plan.

IPM Measures
The diverse range of measures available can be broadly categorised into cultural, biological, physical and chemical interventions:

- **Cultural** actions like increasing diversity in the crop rotation, intercropping, pest ID/monitoring, record keeping, monitoring pest thresholds, good hygiene (separating livestock with hedges), planning, and crop variety choice.

- **Biological** factors include allelopathy (chemical inhibition of one plant by another), competition (increasing seed rate to suppress weeds), habitat for predators (flower margins, beetle banks), and maintaining good soil health (adding soil organic matter, reducing tillage).

- **Physical** actions include burying trash, rogueing volunteers, keeping soil covered with mulches/living mulches/green manures and cover crops; and mechanical weeding.

- **Chemical** interventions (in non-organic systems) should be used only once pest thresholds are exceeded, and used ‘as much as necessary but as little as possible’.

Key Themes

- **Soil health** Maintaining good soil health can lower disease susceptibility. Reducing tillage, soil testing (esp. pH), building fertility, supporting biology, increasing soil organic matter (SOM), and improving structure are all key practices.

- **Diversity** Increasing crop diversity, varieties, and rotations (plus companion/intercropping) can reduce build-up of pests and diseases.

- **Habitats** An interlinked system of margins, buffer zones, hedges and trees can provide an effective means of supporting the farm’s resilience by providing habitat for predators, other ecosystem services (flood risk reduction); and acting as physical barriers (providing a biosecurity break in livestock).

Things to Consider

- The Scottish Agri Environment Climate Scheme (AECS) can be a useful tool to cover the cost of some measures (green manures, flower margins, buffer strips and hedges).

- If trying IPM approaches for the first time, designate a small trial area, or ‘ok to fail’ plot.

- Make an action plan, and review actions (e.g. annually) – what did/didn’t work?

- IPM aims to control, not eliminate. It may be more cost-effective to avoid intervening for pests/weeds below a pre-determined threshold.

- In organic systems, the key elements of effective IPM are establishing a long, diverse rotation, supporting soil health, and variety/breed choice for disease resistance.

- Not all seed mixes are created equal - careful formulation is required to ensure that sown flower margins can support pest predators as well as pollinators.

- Change can take time. Patience, planning, and an awareness that productivity may dip initially before improving; are all important when implementing new IPM approaches.