



Smarter Water Catchments

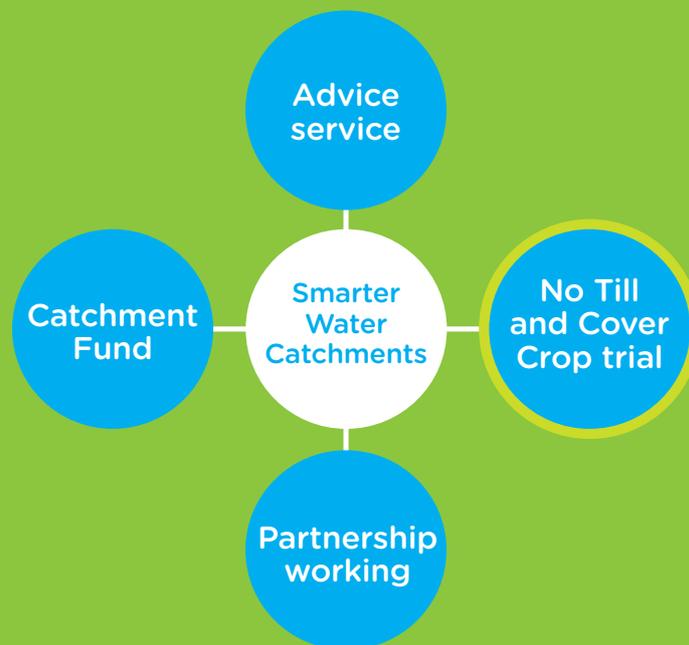
Evenlode No Till and
Cover Crop Trial



We have set up Smarter Water Catchments in the Evenlode to encourage water sensitive farming. The Evenlode is a headwater of the River Thames flowing from Moreton-in-Marsh to Eynsham over a distance of more than 75km. It drains an area of nearly 30,000 ha and is managed as a number of river ‘waterbodies’.

Smarter Water Catchments in the Evenlode has four components (see figure below). One of these is **an exciting opportunity to trial No Till and Cover Crop systems**. We acknowledge that adopting No Till can represent a big change to your farming system but it can also yield major benefits. We would like to encourage No Till and Cover Crop systems by providing access to or funding for alternative equipment and seed.

We would like to explore whether a No Till and Cover Crop system reduces the loss of soil and phosphorus to watercourses whilst improving soil health. Just as importantly, we would like to know whether it increases the profitability and efficiency of your farm.



What happens next?

We are keen that the trial should be farmer led, which means that you will design it, decide what you would like to try, how, when and where. Our role will be to support the trial financially so that risks to participants are minimised. We are looking for volunteers who would be willing to trial an area of land for up to five years.

Over the autumn and winter of 2017 we will be organising a series of farm visits and talks by people with experience of No Till and Cover Crop farming. These will be open to all farmers in the Evenlode to explore the challenges and benefits of this farming system. The farm visits and talks will also help you design the trial. The trial itself will commence in August/September 2018.



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No Till involves maintaining stubble post harvest and planting new crops directly into it. The photograph on the left shows the no till drill sowing a crop within the stubble cover. The image on the right shows a winter wheat crop emerging through the stubble



Jim Bullock is a farmer who started No Till and Cover Crop farming 20 years ago.

He has a simple long term aim which is to reduce the number of imported inputs onto the farm and to make the farm regenerative not extractive. **‘The key to success is flexibility and the ability to make decisions as conditions change’.**

A No Till approach that excludes ploughing and uses Cover Crops can improve the soil on your farm, to the benefit of the environment and your farm business.

For further information on this No Till and Cover Crop trial, or any other component of this scheme, contact your local Agricultural Advisor, Sarah Olney.



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Sarah and her husband run their own mixed farm. Sarah has over 30 years' practical experience in agriculture. Over the last 10 years she has been working on the reduction of diffuse pollution. Sarah is currently seconded to Thames Water to deliver this trial.

