

# Richard Thomas Case Study

## NET ZERO

Richard took part in the Test and Trial to ensure that small farms are represented in the design of the new ELMS scheme. Richard had already reduced tillage, started growing more perennial crops, planting trees, building root mass in the soils through changes in grassland management and reduced the amount of nitrogen fertiliser bought - making more use of organic manures. Richard has sought funding from the Woodland Trust for woodland planting in a move towards implementing agroforestry on farm.

## ELMS

Richard believes that ELMS should reward people for trying to look after and enhance a complex biological system. This could include encouraging longer rest periods in grassland systems to encourage more growth, more photosynthesis, more roots and greater water infiltration. This in turn would lead to public benefits such as reduced risk to properties from extreme weather from flooding. Richard believes that

farming systems based on short term rotations and set stocking need to be propped up with inputs because the systems are inhibiting the biological systems, preventing them from functioning optimally.

Actions that Richard would like to see in ELMS include; cover crops, longer rest periods in grassland management, use of legumes, bale grazing with species rich hay to introduce new species into older, less diverse swards, using heritage or genetically appropriate breeds for the management of habitats, hedgerow management including a long term management regime (25 year rotation), agroforestry (using fruit and nut tree species) and reduced cultivation practices encouraged. Richard would also like to see ELMS be a flexible scheme where the rules don't compromise the benefits e.g. there are no unintended consequences for undertaking actions in certain areas such as an incentive to plough permanent grassland.



**RICHARD THOMAS IS A 121 HA BEEF, SHEEP, ARABLE AND CIDER FRUIT FARMER FROM NORTH HEREFORDSHIRE**  
He is interested in taking a regenerative approach on his farm and is in Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier.



### Richard said:

"We are already doing a lot of net zero work on my farm, including planting trees to sequester carbon, changing grassland management to build root mass in soils and

using organic manures to cut nitrogen fertiliser use, but I want to do even more to make my business more carbon-friendly.

"The way I see it, including net zero incentives within ELMS that are attractive to farmers and deliver meaningful climate mitigation results is a win-win. I would love to see options available within ELMS for things like long term hedgerow management regimes and reduced cultivation,

as these would enable me to build on the work I'm already doing while continuing to produce fantastic, nutritious food.

"For me, it's important that small farms like mine are represented in the design of ELMs, and I think flexibility and variety are going to be key to get as many farmers as possible taking part. For the scheme to work for my mixed farming business, I would need completely different options to those a large-scale fruit farmer in Kent would need, but if there is at least one option within ELMs for each farmer to do something for net zero then we can have a real cumulative positive impact."



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