

MEDIA RELEASE

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VOLUNTARY INITIATIVE PUBLISHES FARMLAND BIRD ADVICE

New advice for farmers and advisers on farmland birds and pesticides has been published by The Voluntary Initiative (VI).

Farmland birds are an important measure of UK biodiversity and one of the Government's sustainable development indicators. Birds such as yellowhammer, corn bunting, grey partridge and the skylark depend on arable farmland for food and habitat. Changes in farmland management can affect populations and the use of pesticides can have indirect effects such as the removal of food sources. These effects can be reduced by using pesticides responsibly and creating and maintaining suitable habitats.

“The new advice explains how farmland birds can be indirectly affected by pesticides and recommends four steps farmers can take to help reverse the decline of these important native bird species,” said the RSPB's Jim Densham, chair of the VI Biodiversity Sub-Group. “Farmers need to ensure they follow integrated farm management practices, use pesticides responsibly, provide field margin habitats as well as in-field food and habitat options.”

Welcoming the advice, Dr Andrea Graham, the NFU's Countryside Adviser, said: “This is helpful practical advice on the creation and maintenance of important wildlife habitats on farm and complements the key messages being promoted by the Campaign for the Farmed Environment.”

Notes for editors:

1. The new VI advice can be found at http://www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk/Attachments/Resources/1284_S4.pdf.

2. A supporting presentation can be found at:
http://www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk/_Attachments/Resources/1267_S4.ppt
3. The Voluntary Initiative (VI), which was set up in 2001, is a programme of measures, agreed with Government, to minimise the environmental impact of pesticides.
4. The sponsors of the Voluntary Initiative are the Agricultural Engineers Association, Agricultural Industries Confederation, Country Land and Business Association, Crop Protection Association, National Association of Agricultural Contractors, the NFU, NFU Scotland and the Ulster Farmers Union. To date over £873 million has been invested in the scheme by the agricultural industry.

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