

SOWAP newsletter no.1, March 2005

Finding and Demonstrating Ways of Better Managing the Land



Initial SOWAP results

Soil and Water

- Conservation tillage techniques have reduced soil loss and water run-off from fields compared to ploughing in all 3 SOWAP countries (Belgium, UK, Hungary). On some of the conservation-tilled field plots, soil erosion has been reduced by up to 90% and water run-off by up to 40%.
- Considerable variability in results between fields and even within fields requires further investigation before clear conclusions can be drawn.

Biodiversity

- Higher numbers of some birds are associated with conservation-tilled fields rather than ploughed fields; however, bird numbers are considerably higher still in over-wintered stubble areas. As such, stubbles appear more important than conservation tillage in providing resources for wintering birds.
- Early results suggest that earthworm numbers can be higher in conservation-tilled fields than in conventionally ploughed fields.
- Soils at the Leicestershire site support a larger microbial biomass and possess different community structures than soils at the Somerset site. Tillage treatment appears to have an effect on biomass at the Leicestershire site but no effect has been observed at the Somerset site.

Yields

- Yields of winter wheat, winter oilseed rape, sugar beet and maize are similar from both ploughed and conservation-tilled fields

*Please pass this on to interested colleagues. They can register for future editions either by emailing admin@sowap.org or subscribing at www.sowap.org.
For further information contact admin@sowap.org*