

Adviser spotlight

# One-to-one Integrated Land Management Plans (ILMP)

Expert perspective: advice from a qualified farm adviser on ILMPs and the potential benefits to farm owners.



FAS adviser: **Sinclair Simpson, Professional Farm Adviser**

Sinclair Simpson has worked as an independent consultant in agriculture for over 37 years. He specialises in farm business management, enterprise benchmarking, grassland management, animal production, husbandry of combinable crops and integrating farm systems to maximise trading profit. Since its launch in 2016, he has been delivering Integrated Land Management Plans (ILMPs) on behalf of FAS to support farmers to improve the sustainability and profitability of their businesses. Here he shares his thoughts on ILMPs and the potential benefits to farm owners.

## What is an ILMP?

‘An Integrated Land Management Plan is an excellent advisory tool. It helps advisers assess the current physical and financial production efficiency of a farming business in relation to the capability of the land and the soil type being farmed. It also allows the adviser to demonstrate how the “appliance of science” allows the farmer to increase production efficiency – which is something most clients find of particular interest.

‘The required farm visit includes collecting information on environmental habitats identified on the farm and the environmental processes used to manage them. As an industry, I think it is important that we look after the environment for future generations and an ILMP is an important tool in developing efficient, environmentally friendly farming systems that are sustainable.

‘The ILMP also includes an allowance to provide follow-up specialist advice to help participants explore options identified in the ILMP report.’

## What kind of farming businesses do you normally work with?

‘I work with a wide range of farm businesses operating organic and non-organic farming systems.

‘The organic farms include dairy, beef, sheep and cereal growers. The non-organic farms cover upland beef and sheep producers, and lowland farms with combinable crops and livestock. This mix of organic and non-organic farmers makes life interesting in that there is the opportunity to share learning between the two groups (e.g. non-organic producers can introduce the grass/clover and manure management systems of the organic farmer to their non-organic system, which can lead to substantial reductions in the cost of purchased inorganic nitrogen).’

“

The main aim of the ILMP is to assess variables and futureproof the business accordingly.

”



## Approximately, how many ILMPs have you carried out on behalf of FAS?

‘Since the scheme was launched, I have completed 15 ILMPs and been responsible for delivering follow-up specialist advice plans to those businesses.’



No business has developed the perfect farming system, so there is always room for improvement.



## Why are ILMPs beneficial to farming business owners?

‘An ILMP allows business owners to call in an independent consultant to carry out a thorough assessment of the current business performance and match it against industry standards. If the physical or financial performance of the business is below par, it is up to the advisor to offer options in the ILMP that address identified weaknesses. In cases where the business meets industry standards, this does not mean that further improvements cannot be made.’

## What does an ILMP involve?

‘The assessment process involves a SWOT analysis to identify business strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Once identified, the ILMP should then provide options which build on the strengths, eliminate weaknesses, explore opportunities and reduce threats to the business.’

## What kind of issues can they help identify or address?

‘ILMPs can help with a range of issues, including; setting targets for basic soil fertility to maximise grass and cereals yields; target applications of farmyard manure to reduce purchased fertiliser costs; management and control of perennial weeds;

set financial targets to increase net worth; identify environmental measures that protect biodiversity and promote development of new habitats; implement reseeding programmes and grassland management systems to fix atmospheric nitrogen; and for big bale systems – match cutting dates to stock performance. These are examples of the many options available. It’s important to tailor the ILMP to meet the requirements of the individual business.’

## Do you think ILMPs can help business owners who are worried about the uncertainty of Brexit?

‘Uncertainty is not new to the industry. All the recommendations I make within the ILMP process are intended to futureproof the business in a climate of market change.’

## Why should business owners take advantage of business development support like ILMPs and schemes like FAS?

‘The potential increase in profit, following an ILMP – by any FBAASS-accredited adviser worth his salt – should represent a very high return on the capital cost, after government funding. ILMPs are equally valuable to businesses generating higher profits as they are to those who would like to improve their current level of performance.’

## What advice would you give to business owners interested in applying for support?

‘They should apply now to ensure that all the funding is used up by the deadline and this valuable advisory tool is not lost post-Brexit.’



Farming can never be described as easy, but a well constructed ILMP definitely has the potential to make it easier.



For information on carbon audits or the wider support available through FAS, please visit [www.fas.scot](http://www.fas.scot)

Or contact us  
T: 0300 323 0161  
E: [advice@fas.scot](mailto:advice@fas.scot)

