

● STORIES FROM THE FARM

# Frank Sapsed

Codicote Bottom, Hertfordshire



# A passion for wildlife

Frank farms his family farm in Hertfordshire, as did his father and grandfather before him. He has been growing oats for Jordans Cereals for over 25 years and has been a part of JFP since it started back in 2015.

As with all the farmers that grow oats for Jordans Cereals, Frank has a passion for wildlife — in particular, for wildflowers and all they offer for bees and other pollinators on his farm.

In this time of climate and ecological emergencies Frank says that *“people are looking at farming more closely. They want to know that farmers are doing their bit to support birds, bees and other farmland wildlife”*. Frank provides field margins — a non-cropped area of wildflowers and grasslands around each field — which he manages with as much care and attention as the crops themselves. His impressive 5ha of wildflower plots, *“some of the best in Hertfordshire”* according to his farm advisor Matt, are brimming with native wildflower species like oxeye daisy, lady's bedstraw, field scabious, and bird's-foot trefoil — all of which provide a valuable food source for bees, butterflies and other pollinators. It gives Frank a great sense of pride when he sees users of the public footpaths crossing his farm, stopping in their tracks to take photographs of his impressive wildflower areas in bloom.

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It's not just the seeds of plants that he sows in the margins that grow, sometimes new species occur naturally! In one area, pyramidal orchids have suddenly appeared and in the last few years species surveying, undertaken by a PhD student, has revealed rare species of bumblebee feeding within his margins.

But Frank is not alone. Six miles to the north, Barbara, Frank's wife, is also growing oats for Jordans on her family farm. Between them they manage an impressive 40ha of land for wildlife, including hedgerows, wild bird seed plots, waterways and field margins. These important habitats support pollinators, small farmland birds, such as corn bunting and linnet, grey partridge and water vole.

The River Mimram, one of Hertfordshire's finest chalk streams, flows through Frank's farm. As well as supporting a healthy population of water voles, the river acts as a commuter highway for bats – enabling them to move between roost sites and feeding areas. Frank's combination of extensive wildflower margins, woodlands, hedgerows, and the river provides a perfect habitat for many species of bat including soprano pipistrelles and brown long-eared bats. The linear habitats provide connectivity to other areas beyond Frank's farm, helping wildlife to move between and access different areas of the landscape.

