

## NEWS RELEASE

**19 July 2016 – for immediate release**

### **FSS rules apply to cover crops - BSPB**

As part of the FAIR PLAY campaign on farm-saved seed, the British Society of Plant Breeders (BSPB) is reminding growers that using farm-saved seed of eligible varieties in cover crop mixtures is subject to the same seed regulations and FSS rules as harvested crops.

Interest in the use of cover crops among arable farmers has increased recently in response to CAP greening requirements and as research has demonstrated the rotational benefits of cover crops for soil quality, reduced nutrient losses, and improved weed and disease management.

This renewed interest has been reflected in an increasing number of queries received by BSPB from individual farmers in relation to the use of combinable crops such as peas, oats and barley in cover crop mixtures.

BSPB is therefore advising farmers and their advisers that seeds regulations and farm-saved seed rules apply regardless of whether a crop is taken to harvest, and that when sowing a cover crop mixture which includes seed of PVR protected varieties, farmers must use either new seed purchased from a licensed seed merchant or farm-saved seed produced on their own holding.

Under the FSS rules, farmers cannot sell, barter, exchange or in any other way transfer farm-saved seed between holdings.

In addition, the use of eligible varieties as farm-saved seed in cover crops must be declared to BSPB and FSS payment made according to the proportion of eligible varieties in the mixture and the area sown.

A list of eligible varieties and payment rates by crop species is available on the FSS section of the BSPB web-site at: <http://www.bspb.co.uk/farmsavedseed/combinable-crops-payment-rates-and-eligible-varieties.php>. Farmers can contact the BSPB helpline on 01353 653209 for advice.

Farmers purchasing new seed to use for cover crops should ensure that this is certified seed bought from a licensed seed merchant (for peas, oats and barley) or if they are buying a cover crop mixture which may include a combination of regulated and unregulated species, that the bag carries an official green label stating 'mixture of seed for green cover'.

BSPB chief executive Dr Penny Maplestone said:

“The FAIR PLAY campaign was established by BSPB and the farming unions to promote a collaborative, industry-wide approach to ensuring all farmers contribute fairly for the economic benefits of using farm-saved seed.

“By ensuring farmers are clear about the rules on FSS use, the FAIR PLAY campaign has come a long way in tackling the gap in FSS payments and supporting continued investment in UK-based breeding programmes.

“Plant breeding provides the essential platform for competitive and sustainable UK agriculture, and has delivered major advances in the yield, quality and performance of our key arable crops. As the farming unions warn of the potential loss of up to quarter of the crop protection toolbox over the next two years, the need for genetic innovation has never been greater to maintain the competitiveness and resilience of UK crop production in the face of a changing climate and new and emerging pest and disease threats.

“It is vital therefore that all farmers understand their legal obligations in relation to FSS use to support the continued development of improved varieties, bred for UK conditions and markets.”

**Contact:**

Dr Penny Maplestone, BSPB

Tel: 01353 653200

E-mail: [penny@bspb.co.uk](mailto:penny@bspb.co.uk)

**Issued by:**

Daniel Pearsall, Front Foot Communications

Tel: 01557 820504

E-mail: [daniel.pearsall@frontfoot.uk.com](mailto:daniel.pearsall@frontfoot.uk.com)