



**Farming**  
Advice Service

## Welcome to the Farming Advice Service (FAS) newsletter

*Thank you for continuing to subscribe  
to our monthly newsletter.*

*We hope you find the content useful  
and we welcome any feedback  
or suggestions on topics you would  
like to see covered in future editions.*

### Contact us

**FAS technical advice line: 03000 200 301**

[advice@farmingadvice.org.uk](mailto:advice@farmingadvice.org.uk)

[farmingadvice.org.uk](http://farmingadvice.org.uk)

**January 2023 –  
Issue 83**

Key dates to be  
aware of

Nutrient Management  
Webinar with Mel  
Holloway – Wednesday 22  
February 7:00pm

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## Key dates to be aware of...

- 1 February** For any land located in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs), you can, from this date, apply organic manure with a high, readily available nitrogen content (for example, slurry, poultry manures or liquid digested sewage sludge) to grassland and tillage land on all soil types if conditions are suitable and you adhere to the quantity restrictions for applying these manures. This is also subject to the [Farming Rules for Water](#) being complied with and there is [agronomic justification](#). (SMR\*\*1).
- 28 February** For any land located in an NVZ, this is the end date for quantity restrictions for applying organic manures with a high, readily available nitrogen content. This is subject to compliance with the [Farming Rules for Water](#) and there is [agronomic justification](#). (SMR 1)

## In case you missed them...

- 1 January** You must start following the rules in the [cross compliance 2023 guide](#) from this date. The Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) 2023 year starts.
- 1 January** You can apply organic manure with a high readily available nitrogen content (for example, slurry, poultry manures or liquid digested sewage sludge) to grassland and tillage land on shallow or sandy soils from this date if conditions are suitable and you adhere to the quantity restrictions for application of these manures. (SMR 1)
- 1 January** Beginning of the year for assessing the annual amount of livestock manure applied to your land. (SMR 1)
- 16 January** For any land located in an NVZ, this is the date from which you can apply manufactured nitrogen fertilisers to grassland and tillage land if conditions are suitable. This is subject to the [Farming Rules for Water](#) being complied with and there is [agronomic justification](#). (SMR 1)

\*\* SMR = Statutory Management Requirements

For more details about the information provided in the key dates table, visit the [Guide to cross compliance in England 2023](#) at GOV.UK.

## Nutrient Management Webinar with Mel Holloway

**Wednesday 22 February 7:00pm**

Join Mel Holloway, expert farm consultant and FACTS qualified advisor, for a presentation and Q&A on nutrient management planning, NVZs and Farming Rules for Water in 2023. **We will also look at the recently announced SFI Nutrient Management standard.** [Click here for free online registration](#)



# How can we help you?

## Free and confidential advice

The FAS is funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). We provide **free, confidential advice** to help farmers in England understand and meet the cross compliance requirements. These requirements apply to you if you are a Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), Countryside Stewardship or Environmental Stewardship claimant.

We update the farming sector on relevant government farming policy that is applicable in England and on the actions that can be taken to help farmers comply with the relevant regulations. Our newsletter also provides articles on topics that are complementary to cross compliance, such as practices that benefit the wider environment and wellbeing support.

[Our website](#) hosts our previous newsletters, as well as technical articles and webinars that cover various topics in more detail.



## Contacting the advice line

Farmers requiring telephone advice can contact the **FAS technical advice line** on 03000 200 301, Monday to Friday, between 08:30 and 17:00. The Rural Services Helpline provides a single number for all FAS, RPA, Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), Natural England and forestry enquiries.

You can also email enquiries to [advice@farmingadvice.org.uk](mailto:advice@farmingadvice.org.uk). Our helpline team aims to respond to all telephone and email enquiries within one working day.

The advice given to individual farmers is **confidential** – we do not disclose any personal or individual information or data obtained during advisory activities.

## Watch our webinar recordings and listen to our podcasts

Did you miss the latest FAS webinar **Cross Compliance in 2023** which took place on 18 January 2023? You can catch up on this and many of our previous webinars on the [FAS website](#).

You can also listen to **podcasts** with expert speakers on the [FAS website](#), as well as through Spotify, Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts.

Our latest podcast on **mental health and wellbeing in farming**, with Caroline Harrison from the RABI and Mark Thomas from FCN, is [now available online](#).

## Technical articles available on the FAS website

The FAS has produced a number of technical articles covering a range of topics, from farming practices to cross compliance. To access these articles, please click on the links below:

- [Reducing agricultural emissions of ammonia](#)
- [Supporting farmers to become resilient](#)
- [Net zero in agriculture](#)
- [Cross compliance inspections – common breaches and guidance](#)
- [Navigating farming support schemes in 2023](#)

## Need extra support?

*We understand it can be difficult to keep up with all the changes affecting the farming industry at the moment, and that the amount of information available can be daunting. The **FAS** is here to help and you can also find the most up-to-date information on grants and payments at [GOV.UK](#).*

If you are feeling overwhelmed and are not sure where to turn, the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution ([RABI](#)) and the Farming Community Network ([FCN](#)) offer support services by email and phone. A range of other organisations also offer complementary forms of support for the farming community – [click here](#) to view support organisations by topic.

The FCN receives between 100 and 150 calls from farmers each month and they have now produced an article highlighting the learnings from these calls. For information on their top 10 observations from these calls, please [click here](#).

# Cross compliance in 2023

*The full cross compliance guide for 2023 is now available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). Below are some key sections with updates for this year and next.*

## What's new for 2023

The cross compliance rules that you must meet **have not changed**. However, the Rural Payment Agency (RPA) has made some changes to how cross compliance runs. It is no longer the case that the RPA has to apply penalties differently between all other rural payments claimants and those:

- who claim under the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) only;
- whose Countryside Stewardship (CS) agreements start on or after 1 January 2021 only;
- whose CS agreements start on or after 1 January 2021 only and who claim under the BPS.

The RPA have added a new section on their plans to replace the BPS with delinked payments in 2024 and what this means for cross compliance.

## Delinked payments: replacing the Basic Payment Scheme

The RPA plans to replace the BPS in England with delinked payments in 2024. The BPS will end after the 2023-scheme year.

When payments are delinked, you will not need any land or entitlements to receive the payments. The RPA plans to make delinked payments each year from 2024 to 2027 but the amount you will receive will reduce each year. Delinked payments are due to stop at the end of 2027.

For more information on delinked payments, please see [Delinked Payments](#).

## Cross compliance

Cross compliance will end after the 2023-scheme year and will not apply to your delinked payments.

From 2024, cross compliance will therefore not apply in England to the rural payments schemes listed in the [About Cross compliance section](#), or to Countryside Stewardship agreements which started on or after 1 January 2021.

However, most of the standards in cross compliance will continue to apply to your farm activities as they **remain in other English laws**. The Defra group will make sure you are aware of these legal requirements, as well as the approach to enforcing them, before 2024.





# Detail of actions and payments for Environmental Land Management schemes announced

On Thursday 26 January Defra published the policy paper [“Environmental Land Management \(ELM\) update: how government will pay for land-based environment and climate goods and services”](#).

The document offers further clarity on the progress of the agricultural transition, with a reduction in direct payments, an increase to funding and rollout of Environmental Land Management schemes.

## The six schemes that will pay farmers for environmental and climate goods and services:

**The Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)** will pay farmers to adopt and maintain sustainable farming practices that can protect and enhance the natural environment alongside food production, and also support farm productivity (including by improving animal health and welfare, optimising the use of inputs and making better use of natural resources).

**Countryside Stewardship (CS)** will pay for more targeted actions relating to specific locations, features and habitats. There will be an extra incentive through CS Plus for land managers to join up across local areas to deliver bigger and better results.

**Landscape Recovery** will pay for bespoke, longer-term, larger scale projects to enhance the natural environment.

This document published on 26 January contains information on the growth and rollout of Environmental Land Management schemes, including the full range of actions, payment rates and when they will be available.

The **Sustainable Farming Incentive** offer in 2023 will expand to include six new standards:

- nutrient management standard
- integrated pest management standard
- hedgerows standard
- arable and horticultural land standard
- improved grassland standard
- low/no input grassland standard.

These are in addition to the three standards launched in June 2022:

- arable and horticulture soils standard
- improved grassland soils standard
- moorland standard.

The document also gives an update on the **Annual Health and Welfare Review, Countryside Stewardship** and further rounds of **Landscape Recovery**.

[Janet Hughes's Future Farming blog](#) offers a clear summary of the announcement and full details can be found on the [GOV.UK webpages](#).



# Defra is increasing money available for farmers and land managers



On 5 January 2023 Farming Minister Mark Spencer gave a [speech at the Oxford Farming Conference](#), in which he announced more support for farmers through these difficult times of rising costs.

Defra is updating payment rates for both Countryside Stewardship (CS) revenue options and capital items from the start of 2023.

The changes mean farmers could receive up to a further £1,000 per year for taking nature-friendly action through the **Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)**. The new Management Payment will be made for the first 50 hectares of farm (£20/ha) in an SFI agreement, to cover the administrative costs of participation and to attract smaller businesses – many of whom are tenant farmers – who are currently under-represented in the scheme. SFI is already paying farmers to improve soil and moorlands, and an expanded set of standards for 2023 is expected to be published shortly.

In addition, farmers with a Countryside Stewardship (CS) agreement, of which there are now 30,000 across England, will see an average increase of 10% to their revenue payment rates – covering ongoing activity such as habitat management. Defra is also updating **capital payment rates**, which cover one-off projects such as hedgerow creation, with an average increase of 48%.

This is one of a series of actions Defra has taken this year to help farmers and land managers face the challenges of the current economic climate, including increasing the frequency of Basic Payment Scheme payments to help with cashflow and introducing measures to help limit fertiliser use.

There is something available for everyone in the package of Environmental Land Management schemes and one-off grants. Defra encourages all farmers to look closely at what is on offer so that they can find what works best for their business.

For more information, please read the relevant [press notice](#).

Jonathan Baker's blog [Introducing SFI Management Payments and changes to Countryside Stewardship rates](#) also gives a break-down of the changes and opportunities to come later in the year.



# New funding opportunities announced in January



## Funding available for robotics and automation in farming

From 9 January 2023, farmers, growers and agri-tech businesses in England can apply for funding to develop innovative ideas in the areas of robotics and automation.

This £12.5 million [robotics and automation competition](#) is part of the £270 million [Farming Innovation Programme](#), which funds ambitious research and development projects to overcome barriers and create a more productive and sustainable sector.

The robotics and automation competition follows the [climate smart farming competition](#) and the [sustainable farm-based proteins competition](#) which Defra ran in 2022.

This competition focuses specifically on robotics and automation in agriculture and horticultural production.

The competition is structured to fund two types of projects:

- [collaborative industry-led research projects with project](#) costs between £500,000 and £1 million over 36-48 months;
- [collaborative, experimental development projects](#) with project costs between £750,000 and £1.5 million over 24-36 months.

Projects within this programme must be collaborative. This is a business-led competition and Defra is encouraging farmers and growers to be part of the project teams. By investing in robotics and automation, Defra hopes to improve productivity on farms, encourage sustainable farming practices, and use data to improve animal welfare and food quality.

In the long term, Defra is hoping that investment in this area will help to reduce input costs. Automation and robotics were also identified in the [National Food Strategy](#) for their potential to promote growth in the sector.

### The robotics and automation competition scope

Horticultural and arable crop production and all livestock are in scope. Controlled environments and vertical farming systems are also in scope. As with previous competitions, projects should demonstrate the benefits to farmers and growers in England.

Projects should address challenges where automation and robotic solutions would benefit food production systems through greater efficiency and resilience.

Example projects could include robotics to move fruit from picker to packing station; robotic feeding and cleaning mechanisms for livestock; automatic monitoring of livestock welfare; and automatic monitoring of soil, plant health and crop yields.

The competition does not cover funding for ornamental, non-food crops or wild-caught fisheries.

### Next steps, links and dates for your diary

[UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\)](#) opened the competition on 9 January 2023 and it will close on 15 March 2023.

Using the following links you can [apply for industrial research projects](#) and [apply for experimental development projects](#).

Defra is encouraging farmers and growers to be involved in the project teams to help make sure the projects are viable on the farm.

UKRI and [Innovate UK KTN](#) will hold consortia building events starting on 18 January 2023. Farmers and growers are very welcome to [register](#) to attend.

## New funding opportunities announced in January

### New round of funding available to improve productivity, sustainability and resilience in farming

#### The Research Starter Projects launch

At the end of this month, farmers, growers and foresters in England will be able to apply for a share of £850,000 to improve productivity, sustainability and resilience.

This is the third round of the competition. Defra launched the first round of the Research Starter competition in October 2021.

The Research Starter 3 expression of interest competition will open on 30 January 2023. And it closes 8 March 2023.

Defra expect projects to start in November 2023.

The competition is designed to help farmers and growers develop bold, collaborative, ambitious ideas which move the agricultural sector towards net zero.

Full details can be found on the [Research Starter competition page](#).

### Large Research & Development Partnership: Round 2 launch

Next month applicants will also be invited to apply for a share of £8 million to develop new solutions or products that have the potential to substantially improve overall productivity, sustainability and resilience of the farming, growing and forestry sectors.

The competition will open on 20 February 2023 and close on 19 April 2023.

The first round of large R&D partnerships competition funding was well received with applications spread across horticulture, broadacre, forestry and livestock. Over 150 farmers were involved, and Defra expect to announce winning projects later this year.

Further details of next month's competition will be released on Defra's Future Farming blog and Defra e-alerts as well as the Farming Innovation Programme website.

Visit the [Farming Innovation Programme website](#) for further details.

## Pesticides users registration reminder

*Businesses and other organisations that use plant protection products (PPPs) professionally in Great Britain are now legally required to register basic details of their activities with authorities under [The Official Controls \(Plant Protection Products\) Regulations 2020](#).*

To register, businesses should complete the registration form available on [GOV.UK](#). Defra has produced detailed guidance on who should register and how they can do this. They have also developed [video guidance](#) to help you fill in the form online and send it to Defra.

**The deadline to register was 22 June 2022. If you have been using PPPs professionally for more than three months and have not yet registered, you must do so as soon as possible. New users need to register within three months of commencing business. If you have already registered, you do not need to take any further action.**

Defra is collecting information from businesses in Scotland and Wales on behalf of Scottish and Welsh Governments. Businesses in Northern Ireland should not register with Defra as Northern Ireland has created its own [regulations](#).

For more information, please see [Defra's Policy Statement](#).





# Working together to achieve sustainable water abstraction

*The drought and dry weather experienced over the last few years is an indication of what we can expect to happen more frequently in the future. Less groundwater recharge and larger seasonal variations in river flows will affect how much water can be sustainably abstracted from underground aquifers and rivers.*



Climate change and population growth mean that if we do not act now, water demand will exceed availability in many parts of the UK. Rivers could have up to 80% less water during the summer by 2050 and it will not be possible to meet the growing demands for water from people, industry, and agriculture.

The Environment Agency (EA) and licence holders need to work together to prevent damage to the environment from water abstraction and ensure that water, that is not needed, is not tied up in abstraction licences.

## What happens next?

The EA has completed an initial screening exercise to find out which catchments are showing signs of environmental damage due to water abstraction.

The EA will write to abstraction licence holders if they are concerned that an abstraction may be contributing to this damage. Letters will be sent out to all affected abstractors in a catchment, using a phased approach that aligns with the Catchment Abstraction Licencing Strategies' (CAMS) common end dates and Time Limited Licence renewals. The EA aims to write to potentially impacted licence holders six years prior to their catchment common end date so that licence holders know as soon as possible that their licence may need to change in the future.

The EA will then review all abstractions in these catchments to check whether they are environmentally sustainable. It is expected that the assessments will show that some licences identified during the initial screening are not causing damage and will need no further action.

If the investigation confirms that abstraction is causing environmental damage, the EA will work with impacted licence holders to make voluntary licence changes to help secure the best solutions for abstractors and the environment. If it is not possible to reach a voluntary agreement, the EA will make the required changes to permanent and time limited licences at the same time, so that abstractors are treated equally regardless of their time limited status.

The Environment Act 2021 removed the option for permanent licence holders to claim financial compensation if their licence is changed to protect the environment from damage. This legislation will apply from 1 January 2028.

## Why is this important?

Abstraction provides essential water for public water supply, agriculture, and industry. We need to adapt the way we manage and abstract water. Taking this action will make catchments more environmentally sustainable and improve certainty over the security and resilience of future water supply. Catchments where abstraction is sustainable will be more resilient to changes in climate and drought pressures. This will help water-dependent businesses to become more resilient and support sustainable growth.

For more information, please contact [sustainable.abstraction@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:sustainable.abstraction@environment-agency.gov.uk).



# New powers to crack down on illegal tree felling

*Unlimited fines and prison sentences are amongst a package of new powers to be introduced as part of a crackdown on illegal tree felling in England, announced by Defra and the Forestry Commission in December 2022.*

Delivered as part of the Environment Act 2021, changes to the Forestry Act 1967 will deliver more proportionate, impactful and enduring enforcement options. The key changes are:

- Felling trees without a felling licence, where one was required, will carry the penalty of a fine – up from the current limit of £2,500 or twice the value of the trees felled;
- Failure to comply with a Forestry Commission Enforcement Notice and a subsequent court-ordered Restocking Order (meaning any trees felled must be replanted) will put offenders at risk of imprisonment, in addition to an unlimited fine;
- Restocking Notices and Enforcement Notices will be listed on the Local Land Charges Register, making them visible to prospective buyers of the land – potentially reducing the land's value.

These new powers will curb illegal tree felling, streamline and strengthen forestry enforcement administration, and serve to protect our trees, woodlands and forests.

The largest fine issued in recent years following a report of illegal tree felling to the Forestry Commission took place in Hailsham, East Sussex in January 2020. Hastings Magistrates Court issued a fine of almost £15,000 for the felling of 12 oak trees, all approximately 150 years old.

Bringing greater transparency to the forestry enforcement process, these provisions clarify that when an Enforcement Notice is affected by a change in land ownership, the new landowner will inherit the responsibilities of an Enforcement Notice. The new clauses will also reclassify Restocking and Enforcement Notices as local land charges, which appear on local land charge registers.

Finally, the Forestry Commission will have powers to compel a landowner to provide information regarding anyone else who has an interest in the land, including leaseholders and tenants. While the owner is listed on HM Land Registry, demonstrating who occupies a woodland can be more challenging. These measures will improve visibility in this regard and help to better target any appropriate enforcement action.

If you think you need a tree felling licence, you can find out how to apply by visiting [Tree felling licence: when you need to apply](#).





## Updates from the Future Farming blog and industry announcements

Defra regularly updates the [Future Farming blog](#). Please [subscribe to the blog](#) to ensure you receive all the latest news.

- [How RPA ensures land data is kept up to date](#). During a three-month period between December and February each year, the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) systematically reviews and updates data held on the Rural Land Register through a process called Proactive Land Change Detection (PLCD).  
If, as part of PLCD, a mapping update is made to your land you will be notified through the Rural Payments service. During the last round of PLCD updates, only 4% of the land parcels updated were returned to the RPA for further amendment. However, if you have any concerns about the changes, you can use a [RLE1 form](#) to request further mapping changes.
- [Top Tips for a farmer to prepare for a site visit](#). RPA's Field Officers undertake more than 6,500 site visits each year, supporting the farming, food production and food trade sectors across England. In this blog the RPA offers some advice to farmers on how they can best prepare for a site visit.
- [Flooding advice for farmers and land managers](#). Information relating to the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) scheme has been added to the guidance on flooding advice for farmers and land managers.
- Winter is the ideal time to review your water needs. [The Environment Agency's \(EA\) guidance on water abstraction during prolonged dry weather and drought](#) includes a section on planning for the future and improving the resilience of your water supply. The Environment Agency will be producing its initial irrigation prospects at the end of February, which will be published on the FAS website Technical Articles pages.
- The [RPA has announced improvement work on its gov.uk pages](#) following feedback from agreement holders and other users.
- [Changes to Capital Grants for 2023](#) were announced on 5 January, including higher rates of payment and longer to complete works.
- [The RPA has written to all Stewardship agreement holders to tell them about the changes and opportunities 2023 brings](#). From 1 January 2023, existing agreements signed under European Union (EU) T&Cs will be moved to align with agreements taken up after January 2021. Significantly this means for the first time, everyone will benefit from the same supportive, partnership-based approach as the RPA move away from the penalty-based inspection system under the EU.

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## Stay up to date with us



### Get the latest updates by following us on Twitter

Follow us on [@DefraFAS](https://twitter.com/DefraFAS) for up-to-the-minute updates on publications, events and industry information.



### Subscribe to our free monthly newsletter

If you don't already receive our monthly FAS newsletter, please visit [farmingadvice.service.org.uk](https://farmingadvice.service.org.uk) and enter your email address into the newsletter sign-up box.

Alternatively, please email [bookings@farmingadvice.service.org.uk](mailto:bookings@farmingadvice.service.org.uk) with **'Register for newsletter'** in the subject line.

In line with data protection regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act 2018, FAS has updated its privacy policy to explain how your data is kept safe.

To view the policy, please visit [www.farmingadvice.service.org.uk/events/privacy/](https://www.farmingadvice.service.org.uk/events/privacy/).