



**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)

**February 2023 –  
Issue 84**

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## Key dates to be aware of...

<b>1 March</b>	You cannot cut or trim hedges or trees from this date, but you can carry out hedge and tree coppicing and hedge laying until 30 April. Not included in the ban are fruit and nut trees in orchards, and trees acting as windbreaks in orchards, vineyards, hop yards, or hop gardens. ( <a href="#">GAEC*7a</a> and <a href="#">GAEC*7c</a> )
<b>14 March</b>	Countryside Stewardship revenue claim declarations and Environmental Stewardship revenue claims open. ( <a href="#">GOV.UK</a> )
<b>14 March</b>	Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) 2023 application window opens. ( <a href="#">BPS 2023</a> )
<b>21 March</b>	Applications open for Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier and Wildlife offers. ( <a href="#">GOV.UK</a> )
<b>31 March</b>	If you hold a <a href="#">water abstraction licence</a> , expect to receive your annual bill (or first-part charge if you hold a two-part tariff agreement) for the forthcoming financial year. ( <a href="#">GAEC*2</a> ) Visit the ' <a href="#">Manage your water abstraction licence</a> ' online pages for more information.

## In case you missed them...

<b>1 February</b>	For any land located in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ), 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 complying with the <a href="#">Farming Rules for Water</a> and there being agronomic justification for applying manure. ( <a href="#">SMR**1</a> )
<b>7 February</b>	Applications open for Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier. ( <a href="#">GOV.UK</a> )
<b>28 February</b>	For any land located in an NVZ, quantity restrictions in regard to applying organic manures with a high, readily available nitrogen content come to an end. This is subject to compliance with the <a href="#">Farming Rules for Water</a> and there being agronomic justification. ( <a href="#">SMR**1</a> )

\*GAEC = Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions

\*\* 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](#) and the [Rural Payments Agency key dates 2023](#) pages of [GOV.UK](#).

## Need extra support?

*We understand that it can be difficult to keep up to date with all the changes affecting the farming industry, and that the amount of information that is available can be daunting. The [FAS](#) is here to help. 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](#).

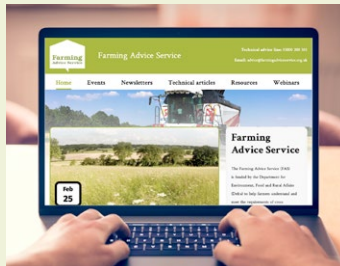
# How can we help you?

## 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.

Defra updates 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.

## Technical articles available on the FAS website

### New for February – [Nutrient Management and Farming Rules for Water](#)

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:

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

## Watch our webinar recordings and listen to our podcasts

Did you miss the latest FAS webinar – **Nutrient management, with Mel Holloway** – which took place on 22 February? You can catch up on this and many of our previous webinars, including **Cross compliance in 2023, with Russell Graham (RPA)**, 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 the FCN, is [now available online](#).

## Environment Agency publishes initial prospects for irrigation forecasts in 2023

The Environment Agency has published their initial prospects for irrigation forecasts for 2023; read the two page summary and full article in the [Technical articles section of the FAS website](#).

Featuring irrigation prospect mapping, individual area forecasts and guidance for irrigators to take action now to safeguard supplies for the summer.

# Are you prepared for the hedge- and tree-cutting closed period?

*The closed period for cutting and trimming hedges and trees between 1 March and 31 August (inclusive) is a cross compliance requirement under [GAEC 7a: Boundaries](#) and [GAEC 7c: Trees](#). Full details can be found on the GOV.UK pages through these links.*

If you are a BPS, Countryside Stewardship or Environmental Stewardship claimant, or if you claim the Farm Woodland Premium element of the English Woodland Grant Scheme, then you must adhere to these requirements on land being used for agriculture, which may include woodland (e.g. when used for grazing). If you fail to do so you could receive a reduction in your payment.

Please note that fruit and nut trees in orchards, and trees acting as windbreaks in orchards, vineyards, hop yards or hop gardens, are not included in the restrictions. Hedges in and around a dwelling house are also excluded.

Some exemptions apply where the hedge or tree is causing a danger to, or obstructing, the public, or where the hedge or tree is dead or diseased. Newly laid hedgerows are also exempt from the rules if they are cut by hand. You will also be exempt from the cutting or trimming rules if you are carrying out coppicing during the period between 1 March and 30 April (inclusive).

You can also apply to the RPA in writing for a cross compliance derogation to cut or trim hedges or trees during the closed period. This includes derogations to cut or trim a hedge or a tree during the month of

August for the purposes of sowing oil seed rape or temporary grassland during that month.

You should wait until you have received written permission before carrying out any work.

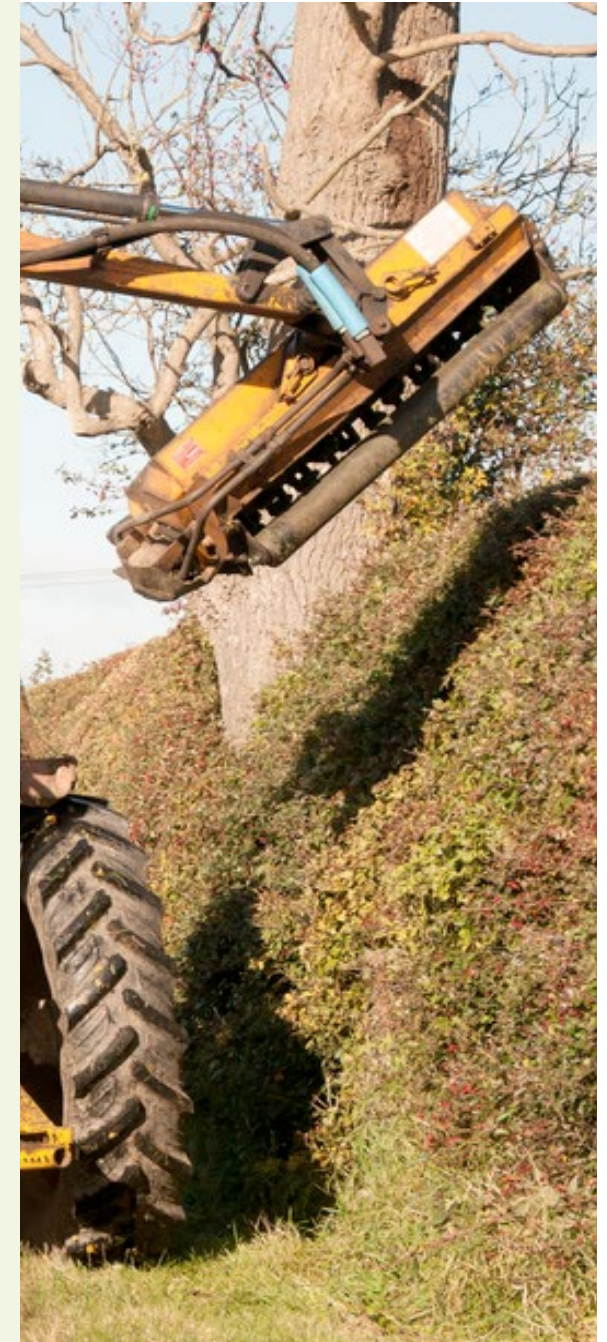
The RPA can be contacted by email ([ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk](mailto:ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk)). All correspondence should be marked 'cross compliance derogation' to ensure it is directed to the correct team.

Please be aware that a **derogation to cut a tree within a hedgerow** would need to be considered under:

- [GAEC 7a: Boundaries](#) – with respect to the hedgerow that the tree is a part of; and
- [GAEC 7c: Trees](#) – with respect to the tree itself.

Before carrying out work on trees, you must check if you need a [felling licence](#). The local planning authority (LPA) will tell you if there is a [tree preservation order](#) in place, or if it is in a [conservation area](#).

You also need to make sure that you take into account any obligations under any Stewardship Schemes when cutting or trimming hedges or trees, and make any minor or temporary adjustments to your agreement if necessary.



# Trees on farms – the latest updates

## The Forestry Commission's Forestry Training Fund

The Forestry Commission, supported by Defra's Nature for Climate Fund, has just announced a new fund to cover **100% of the training costs** for short, practical forestry courses. This funding is being made available to people who want to undertake a forestry-related training course, either to diversify their skills or because they are considering a change in career. Courses include chainsaw maintenance, woodland management, and marketing and selling timber. [Click here for more info.](#)

## Improvements made to the Tree Health Pilot scheme

This month, Defra and the Forestry Commission have updated the Tree Health Pilot to improve the support available to farmers and land managers dealing with tree pest and disease issues.

This innovative pilot, running between 2021 and 2025, provides land managers with grants, guidance and advice in regard to reducing the impacts of tree pests and diseases and building the resilience of England's trees, woodlands and forests ahead of the roll-out of a future nationwide Tree Health Scheme. The pilot is currently available in London, the South East, the North West and the West Midlands.

Following a successful first year, in which more than 80 expressions of interest were received, Defra has worked with the Forestry Commission to extensively evaluate user feedback and make several key changes to the scheme.

Defra has:

- increased payment rates for the Tree Health Pilot, in line with rises for Countryside Stewardship
- introduced simplified forms, which will enable quicker access to payments, as well as swifter action to reduce the spread of tree pests and diseases
- introduced a new biosecurity advice package for grant-holders that covers training and assistance on creating a bespoke biosecurity management plan

[Read Defra's blog post](#) for more detail. To learn how the new payments process works, and how the maximum cap is calculated, please visit the [Tree Health Pilot guidance page on GOV.UK.](#)

## Ash Dieback guidance

Sustainable farming organisation LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), has produced a practical manual with expert guidance, outlining six simple steps to help farmers and landowners identify, assess and manage ash dieback – [A Farmer's Guide to Ash Dieback.](#)

## Learn more about Landscape Recovery round two

On 26 January, Defra announced that the second round of Landscape Recovery will open in the spring.

Farmers and land managers from across England are invited to learn more about the scheme at an upcoming webinar. The government is encouraging all potential applicants to attend.

[Click here to attend the webinar taking place on Wednesday 8 March from 12:30 to 14:00.](#)

Defra will provide more information about Landscape Recovery round two in the upcoming webinar. Feedback will be sought from potential applicants on the proposals and there will be an opportunity for questions. Full application guidance will be provided when applications open.

If you are unable to attend a webinar, you can watch a recording of the webinars that took place during February on the [Future Farming Blog](#).

### Round two:

Round two will focus on projects of at least 500 hectares; targeting net zero, protected sites and habitat creation. This could include landscape-scale projects creating and enhancing woodland, peatland, nature reserves and protected sites, such as ancient woodlands, wetlands and salt marshes.

## Egg labelling changes introduced for poultry housed due to avian influenza

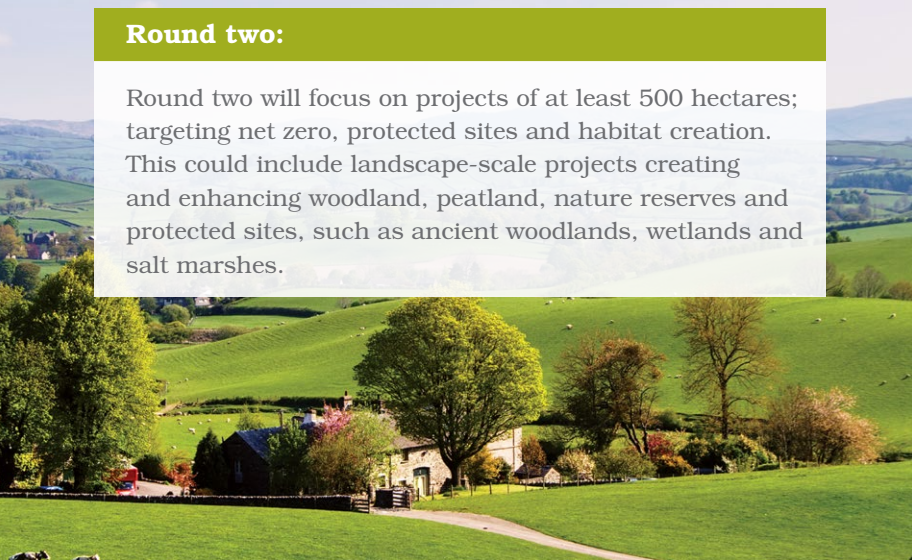
*In line with the Eggs (Marketing Standards) Regulations, eggs originating from free range flocks in Norfolk, Suffolk and parts of Essex must be labelled as barn eggs from 1 February. This will apply to the rest of England from 27 February. The commencement date marks the end of the 16-week grace period given after the introduction of a regional (12 October 2022), and subsequent national mandatory (7 November 2022), housing order.*

In recognition of current elevated input costs facing the industry, along with the impacts of avian influenza, Defra will allow the same packaging concessions that were granted last year. Further details can be found [here](#).

This announcement follows new government support for the poultry industry announced last October allowing compensation to be paid to farmers from the outset (rather than at the end) of planned culling, and enabling swifter payments to help stem any cash flow pressures and give earlier certainty about entitlement to compensation to

assist farmers and producers in relation to the impacts of bird flu.

All poultry and captive birds must be housed in England until further notice. Bird keepers are required to house or net their birds and implement strict biosecurity measures to help protect their flocks from the threat of avian influenza, regardless of type or size. Introducing these steps on farms is the most effective way of reducing the risk of the disease spreading. Further information is available on the [GOV.UK webpages](#).





# Environmental Improvement Plan

## – an update from Defra

*The Environmental Improvement Plan sets out the actions needed to restore nature, tackle environmental pollution, and increase prosperity in England. Published on GOV.UK, it builds on both the [25 Year Environment Plan](#) and the [Environment Act 2021](#). The former sets out a plan to improve the environment within a generation; the latter sets out legally binding, long-term targets to restore nature.*

Defra has previously said that it aims for 70% of farmers to be participating in environmental schemes by 2028. The Environmental Improvement Plan builds on this and Defra is aiming for 65–80% of landowners and farmers to adopt nature-friendly farming on at least 10–15% of their land by 2030.

Defra has explained the importance of these reforms for, and the role of farmers in, protecting and improving the environment, as summarised below in regard to specific sections of the plan.

### Habitat restoration and creation

Farming, through a combination of regulation and public and private schemes, will contribute 80–100% of the target of restoring or creating more than 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected areas by 2042. This reflects the unique role farmers have to play, including through actions to restore peatland and create biodiverse woodlands.

### Species abundance and extinction risk

Defra expects farming and land management to contribute at least 50% of the 25 Year Environment Plan goal of bringing 75% of protected sites into a favourable condition by 2042. This could include activities to reduce the impact of invasive non-native

species on sites, as well as addressing pressures on what are often sensitive areas. These sites are hugely important for ensuring species have strongholds from which they can expand through a farmed landscape that is more welcoming for them.

Outside of protected sites, Defra wants to see the continuation of well-managed priority habitats. Defra also wants newly restored or created habitats to be managed through funded schemes by 2042. To create habitats for vulnerable species and support carbon sequestration, we need more trees across the landscape. Defra will achieve this in a way that limits the impact on food security by applying a mixed approach that combines trees as part of food-producing systems (agroforestry), the creation of smaller woodlands, and larger-scale woodland creation where appropriate.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has been developed by Defra with the support of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Park staff from across England. The programme will now run until March 2025. Details can be found on the [Defra website](#).

### Water quality and water demand

Defra expects that farming reforms, a combination of public and private schemes, and regulation will contribute at least 80% of the progress required to deliver targets to reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution from agriculture into the water environment. The remainder can be met through other improvements, such as developments in soil and nutrient management.

Defra will work with the farming sector to improve water storage and management through changes to abstraction and water licensing, as well as through grant funding, such as the [Water Management grant](#). Defra aims to increase the percentage of water storage available to the agriculture and horticulture sectors by 66% by 2050.

## Environmental Improvement Plan – an update from Defra

Defra will support farmers by helping them meet the cost of improved slurry infrastructure and equipment. This is a short-term period of investment to bring the sector up to standard, after which Defra intends to step up regulatory activities and enforcement to prevent pollution from poor slurry storage and/or management.

### Net zero

Changes in farming practice are required if the agricultural sector is to limit its emissions. Defra acknowledges that changes need to be made whilst maintaining agricultural profitability and increasing productivity.

The Environmental Improvement Plan restates that Defra will provide incentives and grants to farmers to decarbonise agricultural emissions through adopting sustainable land management approaches, new technology and innovative practices to improve farm efficiency.

Farmers can be paid to help achieve all of these ambitions through the Environmental Land Management schemes, as well as the range of grants Defra offers. To find out more, please visit Defra's Future Farming [blog post](#).

## Funding boost for innovation, productivity, and animal health and welfare in farming

*On 21 February, Minister Mark Spencer announced that more than £168 million in grants will be available to farmers this year. The grants will drive innovation, support food production and protect the environment.*

From 21 February up to 4 April, farmers can apply for grants under the [Productivity and Slurry theme](#). The grants support the purchase of items that will make an immediate difference to farm performance, helping farmers use less inputs, reduce emissions and cut waste.

Later this year, Defra will also provide a range of [capital grants for livestock keepers](#) in England.

These grants will go towards the cost of items that improve the health and welfare of livestock. Defra has worked closely with farmers, academics and industry groups to compile the list of items.

Minister Spencer also announced plans for funding for smaller abattoirs, to be announced in full later this year. The new funding will help those abattoirs to add value by supporting local produce availability, providing equipment to support the rearing of rare and native breeds, encouraging rural employment and safeguarding the food supply chain.

For further context please read the [Minister's speech](#) in full.

# Livestock Information Service

*All movement notifications in respect of sheep, goats and deer in England can now be completed online using the Livestock Information Service (LIS).*

LIS online reporting provides a fast and easy way to create and print movement documents, report moves onto farms, keep accurate movement records in an easy-to-use holding register, improve traceability and help manage animal disease outbreaks.

Launched in March 2022, this joint venture between industry and government was designed with input from farmers, as well as from market and abattoir operators. You can create your account at [livestockinformation.org.uk/create-an-account](https://livestockinformation.org.uk/create-an-account).

Keepers only need a current county parish holding (CPH) number and linked email address to get started. If you cannot remember, or do not have access to, that email account any longer, the LIS Support Team can help. Contact them at [support@livestockinformation.org.uk](mailto:support@livestockinformation.org.uk) or call 0844 573 0137.





# Final phase of field trials for TB cattle vaccine underway

APHA [announced](#) on 6 February that cattle have been given a bovine tuberculosis (bTB) vaccine under the next phase of their world-leading vaccination trials.

These trials mark the latest progression of the bTB eradication strategy for England. If this phase is successful, the UK will be a step closer to being able to vaccinate cattle against this endemic disease. It is hoped that the combination of the CattleBCG vaccine and the DIVA skin test will be deployable in the next few years, adding significant tools to those currently available.

The field trials are taking place on commercial livestock farms across the country and are due to be completed in 2023.

The Contract Research Organisation, Eville & Jones Ltd, is now seeking to work with interested farmers and veterinary practices to support this phase of the field trials on suitable farms that meet the following inclusion criteria:

- Officially TB Free (OTF) herds in the Low-Risk Area (LRA) of England or the Low TB Area (LTBA) of Wales
- Herds that have been in existence for eight years or more
- A minimum of three continuous years free from TB (OTF status), with a routine Single Intradermal Comparative Cervical Test (SICCT) having been completed within three calendar years of Day-7
- Not in a current radial or contiguous TB testing regime
- Not in an active TB hotspot (as defined by APHA)

- Not having purchased cattle from a higher TB risk area within the last 12 months (of Day-7)
- No scheduled statutory TB test during the proposed study period (Day-7 to Day-91)

If you are interested in taking part in this research project, which is critical in order to bring a new tool to bear on the eradication of bovine TB, and believe you have a suitable farm that meets the inclusion criteria, please contact Dr Lindsay Heasman: [lindsay.heasman@eandj.co.uk](mailto:lindsay.heasman@eandj.co.uk).

Details of contractual arrangements and incentives will follow on enquiry. You can read more about the vaccination trials on the [TBhub webpage](#).



## Register for a vet visit: the Animal Health and Welfare Review

*Farmers and animal keepers can now register for an Annual Health and Welfare Review, which is a funded yearly visit from your chosen vet or team of vets. It can be undertaken whenever works for you and will allow you and your vet to concentrate on your animals' specific health and welfare priorities. This is the first step on the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway.*

The initial step is to [register your interest on GOV.UK](#). This is simple and will take about 5 minutes. Initially, only BPS-eligible farmers will be able to register. Full guidance on eligibility can be found on [GOV.UK](#), where you will also find published guidance for vets on their role in the Review. Watch the quick demonstration video on how to apply here: [How to apply for an annual health and welfare review of your livestock](#).



# 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.

- ‘Biodiversity Net Gain’ (BNG) will be introduced from November 2023, helping deliver the nature-friendly homes of the future. Defra has released the [government’s response](#) to the BNG regulations and implementation consultation. The response outlines how biodiversity net gain will work in practice, as well as detailing the requirements that Defra will set through secondary legislation. There is [guidance](#) on how land managers (including farmers and land advisors) can take part in the off-site BNG market, alongside how they can [combine BNG and nutrient mitigation/other ecosystems service payments](#) (‘stacking and bundling’). For further information, please visit the BNG guidance homepage.
- Defra published the [policy document for the Environmental Land Management schemes](#) at the beginning of the year. If you have not had a chance to review it, the document can be found on the Defra site.
- The Environment Agency has released its initial irrigation prospects, which are published on our [Technical Articles page](#). The initial prospects for irrigation across England in 2023 range from good through to moderate to poor (in parts of East Anglia). The next two months of rainfall will be critical in determining the water resources position going into the irrigation season. Please take every possible opportunity to ensure that high-flow storage reservoirs are as full as possible by the start of the irrigation season. An update on the irrigation prospects will be published towards the end of April. Winter is the ideal time to review your water needs. [The Environment Agency’s 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.
- [Top tips for farmers 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.
- [Changes to Capital Grants for 2023](#) were announced on 5 January. These include higher rates of payment and works that take longer to complete.

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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/).