



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.service.org.uk
farmingadvice.service.org.uk

You can view a text-only version of the June
Newsletter [by clicking this link](#).

**June 2023 –
Issue 88**

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Stay up to date with us

Key dates to be aware of...

4 July	Applications for Nitrate vulnerable zone (NVZ) grassland derogations opened on 6 June. The deadline for applications is 4 July . You must apply by telephoning the Environment Agency with the relevant information, which can be found on GOV.UK .
18 August	The deadline for applying for Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier and Wildlife Offers is 18 August .
31 August	The deadline for making certain changes to a Countryside Stewardship revenue claim declaration that was submitted before midnight on 15 May (without reduction) is 31 August at 11:59pm . If you missed the deadline for Countryside Stewardship (CS) revenue claim declarations or Environmental Stewardship (ES) revenue claims without reduction on 15 May, 31 August at 11:59pm is also the deadline for late CS revenue claim declarations and ES revenue claims (with reduction). (GOV.UK)

In case you missed them...

30 April	You must have recorded the number of “specified” livestock kept on your farm during the previous calendar year and calculated the amount of nitrogen they produced. You must also have recorded the number and type of livestock in a building or hardstanding during the previous storage period. (SMR**1)
1 May	You must not carry out hedge or tree coppicing or hedge laying from this date. (GAEC*7a and GAEC*7c)

*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](https://gov.uk).

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), CS or ES 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.

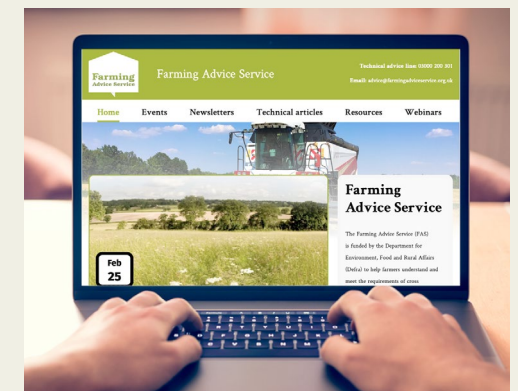
[Our website](#) hosts our previous newsletters, as well as technical articles and webinars that cover various topics in more detail.

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, Rural Payments Agency (RPA), Animal and Plant Health Agency, Natural England** and **forestry** enquiries.

You can also email enquiries to 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

If you missed our latest webinar “**Practical Nutrient Management Planning**” on 29 March, you can watch the recording on our [webinar pages](#).

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

The latest podcast on the Future Farming Resilience Fund is [now available online](#), together with **an introduction to nutrient management with Mel Holloway**.

Technical articles available on the FAS website

The FAS and partners have 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:

- [Nutrient management and farming rules for water](#)
- [Reducing agricultural emissions of ammonia](#)
- [Supporting farmers to become resilient](#)
- [Net zero in agriculture](#)
- [Environment Agency updated prospects for irrigation – forecast for 2023](#)

Farm Safety Week – starts 17 July

This year, the annual Farm Safety Week campaign is taking place from 17 to 21 July 2023. The campaign is managed and funded by the Farm Safety Foundation ([YellowWellies.org](#)) and involves over 400 partners in five countries – England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Agricultural mortality rates remain high in the industry, compared with other sectors, in which fatal accident rates have generally decreased. Now in its 11th year, the annual Farm Safety Week campaign raises awareness of the impacts of farm incidents on the industry and community and promotes the importance of farming safely.

Stephanie Berkeley, manager of the Farm Safety Foundation, the charity leading the campaign, has said:

“While there are signs that attitudes and behaviours are changing in the industry, the pace of change is slow – too slow for those that have been affected by life-changing or life-ending incidents across the UK and Ireland over the past year.

Farm Safety Week is an opportunity to come together as an industry and recognise those lost to and impacted by incidents on farms. Whether new to the industry or farming for years, we all have a role to play in improving the poor safety record that we can’t seem to shake. In the first six months of 2023, we have already lost 18 people on farms in England, Wales and Scotland, almost twice the number compared to the same period last year. This is a reminder of

why Yellow Wellies exists as a charity and why our education programme and campaigns like Farm Safety Week matter.”

Farm Safety Starts With Me is the theme running through this year’s campaign, which emphasises that farm safety is an investment not a luxury. The campaign seeks to highlight those reasons why farm safety might not be prioritised, and to address them.

To learn more about Farm Safety Week visit [www.yellowwellies.org](#) or follow @yellowwelliesuk on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter using the hashtag #FarmSafetyWeek.



Environmental impact assessments (EIAs) in agriculture



The EIA regulations protect rural land in England that is uncultivated or semi-natural from potential damage through changes in agricultural activities. This includes damage by increasing productivity and/or physically changing field boundaries, and can prevent ploughing, cultivating or intensification so as to protect and maintain levels of organic matter and carbon in soils.

Uncultivated land is land that has not been cultivated in the past 15 years by physical means (e.g. ploughing or an activity that breaks the soil surface or disrupts the subsoil) or chemical means (e.g. adding fertiliser or soil improvers).

Semi-natural land includes [priority habitats](#), heritage or archaeological features, or protected landscapes. This is usually land that has not been intensively farmed, such as unimproved grassland or lowland heath.

The requirements to comply with the EIA regulations also form part of the cross compliance rules under Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) 6: [Maintenance of soil organic matter](#).

When to get permission to change the use of rural land

Natural England must decide if your proposal to change the use of uncultivated or semi-natural rural land is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. You must [apply for this decision](#), known as an 'EIA screening decision', before you change the use of rural land in several ways, including:

- increasing the productivity of land for agriculture;
- restoring semi-natural grassland or semi-natural heathland;
- altering field boundaries.

Please visit [GOV.UK](#) for more details.

You can access an Environmental Screening Report template compiled by Natural England at [GOV.UK](#). This will guide you through your EIA screening decision application and ensure that you have included the appropriate information. Natural England also provides a checklist that can be used to ensure that all the required information has been provided. This is on the last page of the [Application for an Environmental Impact Assessment \(EIA\) Screening Decision form](#).

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact the EIA team at Natural England on 0800 028 2140 or eia.england@naturalengland.org.uk.

Sustainable Farming Incentive 2023: expanded offer to roll out from August

On 21 June Minister Spencer confirmed the final details of the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) 2023 offer at the Lincolnshire Show, including on the SFI management payment and 'how those who already have an SFI agreement can access SFI23.

The SFI offers payments for actions that support food production and can help improve farm productivity and resilience, while also protecting and improving the environment.

It is straightforward to apply for the scheme, payments are received quickly, and it is less prescriptive than SFI 2022 – allowing farmers the flexibility to focus on delivering outcomes that matter.

Defra wants all farmers to consider taking part in the SFI, so they are introducing twice as many new SFI actions than originally planned in 2023 and have made the scheme more flexible.

To make the change from the initial offer to the new one smooth, Defra has temporarily closed applications and will

start accepting applications in a controlled rollout from August.

Farmers will be able to apply for a total of 23 paid-for actions. This includes actions relating to soil health, hedgerow management, providing food and habitats for wildlife, and managing pests and nutrients. Defra has produced an [SFI handbook](#), which includes details of actions and payment rates.

In combination with CS, Defra has an offer that is attractive and workable for all kinds of farms, with even more coming in future years.

For more information, please read the Defra [blog post](#).



Survey on actions to reduce ammonia on farms

A reminder to provide your views on ammonia to support research and enter a prize draw.

The UK's [Clean Air Strategy](#) 2018 highlights that agriculture is the biggest producer of ammonia emissions in the UK. However, there are practices that can be introduced to reduce these emissions. Many farmers in the UK have introduced these practices, but information on uptake and the challenges to further uptake is lacking. A survey is being conducted to understand this better.

Ammonia emissions in agriculture can be released at different stages of the manure management cycle, and practices to reduce them include using slurry spreading equipment, such as a trailing shoe or covering manure/slurry stores.

If you would like to share your views on ammonia and practices that reduce ammonia, [please complete this quick five-minute survey](#). There is an opportunity to enter a prize draw to win a £50 Amazon voucher for completing the survey (the T&C's are provided within the survey).

If you have any questions, please contact Aim-Health@ricardo.com. The anonymous findings from the survey will be used as part of wider research being undertaken by the National Institute for Health and Care Research's (NIHR's) Public Health Research (PHR) programme, with support from Defra and other stakeholders across the UK.



Water abstraction – dry weather update and water abstraction digital service

The drought situation in England had been improving due to several months of above-average rainfall through winter and spring but the recent drier and hotter weather, coupled with high water demand, is increasing dry weather impacts in parts of England.

May was dry, with many catchments across England receiving below-average rainfall (with the exception of 13 catchments in south west and eastern England – see the Environment Agency's latest [water situation report](#) for more information). This weather pattern has continued in June, with significantly below-average rainfall (as at mid-June). The hot weather has added additional pressure. The May rainfall total for England was 39 mm, which represents 65% of the 1961 to 1990 long-term average (LTA) for the time of year.

Soil moisture deficits (SMDs) have increased across England, with many recording values now higher than average for the time of year, meaning soils are drier than would be expected. This is particularly the case across western areas of England (as at the end of May).

In some parts of the country reservoir levels, groundwater levels and river flows are declining, as expected due to the seasonal hot, dry weather.

The Environment Agency (EA) is working with partners to manage any impacts locally and is continuing to monitor the situation to plan and prepare for a situation in which the prolonged dry weather continues.

Cornwall and Devon and parts of East Anglia will remain in drought now and throughout the summer.

The South West has continued to see low levels in two public water supply reservoirs, while in Norfolk there are concerns about groundwater levels and agricultural water reserves. The EA is continuing to work with the sector on planning for dry weather impacts and has introduced water abstraction e-alerts in eight of its operational areas (to date) to help optimise water availability. The multi-sector Water Resources East Dry Weather Group is also working to identify local opportunities for support.

The EA'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.

Further links and information are available on the EA's blog on [GOV.UK](#) and in the EA's irrigation prospects report, for England, which can be found on the [FAS website](#).

Don't forget that [GAEC2](#) requires farmers to have a licence from the Environment Agency to abstract more than 20 cubic metres (4,400 gallons) of water from an inland or underground source for irrigation, in a single day.

Water abstraction digital service

You can now use the [Managing Water Abstraction service](#) on GOV.UK to submit your **water abstraction returns online**, view your licence and past returns, and give someone access to manage your account.

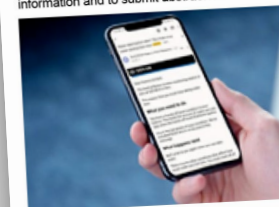
Some abstractors are now receiving water abstraction e-alerts from the service, which are email notifications sent by the Environment Agency when flows are low and licence conditions mean that abstraction needs to be reduced or to cease. The e-alerts also let abstractors know that flows have recovered so they can take water again. The alerts improve access to water when it is available, and better protect the environment and other abstractors when it is not.

Details about how to manage your water abstraction or impoundment licence online can be found [here](#). More information about e-alerts can be found [here](#).

Improving communications

Guidance
Manage your water abstraction or impoundment licence online

Use this service to view and share your licence information and to submit abstraction returns.



- Water Abstraction Alerts
 - Improved access to water when it is available
 - Continued protection for abstractors and the environment when it is not
- £8.8m/year potential benefit for the sector

Trees on farms – *the latest updates*

New guide launched to help farmers tackle ash dieback

A new, practical manual, with expert guidance, outlines six simple steps for identifying, assessing and managing ash dieback on farms.

Farmers manage a large proportion of the country's ash trees, not just in woodland, but in their fields, hedgerows and along roadsides. Ash dieback is present across the UK and is a pressing problem for an increasing number of farmers and other landowners.

The sustainable farming organisation LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), in collaboration with Forest Research, the University of Exeter, Fera Science Ltd. and Defra, has produced a practical manual, with expert guidance, outlining six simple steps to help farmers and landowners identify, assess and manage ash dieback. The free resource includes sections on:

- Identifying and assessing ash dieback
- Protecting yourself and others
- Preparing to act
- Taking action
- Protecting trees on-farm
- Restoring trees on-farm

It also looks at wider health and safety issues, legal obligations around felling, and ways to reduce the costs involved in managing ash dieback.

Alongside 'A Farmer's Guide to Ash Dieback', LEAF has also produced a suite of explanatory videos, which include relatable and practical examples of tree health management on-farm. The videos involve farmers, tree specialists and other industry representatives and feature drone footage, farmer case studies and illustrated guidance.

'A Farmer's Guide to Ash Dieback' and accompanying videos can be found [here](#).



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.

Unleashing Rural Opportunity

In June the government announced steps that it is taking to boost rural communities, relating to housing, transport, digital connectivity and jobs.

The 'Unleashing Rural Opportunity' publication also includes new measures targeted at farmers, including:

- new funding to improve digital connectivity in hard-to-reach areas;
- a consultation on planning changes to make agricultural development more flexible for farmers;
- support for electricity infrastructure in rural areas, making sure it keeps up with the changing needs of consumers;
- a consultation on a new fund to help smaller abattoirs improve productivity and enhance animal welfare, with the aim of opening a fund for applications later this year;
- new funding to help cut rural crime.

For more detail, please read the [news story](#) on GOV.UK.

Improvements to farming schemes for upland farmers

Defra recently announced changes it is making, following feedback from upland farmers and industry representatives, to make Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) even more accessible to upland farmers. Defra is:

- making payment rates in ELMS equal for both upland and lowland farms where they are carrying out the same actions – this means increased rates for upland farmers in four CS options;
- reviewing and amending a further seven Countryside Stewardship options to make them more accessible for upland farmers;
- improving engagement with upland farmers, with focused advice and support to help them access schemes.

[Read further details on Defra's farming blog](#) and [take a look at the new upland specific leaflet](#).

Help Defra to review the FETF theme – Productivity and Slurry grant items

In February, Defra invited businesses to apply for grants under the Productivity and Slurry theme of the [Farming Equipment and Technology Fund \(FETF\)](#).

Defra will be adopting a collaborative approach to reviewing the list of grants ahead of future rounds in order to update the list. The next round is expected in early 2024.

Defra is conducting a survey, which **closes at midday on 12 July**, where you can suggest productivity or slurry management equipment and inform Defra which specifications you would like to be updated.

For more information on how to participate, please visit Defra's [farming blog post on the survey](#).



Updates from the Future Farming blog and industry announcements

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Water Management grant closing 12 July

The Defra Water Management grant will be closing soon.

The grant is designed to help improve farm productivity, by bringing about more efficient use of water for irrigation, through the adoption of best practice irrigation application equipment, and to secure water supplies through the construction of on-farm reservoirs.

The minimum grant is £35,000, with a maximum grant available of £500,000 per applicant per funding round.

For more information and how to apply visit the Defra [farming blog](#).

Join Rural Payments Agency (RPA) at agricultural shows this summer and autumn

The RPA travels around the country throughout the year to attend a variety of agricultural shows. The RPA's presence at these events allows it to have face-to-face contact with a wide range of farmers, gaining their insights and feedback on existing and new schemes, as well as discussing what's important in their local communities.

The RPA primarily attends shows in order to answer queries from farmers and agents across all current and future schemes. This year, the RPA will specifically be focussing on the take-up of SFI, Farming Investment Fund grants and CS.

Visitors can discuss any issues or queries they have with the team manning the stand. The RPA team members at the show will always do what they can to help, or take away queries that can't be answered on the day. They will also have a range of leaflets, lots of great literature on CS and the different elements of the scheme, woodland and SFI. For this list of shows the RPA will be attending in 2023 please visit [GOV.UK](#).

Uplift of £31 million to the FETF theme – Productivity and Slurry grant items

On 8 June Defra announced that they are offering a significant uplift on the original £17 million under the Productivity and Slurry grant to meet popular demand. The grant is available to farmers and foresters for equipment and technology to boost farm productivity, increase environmental sustainability and aid the management of slurry, with over 3,000 applicants set to receive grants through the most recent round. This represents an uplift to grants to the value of £31 million.

The current rounds of FETF applications are now closed to new applications; however, Defra does intend to offer further rounds of FETF funding in the future.

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

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.



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

Alternatively, please email 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/.