

Step by step guide to making greening work on your farm

Under the new Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), 30% of an arable farmer's payment will depend on them meeting the 'greening' requirements. Here is a guide on how to meet the BPS requirements this year. Full guidance can also be found on the GOV.UK website at www.gov.uk/rpa/bps

Deadline for applications

BPS applications need to be submitted by **midnight on 15 June** but farmers are urged not to leave it to the last moment. Beginning your claim now means that you have time to access any help you may need. Farmers who still need help to register, and agents with more than five claims should call the Rural Payments helpline on 03000 200 301 to book an appointment at a support centre in order to receive more tailored help.

What are the three greening rules?

- Permanent grassland
- Crop diversification
- Ecological focus areas

CROP DIVERSIFICATION

What is the definition of arable land?

- Arable land includes land cultivated for annual crops (including combinable crops, root crops, crops grown for animal feed such as forage maize and forage rape, field vegetables and cut flowers and bulbs), game crops, wild bird covers, pollen and nectar mixes and stewardship margins around arable fields plus temporary grass and fallow.
- Permanent grass and permanent crops are not arable crops and the land on which these are grown is not arable land.

What is the definition of a holding?

A holding is all of the land a farmer manages and uses for agricultural activities in the UK. For most farmers, this is all of the land you should declare under your Single Business Identifier (SBI). It can include more than one County Parish Holding (CPH) number and land you farm at more than one location in the UK, including cross border holdings.

What is the definition of total eligible agricultural area?

This is the agricultural area that will be eligible for BPS. Eligible agricultural area is made up of:

- arable land
- permanent grassland
- permanent crops

What are the crop diversification requirements?

Area of arable land	Crop diversification requirement	Further requirement
<10 ha	None	

Area of arable land	Crop diversification requirement	Further requirement
10 to 30 ha	At least two different arable crops	The largest crop must not cover more than 75% of your arable land
> 30 ha	At least three different arable crops	The largest crop must not cover more than 75% of your arable land, and the two largest crops together must not cover more than 95% of your arable land
If temporary grass or fallow covers more than 75% of your arable land and remaining arable land is >30ha	Two additional arable crops on remaining arable land	Not required to reduce the amount of temporary grass or fallow to below 75% of total arable land. On the remaining land, the main crop should not cover more than 75%

The RPA is inspecting compliance with the crop diversification rules during the 'cropping period'; throughout May to 30 June. Farmers who have three eligible crops in the ground, in the right proportions, during this period can be confident that they will be complying with the rules. Should any crops be harvested before 30 June, the RPA will accept the presence of stubble as being evidence of a crop that has already been grown. More generally, claimants are advised to retain any evidence they have that early-harvested crops have been grown in case this is helpful at the time of an inspection.

Are there any crop diversification requirement exemptions?

There are three exemptions to the crop diversification rules:

Exception A:

More than 75% of your **arable** land will be:

- fallow
- temporary grassland
- a combination of both

and the rest of your arable land will be 30 hectares or less

Exception B:

More than 75% of your **total eligible agricultural area** will be:

- permanent grassland
- temporary grassland
- used for the cultivation of crops grown in water (such as Watercress)
- a combination of the above

and the rest of your arable land will be 30 hectares or less.

Exception C:

You have new land and different crops. There are two parts to this exemption:

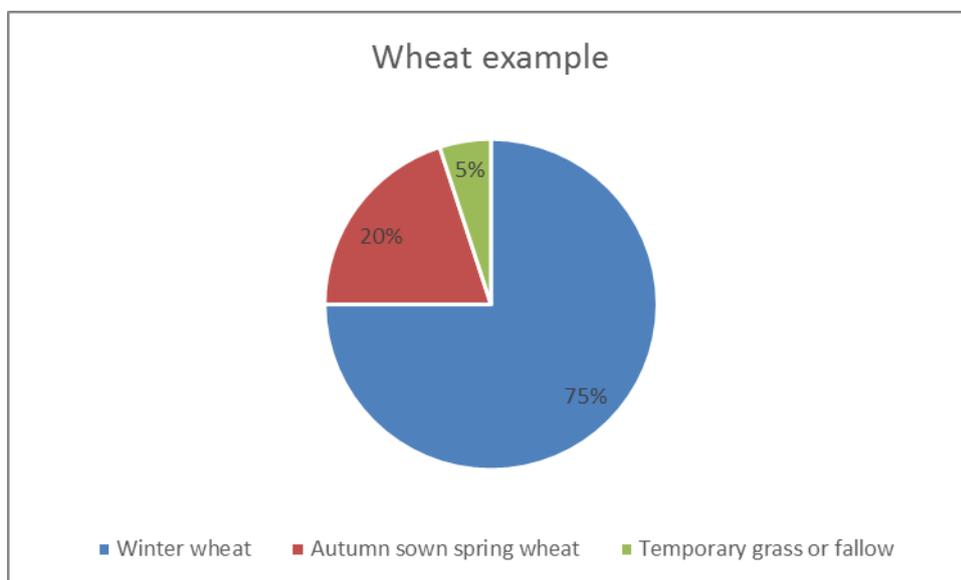
1. More than 50% of the arable land you declare on your BPS 2015 application was not declared on your SPS 2014 application, and;
2. All the arable land parcels you declare on your BPS 2015 application must be used to grow a different crop from the 2014 calendar year

If any of these apply, greening payments will be received without having to do anything different for crop diversification. However, the rules for permanent grassland and Ecological Focus Area (EFA) must still be followed if they apply.

What about contract/block cropped farms?

Difficulty may be experienced where arable areas greater than 30 hectares are contract farmed but have a separate BPS claim. These areas now require three crops per year (whereas previously it may have been block cropped as one crop) providing it does not meet the exceptions.

If you are in a cereal year, it is possible to grow efficiently whilst meeting the crop diversification requirements. Below is an example of how to meet the requirements whilst growing wheat:



What is RPA’s “crop diversification list”?

Under the rules a ‘crop’ can be any of the following:

- a culture of any of the different genera defined in the botanical classification of crops
- a culture of any of the species in the case of Brassicaceae, Solanaceae and Cucurbitaceae
- fallow land
- grasses or other herbaceous forage

The RPA have published the crop diversification lists online – all BPS information is at www.gov.uk/rpa/bps.

Individual crops within a single genus (or species for Brassicaceae, Solanaceae and Cucurbitaceae) count as one crop for crop diversification. For example, bread wheat and Spelt are in the same genus, ‘Triticum’, so would count as one crop.

Winter and spring varieties of crop species count as different crops. The official definitive references to decide if a variety is “winter” or “spring” are the EU common catalogue and PGRO recommended list for peas and

beans. If a variety is not specifically defined as a winter or spring crop then you should assume that the crop is a “spring” variety.

ECOLOGICAL FOCUS AREAS

If a farmer has more than 15 hectares of arable land, there is a requirement to have ‘Ecological Focus Areas’ (EFA) on the land. The EFA areas and features used must be equivalent to at least 5% of the total arable land.

What are the five EFA options?

- buffer strips
- hedges
- nitrogen-fixing crops
- fallow land
- catch crops or cover crops

How do I ensure that my EFA features are eligible and in the right place?

Feature	Area it is worth for EFA	Comments
Hedges	1 metre length = 10 sq. metres	If only counting one side: 1 metre = 5 sq. metre
Buffer strips	1 metre length = 9 sq. metres	Two types: Adjacent to watercourse, or on a slope in-field running parallel to the watercourse.
Nitrogen-fixing crops	1 ha = 0.7 ha	Pasture legumes only count if sown on their own, not with grass.
Fallow	1 ha = 1 ha	Different management periods for EFA v Crop Diversification
Catch and cover crops	1 ha = 0.3 ha	Can only include species from published short list of options

What are the rules for nitrogen-fixing crops?

- Must be in place from 1 May to 30 June
- No restrictions on crop inputs
- Nitrogen-fixing crops count as a crop for the crop diversification rules as well as EFA
- If you are already growing nitrogen-fixing crops on 7.5% or more of the arable area, you have already achieved the 5% EFA requirement

What are the rules for fallow?

- Must be in place from 1 January to 30 June
- Differs to crop diversification fallow dates, which are 1 May to 30 June
- Temporary grass can count as fallow but production would not be permitted until 1 July
- Planting of wild bird cover, nectar mix and grass (when planted as part of an agri-environment scheme) is allowed

- Permitted to “top”, cultivate and use herbicides for weed control but must meet cross compliance rules for soil management
- Permitted to carry out drainage work on fallow
- Must not store bales, hay, silage, straw, manure or machinery on the land to declare it as fallow.
- Must not graze vegetation during fallow period
- If fallow land is located next to a buffer strip, you should ensure that they are distinguishable from each other throughout the whole fallow period

What are the cover crop/catch crop rules for the 2015 scheme year?

	Established by	Retained until
Catch crops	31 August 2015	1 October 2015
Cover crops	1 October 2015	15 January 2016

For EFAs, a sown mix of two different cover types is required (1 cereal & 1 non-cereal) from the following crops:

- Cereals: Barley, Oats, Rye
- Non Cereals: Lucerne, Mustard, Phacelia, Vetch
- Or Grass alone– but only if it has been established by under-sowing in the previous crop.

Get in touch with the FAS

If you would like free and confidential advice on the greening rules from an independent adviser, please contact FAS on 0345 345 1302 or advice@farmingadvice.service.org.uk

Free text message updates

Receive relevant information quickly, including updates of approaching keys dates for cross compliance via the free FAS text messaging service. To register for FREE text message updates, please call 0345 345 1302 or email bookings@farmingadvice.service.org.uk with ‘Register for text updates’ in the subject line.

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