

**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.

All of us at the Farming Advice Service would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a very happy festive season, and a healthy and prosperous new year.

Contact us

FAS technical advice line: 03000 200 301
advice@farmingadvice.org.uk
farmingadvice.org.uk

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

Please be aware that the FAS telephone, email and live chat helpline will be closed from 5pm on Friday 22 December until 8.30am on Tuesday 2 January. Any messages received during this time will be picked up in the new year.

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Key dates to be aware of...

- 31 December** You must apply by 31 December 2023 for grassland derogation in 2024. Applications made in the previous round between 6 June and 4 July 2023 only cover 2023. To apply you can call 03708 506 506 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm) or email regaware@environment-agency.gov.uk.
- 31 December (midnight)** Cross compliance, which farmers and land managers must follow if they claim certain rural payments, ends in England on 31 December 2023, but farming and land management regulations still apply. The rules farmers and land managers must follow can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

In case you missed them...

- 1 December** If you keep sheep and/or goats, you must carry out your annual count of the animals on your holding as of 1 December, enter this into your holding register and complete the inventory by 31 December. You will have received a letter or email in November telling you what to do. ([GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk))
- 1 December** Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship 2023 payment window opens.

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 \(RPA\) key dates 2023](#) pages of GOV.UK.

Upcoming grant deadlines

- 31 December** This is the deadline to raise queries on Delinked Payment information if you wish to transfer value in the forthcoming transfer window. [Contact the RPA for guidance.](#)
- 31 December** If you have started but not submitted a Sustainable Farming Incentive 23 application, submit by this date to avoid the application being withdrawn. See the [GOV.UK](#) pages for further details.
- 15 January** The deadline for applications to be submitted for the [Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund](#) is 11:59pm on 15 January 2024.
- 17 January** The online checker and initial application window for the [Slurry Infrastructure Grant Round 2](#) will close at 11:59pm on 17 January 2024.
- 31 January** For applicants invited to submit full applications for the [Adding Value to Agri Food Grant](#) by the RPA following the eligibility phase, the deadline is 11.59pm on 31 January 2024.

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 8.30am and 5pm. The Rural Services Helpline provides a single number for all FAS, 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.

You can also now speak to our Helpline team through the new online chat function on the farmingadvice.org.uk website.



Improvements on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) (Agriculture) regulation guidance – coming January 2024

Improved guidance to replace [changing uncultivated, semi-natural and rural land](#) will launch at the end of January 2024, together with new application forms.

These will help you more easily meet the requirements of the EIA (Agriculture) regulations.

Although the rules have not changed, the guidance will make it clearer:

- when you need to apply for permission to make changes to your land
- what stages you need to go through

More detailed information, including links to the guidance and the new forms to use, will be provided within the January edition of the FAS newsletter.

Cross compliance

You will still need to comply with EIA regulations when cross compliance ends on 31 December 2023.

Contact Natural England

If you need more information, contact: Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) (Agriculture) Unit

Email: cia.England@naturalengland.org.uk

Freephone: 0800 028 2140



Need extra support?

We understand that 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](#).

Watch our webinar recordings and listen to our podcasts

If you missed any of our previous webinar sessions, including the four webinar series on the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), you can watch the recordings on the [FAS website](#).

You can also listen to FAS podcasts, where expert speakers discuss topics such as the Farming Resilience Fund and nutrient management, on the [FAS website](#). The podcasts are also available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts.

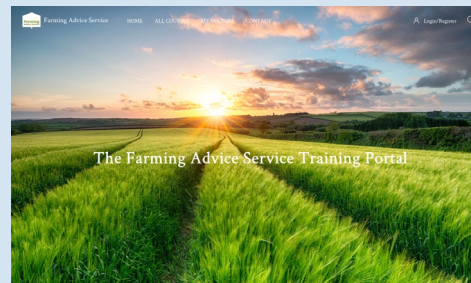


Technical articles available on the FAS website

The FAS and its 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 the Farming Rules for Water](#)
- [Reducing agricultural emissions of ammonia](#)
- [Supporting farmers to become resilient](#)

FAS online training portal



The FAS online training portal is available to anyone who wishes to [register](#), with modules on the following topics:

- Net Zero emissions in agriculture
- Farming Rules for Water
- Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs)

Registrants qualify for two BASIS CPD points for completing each end-of-module quiz.

Farming regulation from the New Year

As mentioned in the November FAS newsletter – BPS and cross compliance will both end at midnight on 31 December 2023. Rules will continue to protect the environment, and animal health and welfare.



Defra has published [cross compliance guidance on GOV.UK](#). It explains what the end of cross compliance means for farmers and land managers.

Defra has made it easier to find which rules still apply to you, with the [Rules for farmers and land managers page](#) on GOV.UK. This is a page of ‘must do’ laws, grouped by activity. For example, if you keep cattle, the section on keeping livestock has a link to the rules for that.

In regard to the approach to regulation of these rules, Defra is currently working with regulators to implement a more preventative and advice-led approach. What this means for farmers is that, wherever possible, Defra will work with you to help you get it right and give you opportunities to self-correct before taking formal action.

Delinked payments: Replacing BPS

Defra will replace BPS with delinked payments on 1 January 2024. These payments will be made each year from 2024 to 2027.

In November or December 2023, the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) sent a ‘Delinked Payments Information Statement’ for BPS customers to check. This shows the ‘reference amount’ used to calculate delinked payments.

Each year, progressive reductions will be subtracted from this figure, as these payments will be phased out by the end of 2027.

If you do not agree with the BPS values shown on your delinked payments information statement, you must send a query to RPA by the 29 February 2024 deadline. If you intend to transfer some or all of your reference data and have a query, tell the RPA as soon as possible before 29 February. This will give them time to resolve your query before you transfer.

If you claimed BPS in any of the scheme years 2020, 2021 or 2022, but did not receive an information statement, please contact the RPA to request one. Read the [RPA blog post](#) for more information.

BPS query and appeals deadlines

New deadlines for BPS payment queries and appeals come into force on 1 January 2024. This month, RPA are contacting customers directly about this, and you should refer to RPA’s email (or letter) for further information.

CS and ES agreements

Defra have updated the Terms and Conditions to reflect the end of cross compliance. You can read about the changes if you are:

- an [Environmental Stewardship \(ES\) agreement holder](#)
- a [Countryside Stewardship \(CS\) agreement holder](#)

Defra will re-publish the 2023 CS agreement holder’s guide with references to cross compliance removed.

The RPA will also email CS and ES agreement holders this month with links to further guidance.

Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) risk map reminder

If you spread organic manure you must produce a risk map of your farm and keep it with your farm records (you may have done this as part of your manure management plan for an agri-environmental scheme).

Risk maps must identify areas where you should never spread organic manures according to the NVZ rules and areas where there may be further restrictions on spreading, depending on the time of year and/or conditions. If you store manure in temporary field heaps the location must also be recorded. Risk maps can be hand-drawn and do not need to be to scale. The full list of map requirements is on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

When identifying risks it is important to consider those areas that under certain conditions (eg: winter, or in summer if fields regularly crack) should be classified as high or very high risk and spreading must be restricted or cease.

These areas include:

- Fields or part fields next to a watercourse, spring or borehole when the surface is severely compacted or waterlogged
- Fields or part fields that are likely to flood for some of the time in most winters

- Fields or part fields next to a watercourse, spring or borehole when the soil is at field capacity¹ (in winter) and there is:
 - a steep slope
 - a moderate slope and a slowly permeable soil (i.e. a clay soil or soil through which water passes slowly)
 - a moderate slope and a well-drained soil
 - a slight slope and a slowly permeable soil
- All fields or part fields with effective pipe or mole drains²

You must update the risk map within three months of a change in circumstances (e.g. you take on more land, or you install or remove field drains) and it should be retained for five years.

¹ Field capacity: fully wetted soil where more rain would cause water loss by drainage. Normally occurs from autumn and lasts until spring.

² Fields or part fields which in the last 12 months have been pipe drained, mole drained or sub-soiled over drains should not be used for spreading.

Applications for grassland derogations in 2024

You can find updated [Grassland derogation guidance](#) on what to do if the livestock manure produced on your farm is likely to exceed the amount you are allowed to spread on your land in an NVZ.

You must apply by 31 December 2023 for grassland derogation in 2024. Applications made in the previous round between 6 June and 4 July 2023 only cover 2023.

To apply you can:

- call 03708 506 506 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm)
- email regaware@environment-agency.gov.uk

Water protection zones

Due to a new mapping system provider, the Drinking Water Safeguard Zones have recently been updated.

Drinking Water Safeguard Zones (SgZs) are identified to help meet statutory Drinking Water Protected Area requirements. They aim to reduce and prevent pollution of water abstracted for drinking water supplies. If you live or work within an SgZ, you must take extra care when using substances, e.g. nutrients, pesticides and herbicides, to ensure they do not cause pollution. More information can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

You can use the Environment Agency (EA)'s [Drinking Water SgZs and Nitrate Vulnerable Zones \(NVZs\) interactive map](#) to identify if you live or work in an SgZ. Please be aware that the map indicating the SgZs is updated regularly (most recently in September) so it is important that you check if the land you live in and/or work in has been updated to be included in an SgZ. Further water protection advice can be found on the [Voluntary Initiative](#) or the [Amenity Forum](#) websites.

If you have any questions regarding SgZs, please contact the EA on **03000 203791**.

Water abstraction reminder

Winter is a good time to review your water needs. The Environment Agency (EA)'s [guidance on water abstraction during prolonged dry weather and drought](#) is designed to help farmers. In light of recent flooding in some parts of England, you may benefit from a change in your abstraction pumping rate or extending your abstraction season. Where a new abstraction licence or a change to an existing licence is required, the EA is encouraging applicants to submit their applications as soon as possible and to ensure that Sections A1.4 and A1.5 of Form [WR328 Section A1.4 Part A](#) are completed to make it clear that the application is linked to the Rural Payment Agency (RPA)'s Water Management grant scheme funding.

If you have concerns around the timeframes for abstraction licensing determination in the context of your grant, please contact the National Permitting Service at the EA. The EA has developed a secure [Water Resource Licensing Service \(WRLS\)](#) on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) for abstractors. They are encouraging abstraction licence holders to register to be able to submit abstraction returns easily and quickly online, see a summary of their licences while in the field and allow access to a third party to submit returns.

Trees on Farms

New digital tool, government woodland access plan and Trees and Forestry Tax Guidance refresh

A new digital mapping tool to help farmers and landowners visualise woodland creation

The Forestry Commission (FC) and environmental mapping company Land App have partnered to create a new digital mapping tool to help farmers and landowners.

The [England Woodland Creation Offer \(EWCO\) Checker Tool](#) allows farmers and landowners to see how they could integrate trees into their land and where they would benefit financially from the EWCO grant scheme. Accessed through a free digital map, the new 'EWCO Checker Tool' visually shows users, down to individual field parcel level, what EWCO additional contribution stackable payments they might receive for areas potentially eligible for tree planting. The tool also includes 100-year estimates for how much carbon they might sequester through a proposed woodland creation site, using figures and methods from the Woodland Carbon Code.

If you would like to learn more about how the EWCO Checker Tool works, watch this [recorded webinar](#) where Land App's Head of Growth, Dan Geerah, demonstrates the tool.

Please note: the EWCO Checker Tool allows users to explore the potential financial options of woodland creation before seeking further advice and ground-truthing. It provides an estimated value of what you could receive and is in no way a binding or guaranteed summary of payment.

The new government woodland access plan will support landowners to increase public access to woodlands

As part of the government's [Woodland Access Implementation Plan](#) (WAIP), published on 29 November, farmers and land managers are being encouraged to take up environmental land management grants that will reward them for creating and maintaining access to trees and woodlands for responsible public enjoyment.

To complement the existing financial support, the FC will provide advice and guidance to land managers on managing woodland that has public access. This will include advice on how access can be incorporated into the design of new woodland.

The FC will also advocate responsible enjoyment of the countryside to the public, promoting the Countryside Code to ensure considerate use of accessible greenspaces. This will include support for the responsible management of dogs and their impact on wildlife and livestock.

Through the WAIP, Defra and the FC will work with landowners and land managers by:

- providing funding to create or maintain access to trees and woodlands, either through a legal right or through permission
- providing better and more relevant guidance which promotes examples of good practice
- offering support on how to manage woodlands with existing access alongside other woodland management objectives
- promoting the Countryside Code to ensure responsible use of and respect for accessible greenspaces, including trees and woodlands.

Defra and the FC want to secure a lasting legacy of access to woodlands. To learn more about the WAIP please visit the FC's [Blog post](#).

More information on the England Woodland Creation Offer and the Environmental Land Management Offer can be found [here](#).

Trees and Forestry Tax Guidance refresh

Defra has reviewed and refreshed its tax guidance on trees and woodlands. Although there are no direct changes to the tax policy, Defra has taken time to update the current guidance to increase the clarity on the current rules.

The guidance is now restructured around the different types of woodland and includes a clear contents page. For example, there is now income tax, corporation tax and inheritance tax information on short rotation coppice. Amenity woodlands and short rotation forestry are also included in the guidance. This refresh will improve the user experience and make navigating the relevant pages easier.

Please find more information [here](#).

Slurry Infrastructure Grant – Round 2 now open

Round 2 of the [Slurry Infrastructure Grant \(SIG\)](#) is now open, with more than £70 million of grant funding available (more than double the funding in Round 1).

Applications are open to beef, dairy and pig farmers who already produce slurry.

The first step in applying for the grant is to use the online eligibility checker, which can be found [here](#).

The checker will tell you if you're eligible for the grant and how much funding you could receive, based on your storage needs.

It has been designed to be simple to use. You will need some important information before you use the checker, including details about your business, your planned project and your slurry storage capacity.

To assess how much slurry storage is required on your farm, please use the latest version of the [slurry wizard](#) tool.

The checker is open until 17 January 2024. Applications are not first-come-first-served, so you can take your time to get your details right.



Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) advice on better slurry management

Good slurry management can improve farm efficiency and reduce impacts on the local environment.

If you are interested in improving slurry management on your farm, please contact your local Catchment Sensitive Farming Adviser (CSFA), who can offer you advice alongside a SIG application.

CSF may offer you a free advice visit or signpost to other help available locally. This advice is optional, and not a condition for securing the grant. CSFAs are available to provide support for farmers and land managers to improve the quality of air, water and flood management through the Agricultural Transition. **Find contact details for your local CSFA [here](#).**



Updates from the Farming blog and industry announcements

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

Annual health and welfare review of livestock now available to more farmers in England

Defra announced on 5 December that the annual health and welfare review of livestock is now open to non-BPS registered farmers, meaning more livestock keepers in England can now apply. Through the review, farmers who keep cattle, sheep and pigs can get funding to pay for a vet to visit their farm and carry out a yearly review. For more information please read the [Defra Farming Blog](#) post.

New fund launched to support smaller abattoirs

On 13 December, Defra launched the £4 million Smaller Abattoir Fund to boost the sustainability and efficiency of red meat and poultry smaller abattoirs across England.

The Smaller Abattoir Fund will award capital grants from £2,000 up to a maximum of £60,000 to support smaller abattoirs across England to improve productivity, purchase equipment to do more processing in-house, enhance animal health and welfare, and invest in new technologies.

The smaller abattoir sector has an important role in maintaining food security and ensures a competitive route to market is available to farmers, especially those who supply local butchers and farm shops, and those who rear rare and native breeds. These businesses also support higher standards of animal welfare by reducing journey times to slaughter.

All eligible abattoirs will be contacted directly by the Rural Payments Agency with more details about the application process, but please email FTF@rpa.gov.uk if you have any questions.

More information about the Smaller Abattoir Fund can be found in [Defra's Farming blog](#).

Submit your views on the horticulture supply chain

On 14 December, the government launched a [review to improve fairness in the fresh produce supply chain](#), to support fruit and vegetable growers and ensure consumers continue having access to high quality British produce.

This consultation will gather evidence on contractual arrangements, and assess whether there is a need for further legislation to oversee the relationship between producers and purchasers.

It delivers on a key commitment made at the [Downing Street Farm to Fork Summit](#) and builds upon work already underway to improve fairness in the pork, dairy and egg supply chains. Have your say before the review closes on **22 February 2024**.

Updates from the Farming blog and industry announcements

Farmers and growers will have continued access to crucial plant protection products

The government has introduced laws so that farmers and growers can continue accessing pesticide products in response to concerns that they would cease being able to do so when EU transitional arrangements end this year.

This will help farmers and growers protect their crops, reduce their costs and put affordable and high-quality food on our tables. It will also provide certainty for the coming years while the government works with farmers and industry to develop longer-term solutions.

Specifically, this means:

- Seeds treated with pesticides authorised in the EU can be imported, sold and used in Great Britain for 3.5 years, until July 2027. Treated seeds must have been authorised for use in an EU or EEA Member State before the end of the implementation period and remain authorised in at least one EU or EEA Member State. For further details, you can read the [Health and Safety Executive's \(HSE\) guidance](#)
- Those who held a Parallel Trade Permit on 31 December 2022 can apply for it be reinstated for a maximum of two years. Imported products must be authorised in an EU or EEA Member State and identical to the GB reference product. Grace periods may be granted when a permit expires, allowing existing stocks to be sold for another six months, then stored and used for up to a year after that. More information and how to apply can be found on the [HSE website](#)

These measures will ensure that farmers and growers can continue to buy and use seeds treated with EU-approved pesticides and have continued access to more cost-effective pesticides from the EU. These measures will come into force on 31 December 2023.

£45 million in new farming competitions and grants to support farmers to foster innovation, boost productivity and improve animal welfare

Last month, at the CLA conference, the government announced up to £45 million in competitions and grants to open in the coming weeks, to support farmers to foster innovation, boost productivity and improve animal welfare. Please find a summary of these upcoming opportunities below.

The Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF) (to get you ready for private investment)

Farmers are now able to apply for individual grants up to £100,000 to prepare nature projects that will attract investment from the private sector from a total of £5 million. NEIRF will help farmers attract investment from the private sector. Information on how to apply is now available on the [Defra Farming Blog](#).

Farming Innovation Programme – Research Starter competition

From 18 December, farmers, growers and foresters in England will be able to apply for a share of the £850,000 Research Starter funding to get innovative new projects off the ground if they have the potential to move the agricultural sector to Net Zero. Find out more and how to apply [here](#).

Farming Innovation Programme – Large Research and Development (R&D) competition

From 15 January, businesses can apply for a share of the £7.8 million [Large R&D fund](#), which supports industrial research or experimental development projects.

Farming Investment Fund – Improving Farm Productivity grant

From January 2024, businesses can apply for an initial share of £30 million, providing capital grants of £25,000-£500,000 towards robotic and automatic equipment, with further funding potentially available depending on levels of interest.

For the first time, it will also fund grants of between £15,000-£100,000 towards solar equipment that can be fitted on rooftops and float on irrigation reservoirs, helping increase energy resilience and take-up of renewable energy generation on farms.

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

Get ready for 2024

In 2024, Defra will extend the range of Farming Innovation Programme grants to include the Accelerating Development of Practices and Technologies (ADOPT) grant. From this, businesses will be able to apply for a share of £44 million to test and trial new technology and techniques on farms.

These grants aim to help businesses boost farm productivity, reduce waste and cut input costs, as well as increase environmental sustainability.

Stay up to date with us



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Subscribe to our free monthly newsletter

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/.