

December 2014 - e-news issue 18

Welcome to the Farming Advice Service newsletter

This is the last Farming Advice Service (FAS) newsletter for 2014; we hope that you have found them informative. We would like to take this opportunity to wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

If you would like to sign-up to receive the Farming Advice Service (FAS) newsletter straight to your inbox, please email bookings@farmingadvice.org.uk with 'Register for newsletter' in the subject line. Your details will not be shared with any third parties.

We hope you find the information in this issue helpful. If you have any comments or ideas for topics you'd like us to cover, please let us know.

FAS technical advice line:

Telephone: 0345 345 1302

Email: advice@farmingadvice.org.uk

Website: www.gov.uk/government/groups/farming-advice-service

**Farming
Advice Service**

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Farming Advice Service in 2015



The Farming Advice Service (FAS) updates the farming sector on EU and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) policy. It not only explains the requirements under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and other EU directives, national legislation and policies, but also their objectives and the actions that help meet compliance. We will continue to provide free, confidential advice on cross compliance and the greening requirements in the next CAP round. From 1 January 2015, we will also be offering advice on the Water Framework Directive and the Sustainable Use (of pesticides) Directive.

For further information, please visit our [website](http://www.gov.uk/government/groups/farming-advice-service) or call 0345 345 1302. Please note that the FAS website has a new address - www.gov.uk/government/groups/farming-advice-service

Cross compliance update

What is cross compliance?

Cross compliance is a set of rules that tells applicants what they must (and must not) do to receive rural payments for:

- the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS);
- Countryside Stewardship Scheme;
- Entry Level Stewardship (including Organic Entry Level Stewardship and Uplands Entry Level Stewardship);
- Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) (including Organic Higher Level Stewardship and Uplands Higher Level Stewardship, but not including HLS agreements that started before 1 January 2007); and
- Woodland Management Grant and Farm Woodland Premium elements of English Woodland Grant Scheme.

[‘The guide to cross compliance 2015’](#)

outlines the rules and you should use this guide to establish which rules are applicable to your holding.

What’s new in 2015?

Under the new CAP, some of the cross compliance rules are the same as in previous years, but some have changed. The most obvious change is that **all of the Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs) and most of the Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) have been renumbered**. Some GAECs have also been split or merged into other rules.

The main changes to GAECs and SMRs since 2014

Below is a summary of the main changes that will be made to cross compliance in 2015. However, it is important that claimants read all of the guidance to make sure they understand all the rules and how they apply to their holding.

- Claimants no longer need to keep a Soil Protection Review (SPR). Instead, **there are new rules for soils** (GAEC 4, 5 and 6) – see below.
- **A longer no-trimming season** will apply for hedges and will run from 1 March until 31 August inclusive. A derogation may be available to those wishing to sow oil seed rape or temporary grassland during August.

- The no-cutting period of 1 March to 31 August inclusive **will also apply to trees**. Orchards are not included in the tree cutting ban.
- What was SMR 3 (sewage sludge) and SMRs 13, 14 and 15 (control of foot and mouth disease, certain animal diseases and bluetongue) have **been removed**.
- What was GAEC 11 (control of weeds) and GAEC 12 (agricultural land which is not in agricultural production) have **been removed**. Instead, as part of the BPS eligibility rules, this agricultural land will need to be maintained so that it is kept clear of dense scrub. If it is not maintained, the land will not be eligible for BPS payments.
- What was GAEC 9 (overgrazing and unsuitable supplementary feeding) has **been removed**.
- **Some rules have been removed** from the SMR for Wild Birds (SMR 2).
- The rule on sustainable use of plant protection products (pesticides) has **been removed** from SMR 10 (plant protection products).
- Under a new GAEC 7, **rules for landscape features have changed**. Boundary features, such as hedgerows and stone walls, will now be covered under GAEC 7A. There will also be new rules for the protection of stone banks and earth banks.
- The exemption that allowed stone to be removed from stone walls to repair footpaths has **been deleted**.
- GAEC 7 (scheduled monuments) has been **renamed** ‘Ancient monuments’ and will be covered under GAEC 7E, but the rules remain the same for this GAEC.

How to access the new guidance

‘The guide to cross compliance in England 2015’ is available to view online [here](#). An email has been sent to all digital customers and a printed version of the guidance, along with the ‘Cross compliance: soil protection standards 2015’ will be posted to all claimants during mid-December.



Important changes to soil management requirements

*There will be new rules for soils that will replace the current GAEC 1 (Soil Protection Review), which is being removed. A new set of national minimum standard rules – which are **outcome focused** and require no paperwork – will be used instead. These will mean that more emphasis is put on actually farming the land rather than keeping a paper log.*

The new rules will be:

GAEC 4 Minimum soil cover

Farmers must take all reasonable steps to protect soil by having a minimum soil cover – except where there is an agronomic justification for not doing so or where establishing a cover would conflict with requirements under GAEC 5. Information on acceptable agronomic justifications and soil cover are set out in [‘The guide to cross compliance 2015’](#) and the [‘Cross Compliance: soil protection standards guidance’](#). Where a suitable agronomic justification not listed in the guidance applies, you will need to apply for a derogation from the RPA.

GAEC 5 Minimum land management reflecting site specific conditions to limit erosion

Farmers must put measures in place to limit soil and bankside erosion caused (for example) by:

- cropping practices and cropping structures;
- livestock management, including outdoor pigs and poultry, causing overgrazing and poaching;
- wind; and
- vehicles, trailers and machinery.

Where compaction may cause soil erosion, farmers must, where appropriate, cultivate post-harvest land and late harvested crops using primary cultivation methods such as ploughing. Alternative primary cultivation methods are included in the [‘Cross Compliance: soil protection standards guidance’](#).

A reduction in a farmer’s agricultural payments could happen where erosion is over a single area greater than 1 hectare or along a continuous stretch of more than 20 metres long and 2 metres wide of a watercourse. Examples of appropriate measures to limit soil erosion are available in the [‘Cross compliance: soil protection standards guidance’](#).

GAEC 6 Maintenance of soil organic matter level

Farmers must:

- not burn crop stubble, except for plant health reasons. Where burning is needed for plant health reasons, it must comply with the Crop Residues (Burning) Regulations (1993) (Regulations 4 (b) and 5);
- comply with the Heather and Grass Burning Regulations (2007) (Regulations 5(2) and 6(1)(a)); and
- comply with the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) (England) (No 2) Regulations (EIA)

(2006) (Regulations 4, 9, 26 and 28) and the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations (1999) (Regulations 4(1) and 22). Do not plough, cultivate or intensify species-rich and semi-natural habitats so as to conserve organic matter and carbon levels in soils. An EIA may be required if the land has not been cultivated within 15 years or if it is semi-natural.

Defra has produced a detailed guide to help you to adhere to the new soil standards, including potential risks and measures that can be taken to minimise soil issues. The document will be circulated with ‘The guide to cross compliance in England 2015’ and is available in electronic format from the GOV.UK [cross compliance page](#).

Please note that the current cross compliance rules will apply until 31 December 2014. All claimants are expected to continue to follow the current rules and to keep an up-to-date [SPR](#), which are still subject to inspection. You will no longer be required to retain your SPR from 1 January 2015.

If you require further advice regarding soil management on your farm, please contact FAS on 0345 345 1302 or email advice@farmingadviceservice.org.uk

The latest information on CAP 2015

Visit www.gov.uk/cap-reform for up-to-date information on CAP 2015, including greening and Countryside Stewardship.

You can also sign up to receive updates from the [CAP reform blog](#).

FAS recently hosted a CAP 2015 update webinar for advisers, in partnership with the RPA. If you were unable to attend on the day, please [click here](#) to view a recording of the webinar. When viewing the webinar, please do so in conjunction with reading the latest CAP guidance. FAS will continue its series of events for farmers into the new year to cover the CAP 2015 changes – all events are advertised on our [events calendar](#) so keep an eye out for forthcoming events in your region.

If you have questions about greening or changes to cross compliance rules for 2015, please contact the FAS advice line on 0345 345 1302 or email advice@farmingadvice.org.uk

FAS is a government-funded service, providing independent and confidential advice. Further information can be found on our [website](#).



Strengthened TB testing rules to be extended from 1 January 2015

If you are a cattle keeper, you are now considered to be in breach of cross compliance if TB tests that were set for your herd by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) are not carried out by the testing deadline. In January 2014, Defra strengthened the existing cross compliance process for overdue TB surveillance and check tests. **From 1 January 2015, the tougher rules will be extended to include most other TB tests.**

Breaches of this nature will be reported to the RPA by APHA and reductions to payments will be applied from the first day of the test going overdue. The level of reduction will depend on the length of time the test was overdue before completion. It is important to note that detection will not be reliant on an inspection taking place.

A full list of TB test types that are subject to the zero tolerance approach is at Annex A of the **TB Information Note 05/12** which you can find here <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/bovine-tb-information-notes>

It is your responsibility to notify APHA in writing of any extenuating circumstances for failing to complete a test within the prescribed timeframe. This information will be considered as part of the referral process to RPA. If you anticipate problems meeting your test deadline, contact your local APHA office as soon as you can.

For contact details of your local APHA office, use the postcode search tool on the [APHA website](#) or call 02920 768 555.

Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) reminders

NVZ grassland derogation

If you intend to apply for an NVZ grassland derogation for 2015, don't forget to submit your application by **31 December 2014**.

Apply via the GOV.UK [Farming Online system](#). If you are unable to apply online or your holding is partially in an NVZ, apply using the Environment Agency's helpline on 03708 506 506.

Whether you are applying online or by telephone, you will need to have

information about your holding to hand. If you have not previously applied for or been granted a derogation, you may find a question and answer document that has been prepared on the subject useful. Please email nitratesdirectiveteam@defra.gov.uk to obtain a copy.

Further information on the derogation can be found in Chapter 6, Part B and at Annex 2, Part B of the [NVZ guidance](#).

Storage requirements for farmers newly in an NVZ from 2013

If your land was designated as an NVZ for the first time in 2013, you will need to provide adequate storage for any slurry you produce from the closed period in autumn 2015. Although the closed period is several months away, advance planning will ensure you are ready for this requirement. See **Chapter 10** of the [NVZ guidance](#) for further advice.

Funded training available via Defra's National Skills Framework

Adults working in the agricultural, horticultural and forestry sectors or rurally located small business are encouraged to sign up to a range of training courses, workshops, seminars and conferences.

Individuals or their employers will pay just 30% of the cost with the remainder being funded through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), managed by Defra and delivered through a range of partner organisations across England.

The training is aimed at helping businesses to optimise their performance and become more

competitive, while equipping individuals with the skills they need to advance their management, technical and IT skills.

Funding is still available and opportunities planned include training courses and events aimed at improving management processes, increasing efficiency of production, managing disease control efficiently and delivering environmental sustainability.

For further information on what's available, including who to contact, please see [RDPE Skills and training: guide for applicants](#) or visit www.gov.uk and search for 'RDPE skills'.



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



The European Agricultural
Fund for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural
areas

FAS will run an events programme in the first quarter of 2015 across England covering cross compliance and greening. To find details of events in your area, please check on the FAS [events calendar](#).

Sign up to FAS services



Register for free text message updates

We use text messages to get relevant information to farmers quickly. We send reminders of approaching key dates for cross compliance. 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. Don't forget to include your name and mobile phone number in the message. Your details will not be shared with third parties.



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Key dates

31 December	All new SPRs/annual updates to be completed. (GAEC 1)
1 January	You must start following the new cross compliance rules from this date. This date is also officially the start of the BPS.
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	You can apply manufactured nitrogen fertilisers to grassland and tillage land from this date if conditions are suitable. (SMR 1)
1 February	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 all soil types from this date if conditions are suitable and you adhere to the quantity restrictions for application of these manures. (SMR 1)
28 February	End of the quantity restrictions for application of organic manures with a high readily available nitrogen content. (SMR 1)