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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@farmingadviceservice.org.uk farmingadviceservice.org.uk

You can view a text-only version of the May Newsletter by <u>clicking this link</u>.



Key dates to be aware of...

1 March– 31 August	New hedgerow management rules came into force in May 2024. As part of this, the <u>hedgerow management rules on cutting and trimming</u> , announced that hedgerows covered by the rules must not be cut or trimmed from 1 March to 31 August .
1 June– 1 July	If you missed the deadline for submitting your 2024 <u>Countryside Stewardship or</u> <u>Environmental Stewardship claim</u> without reduction (15 May 2024), you can still submit a claim between 1 June and 1 July with a 10% reduction applied to claim value. You still have until 11.59pm on Wednesday 2 September 2024 to submit a claim, but the later you submit it, the greater the reduction.
1 June	The three-year agreements for the <u>Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund (CSFF)</u> begin on 1 June 2024.
1 July	New hedgerow management rules came into force in May 2024. As part of this, the <u>hedgerow management rules on buffer strips</u> will apply from 1 July 2024 .

In case you missed them...

- **16 April** You must not burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium **in upland areas** from this date. (GOV.UK)
- 15 MayThe deadline for submitting a 2024 Countryside Stewardship or Environmental
Stewardship claim without reduction was midnight (11.59) on 15 May 2024. You still have
until 11.59pm on Wednesday 2 September 2024 to submit a claim, but a reduction will be
applied to the value of your claim the later you submit it, the greater the reduction.

For more details about the information provided in the key dates table, visit the <u>Rules for Farmers and Land Managers</u> and the relevant pages of GOV.UK.

Upcoming grant deadlines

- **7 June** The deadline for applications to be submitted for a <u>Water Restoration Fund</u> grant is midnight (11:59) on 7 June 2024.
- **28 June** The deadline to submit your full application for the <u>Slurry Infrastructure</u> <u>grant round 1</u> is midnight (11:59) on 28 June 2024.
- **10 July** The deadline to check, sign and return the form sent to you by the RPA to receive grant funding through the Farming Recovery Fund 2024 is 10 July 2024.

In case you missed them...

From 3 January the following grants opened for applications:

- Capital Grants 2024
- <u>Higher Tier Capital Grants 2024</u>
- <u>Protection and Infrastructure Grants 2024</u>
- <u>Woodland Management Plan (WMP) Grants 2024</u>
- <u>Woodland Tree Health (WTH) Grants 2024</u>
- Implementation Plan Grant (PA1) or Feasibility Study Grant (PA2)

Farming Advice Service

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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 and land managers in England understand and meet the legal requirements in English law around certain farming activities to protect people, livestock and the environment. 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 Farming Regulation, such as practices that benefit the wider environment and wellbeing support.

<u>Our website</u> 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 <u>advice@farmingadviceservice.org.uk</u>. 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 <u>farmingadviceservice.org.uk</u> website.



Watch our webinar recordings and listen to our podcasts

If you missed any of our previous webinar sessions, including:

- Integrated Pest Management with Richard Heady of Heady's Farm
- <u>Understanding soil biology for soil health and</u> productive agriculture, with Dr Felicity Crotty

You can watch these recordings and more on the FAS website.



You can also listen to previous webinars as podcasts through the <u>FAS website</u> and Spotify, Audible, Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts.



Directory of farmer support organisations -

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here to help the farming community

We understand it can be difficult to keep up with all the changes affecting the farming industry, and that the amount of information available can be daunting. The <u>FAS</u> is here to help.

A range of organisations offer complementary forms of support for the farming community and both the <u>National Directory of Farm</u> and <u>Rural Support Groups</u> and Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (<u>RABI</u>) provide comprehensive lists of these organisations. However, in this article, FAS provides a selection of recognised farmer support organisations (chosen due to their national coverage) that offer a range of support to the farming community, including information on how they can help, links to further information and how you can get in touch.

Organisation	How can they help you?	Where to find more information/get in touch
Royal Agricultural Benevolence Institution (RABI)	 RABI is a charity and offers mental wellbeing support. Support is provided via: A free and anonymous <u>online mental wellbeing platform</u> Free in-person <u>mental health counselling</u> Farming-focused accredited/certified <u>mental health training</u> 	Royal Agricultural Benevolence Institution Support is available via RABI's freephone 24/7 helpline (0800 188 4444) or by emailing help@rabi.org.uk
The Farming Community Network (FCN)	 FCN is a voluntary organisation and charity that supports farmers and their families through challenging times. Pastoral and practical support is available on topics such as: Financial difficulties Animal disease Mental health Family disputes FCN also run the FarmWell platform, which provides information on business and personal resilience including mental health, bereavement, physical health, financial management and succession planning. 	Farming Community Network Volunteers, who often have a background in farming, run the FCN helpline. The helpline number is 03000 111 999 and it is freely available from 7am to 11pm every day.
National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs (NFYFC)	NFYFC has launched <u>Rural +</u> , which offers guidance on recognising and understanding stress and anxiety – often the first step towards improvements.	<u>National Federation of Young</u> <u>Farmers' Clubs</u>

Directory of farmer support organisations

here to help the farming community

Organisation	How can they help you?	Where to find more information/get in touch
You Are Not Alone (YANA)	 YANA is a service specifically for those involved in farming or rural businesses who are affected by stress or depression. Types of support available include: Drawing up a <u>plan of action for yourself</u> or getting advice on how to help someone you know who is struggling with depression or anxiety (this can be found on the website) Funding is available for up to nine counselling sessions for anyone in East Anglia. This is non-means tested, available to anyone involved with the farming community and can be accessed by calling the helpline. 	You Are Not Alone You can get in contact with YANA on their telephone number 0300 323 0400 or email helpline@yanahelp.org
Farm Safety Foundation (home of 'Yellow Wellies')	 The Farm Safety Foundation is a small UK-wide charity dedicated to raising awareness of farm safety and mental wellbeing in farmers. <u>The little book of minding your head'</u> is a document that presents: Triggers and signs of mental ill health Tips for coping with stress Tips for starting a conversation Sources of help. 	<u>Farm Safety Foundation/</u> <u>YellowWellies.org</u>
Forage Aid	Forage Aid is a registered charity that responds to calls for help from UK farmers whose livestock are in crisis due to extreme weather or acts of God. The charity provides forage/bedding to those in need. In early 2023, the Addington Fund and Forage Aid agreed to join forces and build on the invaluable work the two charities undertake in supporting farmers and farm workers experiencing hardship. Administration of all Forage Aid grants and donations is now handled by the <u>Addington Fund</u> .	Forage Aid Apply for help/donate

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New technical articles available on the FAS website:

Soil health in UK farming

In March, FAS published a new technical article on Soil health in UK farming. The article outlines the principles of soil health, soil testing requirements and the available Sustainable Farming Incentive actions focused on improving soil health on your farm. In the context of farming, soil health broadly refers to the continued capacity of soil to function as an ecosystem that sustains plants, animals and humans.

Benefits of healthy soil

Healthy soils provide ecosystem services as well as other direct benefits such as:

- Improved nutrient availability this reduces the need for artificial nutrient additions over time, thus reducing costs.
- Resilience to extreme weather higher levels of soil organic matter increase the ability of soils to hold moisture and increase the infiltration rate, which protects land from events such as flooding or droughts.
- Supporting sustainable crop production.
- Environmental regulation soil health contributes to the regulation of air and water quality, as well as climate, and supports biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

Threats to soil health

There are consequences to poor soil management. Threats to soil health include:

- Loss of soil organic carbon leading to reduced soil fertility and diminished soil carbon storage capacity.
- Soil erosion resulting in the loss of topsoil, lower crop yields, increased flood risk and water quality implications.
- Soil compaction leading to a restriction of root growth, impairment of water filtration and an increase in run-off, leading to flood risk and reduced soil productivity.
- Soil biodiversity loss this hinders natural pest control mechanisms and nutrient cycling processes, which poses a threat to the long-term sustainability of agricultural systems.

Sustainable management practices, conservation strategies and policy interventions can safeguard soil health and ensure the longevity of soils for future generations.

Soil testing requirements

The Farming Rules for Water require farmers and land managers to conduct soil tests every five years to inform planning for applying manures and fertilisers. Nutrient planning ensures that nutrients spread on the land are applied at the right time and in quantities that are sufficient to meet and not exceed the crop or soil need on cultivated agricultural land. This nutrient planning must take into account the results of the soil testing for pH, Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium and Magnesium for every cultivated field. Soil nitrogen levels can be determined by assessing the soil nitrogen supply.

The soil analysis should be performed by an accredited laboratory. The results must not be more than five years old and must be kept to demonstrate compliance with the requirement for up-to-date soil testing.

Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) 2024

The SFI will be open to new entrants for the first time and will initially comprise of 102 actions. The actions available include a number related to soil:

- CLIG3: Manage grassland with very low nutrient inputs
- CMOR1: Assess moorland and produce a written record
- OFA1: Overwinter stubble (organic land)
- OFA6: Undersown cereal crop (organic land)
- CSAM1: Assess soil, produce a soil management plan and test soil organic matter
- CSAM2: Multi-species winter cover crop
- CSAM3: Herbal leys
- SOH1: No-till farming
- SOH2: Multi-species spring-sown cover crop
- SOH3: Multi-species summer-sown cover crop
- SOH4: Winter cover following maize crops.

These actions can help with the long-term productivity and resilience of the soil and therefore benefit food production. They can also provide environmental benefits, such as better water quality, improved climate resilience and increased biodiversity.

For more information, you can use the new digital tool 'Find funding for land or farms' which has been designed to help signpost customers toward the funding that is available to them.

More technical articles covering a range of topics are also available on the FAS website:

- The end of Cross Compliance: What does that mean for Compliance Requirements on Farm?
- Environment Agency prospects for irrigation forecast for 2024
- <u>Animal Welfare Compliance Requirements for Farmers</u>

The full catalogue of technical articles can be found <u>here</u>.

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Expanding the Sustainable Farming Incentive Offer

Defra has set out the details of the expanded Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) offer.

This detail enables farmers to make informed business decisions and can help them navigate through the challenges caused by significant wet weather in recent months. This SFI offer includes actions that can make farming businesses more resilient to the challenges they are currently facing.

From July 2024, farmers and land managers will be able to access options currently available in Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier (CS MT), actions from the SFI offer, plus new actions all through one scheme – SFI.

For the first time farmers can apply for the SFI if they didn't receive Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) payments.

The expanded SFI offer will increase the number of actions from 23 to 102 in the initial rollout, including actions on precision farming, agroforestry and no till for the first time. New actions will support flood preparedness, helping businesses to become more resilient to the changing climate and challenging weather conditions.

Expressions of interest have now opened for those wishing to apply through the controlled roll out, ahead of the offer being fully self-service in July 2024. The RPA will invite a mix of customers into the controlled roll out at the end of this month to fully test the service and gather representative feedback. If you would like to be one of the first farmers to access the expanded SFI offer, you can complete a <u>short expression of interest on the RPA website</u>. Defra will then choose a select number of individuals to submit an application before they open the new offer to the wider sector. Applications will open to the wider sector, based on eligibility, on 22 July 2024. Meanwhile, it has also been confirmed that the application window for CS Higher Tier, which provides grants to help farmers protect, restore or enhance the environment, will open in the winter, with agreements starting in January 2025. Defra have been improving the offer, making it simpler and reducing the burden of seeking advice and endorsement.

You can read more detail about the expanded offer, and the latest on Higher Tier, on the blog post on the Defra Farming Blog.

Due to the announcement that the next general election will take place on 4 July 2024, communication from Government bodies, including Defra, is currently restricted. As such, the Farming Advice Service webinar: Expanded Sustainable Farming Incentive offer 2024, has now been postponed from 29 May until after the general election. As soon as a new date is confirmed we will let you know via the website, email and social media – we hope to see you there.

In the mean-time, you can find SFI scheme information – expanded offer for 2024 on the <u>SFI gov.uk pages</u>.

The Management of Hedgerows Regulations 2024

This month Parliament passed new hedgerow regulations. The Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024 puts the baseline for hedgerow management practices into law, providing a consistent approach for their protection across the country.

This includes:

- A 2-metre buffer strip, measured from the centre of a hedgerow, where a green cover must be established and maintained.
 Also, no cultivation or the application of pesticides or fertilisers should take place within this buffer strip.
- A hedgerow cutting ban from 1 March to 31 August (inclusive).

These practices will be subject to exceptions, which you can find in the legislation. They broadly mirror the previous approach under cross compliance. This will make it straightforward for farmers and others who are familiar with the requirements.

You can find guidance on <u>buffer strips</u> and <u>cutting and trimming</u> on GOV.UK.

The regulations will now be enforced by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). The RPA will hold a public consultation on how to implement and enforce these protections, fairly and proportionately. The regulations are designed to provide an extra level of reassurance that the same management approach is used across the country.

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Water abstraction e-Alerts: Now available across England

Despite experiencing a wet winter, farmers and land managers must remain aware of the way water levels and flows are managed.

Some licensed abstractors must stop or reduce how much water they can take when it's dry. These restrictions protect the environment and the rights of other water users and are sometimes called 'hands-off flow/level' conditions.

The Environment Agency is now sending email alerts in every area of England via the Manage Your Water Abstraction Service. This means abstractors will know as soon as restrictions are in force or have been lifted and can resume taking water when conditions have improved without delay.

As part of this roll out, the Environment Agency has reached out to licence holders, and licence holder representatives, to capture up-to-date email addresses to send the e-Alerts to. This will help to ensure abstractors do not miss out on taking water that is valuable for their businesses. The Managing Water Abstraction Service is also used by abstractors to:

- View their licence information online
- Give other people access to manage their licence and returns
- Submit abstraction returns (records of abstracted quantities).

The Environment Agency is encouraging anyone who has not done so already to register for an account with the service: www.gov.uk/manage-water-abstraction



Local Resource Option screening studies: apply now

As detailed in the <u>March newsletter</u>, you can now apply for a Local Resource Option (LRO) screening study. The deadline for applications is 16 June. You can find out more on <u>GOV.UK</u> and on the <u>Defra Farming</u> blog.

Trees on farms

Five benefits of planting trees on less productive land

As part of the Forestry Commission's England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO), farmers and land managers can receive support for tree planting. See below for five benefits of planting trees in areas of less productive land:

1. Shade and shelter livestock Tree shelterbelts can protect livestock from cold, wet and windy weather. Well-placed trees can also offer a source of shade in the summer months, helping to boost productivity and animal welfare, reducing the negative impacts of rising temperatures.

2. Boost soil and animal health When integrated well, trees can help to limit nutrient run-off by up to 80%, potentially saving farmers/ land managers money on fertiliser and contributing overall to a healthy and resilient farming system. Trees planted strategically in wetter fields can help to mitigate flooding and naturally dry soils, reducing the risk of livestock infection and diseases caused by wet conditions underfoot.

3. Mitigate flooding

When planted along a watercourse, trees can function as an effective flood management solution, stabilising riverbanks, improving soil infiltration and water retention, and reducing flood peaks by up to 65%.

4. Generate additional income

Planting the right trees in the right place can help farmers/ land managers to generate reliable revenue streams. Depending on the businesses, goals and site characteristics, you could harvest trees for timber, wood fuel and other wood products, such as fence posts for your farm. Or you could look to diversify the business through designing woodland for recreation, with opportunities ranging from glamping experiences and game shoots to cycling activities and forest schools.

5. Capture and sell carbon

Registering the planting project with the Woodland Carbon Code allows farmers/land managers to sell the carbon that new woodland will sequester in the form of Woodland Carbon Units. You can also look to capture carbon to offset your business' carbon emissions. Under EWCO, farmers/land managers can receive up to £10,200 per hectare to cover capital costs. Plus, a further £11,600 is available in additional contributions for schemes supporting benefits to society, nature recovery and the wider environment.

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EWCO's new Low Sensitivity Land Payment offers an additional $\pounds 1,100$ per hectare, for applications on low sensitivity land, avoiding areas most suitable for food production.

Your local Forestry Commission team can offer free support at every stage of your EWCO project, from advising on species selection to arranging a site visit and helping you to draw up a woodland creation design plan.

The Forestry Commissions' local Woodland Creation Partners also offer a wide range of highly competitive grants and funding, across specific regional catchment areas in England.

To find out more and how to access free support, visit gov.uk/woodland-creation

Do you know how to spot ash dieback on your land?

Ash trees are an important and significant tree in the landscape, both rural and urban. They provide valuable habitat for a range of wildlife both within woodlands and along corridors such as hedgerows and roadsides. Healthy trees are important to farm businesses and nature, providing shelterbelts, reducing run-off and soil erosion.

Most parts of the country are now experiencing the impacts of ash dieback. It is important to consider the effects of this tree disease if you own or manage ash trees, even if you are dealing with low levels of infection.

Ash dieback is a serious fungal disease affecting the common ash tree (Fraxinus excelsior) and other Fraxinus species. It is caused by a fungus called Hymenoscyphus fraxineus, which is native to eastern Asia. The disease was first identified in England in 2012, although research has shown that it is likely to have been present since at least 2005. The fungus causes gradual crown dieback and can also attack the root collar of susceptible trees. Infection can lead to leaf loss and dead branches throughout the crown of ash trees, as well as clumps of new growth towards the centre of the crown.

Matt Smith, Woodland Officer at the Forestry Commission, has written a new <u>blog post</u> to help farmers and landowners spot and manage the risk posed by ash dieback. There is also information on the grants and incentives to support restocking.



Defra regularly updates the Farming blog. Please subscribe to the blog to ensure that you receive all the latest news.

Farming and food sector support

A new package of support for the UK's farming and food sector was announced at the Farm to Fork Summit and includes:

- Support for farmers and growers affected by wet weather
- A plan to increase domestic production in the UK horticulture sector
- Publication of a Food Security Index setting out key data and trends
- New farming grants to help farm businesses.

Support for those affected by wet weather

Building on the Farming Recovery Fund to support farmers who have been flooded, temporary adjustments will be made for farmers and land managers where the wet weather has led to difficulties carrying out the requirements of Environmental Land Management Schemes. For more information, please visit <u>GOV.UK</u>.

New grants for farmers

The new grants announced include:

- £3 million for new and mobile abattoirs through the Farming Investment Fund
- Over £20 million for the Laying Hen Housing for Health and Welfare Grant, which offers grants between £5,000 and £500,000 each, to help laying hen and pullet farmers to improve the health, welfare and productivity of their flocks
- Over £72 million for the Endemics Disease Scheme so farmers can take the action they need to take to tackle endemic disease

• A Nutrient Management Grant to support the development and adoption of novel techniques for improving nutrient management.

Wider support

The Lincolnshire Rural Support Network, YANA and the Farming Network and Company will benefit from additional funding, coming from a £500,000 Defra fund to charitable partners for projects that support mental health in the farming sector.

For more information, you can read the full announcement on GOV.UK.



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Vaccine manufacturers are working

to facilitate safe access to a BTV-3 vaccine

as soon as possible, but it is vital that any

includes understanding the efficacy of any

vaccine deployed across all species, together

familiarise themselves with the clinical signs

and monitor their animals frequently. Any

suspicions of this notifiable disease should

registrations for all livestock, and land and

buildings used to keep livestock, even short

animals can be traced to help prevent and

control disease. Find out when and how to

apply for temporary land arrangements (TLA)

the Disease Control Framework for BTV-3 in

You can read more about bluetongue and

term lets, so the location of susceptible

Keepers must also maintain up-to-date

Livestock keepers should remain vigilant,

vaccine has the confidence of industry,

consumers and trading partners. This

with potential impacts on trade.

be reported to APHA immediately.

or a temporary CPH (tCPH).

England in 2024 on GOV.UK.

Updates from the Farming blog and industry announcements

Latest bluetongue update: risk to livestock and steps to control virus set out for year ahead

On 7 May 2024, the Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) published an <u>updated</u> <u>qualitative risk assessment</u>, which confirmed a very high probability of a new introduction of bluetongue virus serotype 3 (BTV-3) into livestock in Great Britain through infected biting midges being blown over from northern Europe.

Bluetongue virus is primarily transmitted by biting midges (Culicoides species) and affects cattle, sheep, and other ruminants such as goats and deer, and camelids such as llamas and alpacas. The virus does not affect people or food safety.

On 23 May, Defra set out how it will manage an outbreak of bluetongue virus in England this year to help farmers and livestock keepers prepare. The <u>Disease</u> <u>Control Framework for Bluetongue Virus</u> <u>Serotype 3 in England in 2024</u> confirms that movement controls of susceptible animals and their germinal products will be used as a precautionary tool to stem the spread of the disease until a safe and effective vaccine for BTV-3 becomes widely available.



Cryptosporidium outbreak

Following the recent news of the cryptosporidium outbreak in Devon, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has issued some guidance around how to stay safe from infections. It is encouraged that farmers share this guidance with visitors, and this is the link. <u>How to stay safe from infections carried</u> by animals when visiting a farm – UK Health Security Agency (blog.gov.uk)

RPA podcasts and blog

The RPA has a freely available podcast series freely which covers a range of topics on RPA services, as well as farming/land management grants and schemes.



In the latest episode (episode 9), the podcast team discussed the opening of the claim window for existing Countryside Stewardship revenue and Environmental Stewardship agreements, delinked payments, RPA's shows and events schedule, and the new round of Farming Equipment and Technology Fund Grants. The episode also contains an interview with Marie Hardeman, RPA's Customer Director, who talks about her first year in the role and improvements in Customer Services.

Listen to the RPA podcast

Keep up to date on developments at the RPA with the RPA Podcast. You can listen to all the latest episodes on <u>Apple</u> and <u>Spotify</u>, or through <u>Buzzsprout</u>.

Subscribe to the <u>RPA blog</u> and you will receive email updates when a new blog is posted.

Stay up to date with us



Get the latest updates by following us on X (formerly Twitter) Follow us on <u>@DefraFAS</u> 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 <u>farmingadviceservice.org.uk</u> and enter your email address into the newsletter sign-up box.

Alternatively, please email <u>bookings@farmingadviceservice.org.uk</u> 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.farmingadviceservice.org.uk/events/privacy/.