

Rural Insight

December 2025



Welsh Update

Avian Influenza rules

The Welsh Government introduced the compulsory housing measures for poultry and captive birds and additional biosecurity requirements for game birds in response to avian influenza. The amended Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) came into force at midnight on Thursday 13 November until further notice. To keep up to date, please visit the Welsh Government website here - [Avian influenza \(bird flu\): current restrictions | GOV.WALES](#)

English Update

Sustainable Farming Incentive 2026

In her speech at the CLA Rural Business Conference, Emma Reynolds, announced that the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) will reopen in the first half of 2026. She said improved budgetary controls would help funding reach more farmers and focus investment on actions with the greatest environmental impact.

25-Year Farming Roadmap expected to be launched in 2026.

DEFRA is developing a 25-year Farming Roadmap which will set out its plans to make farming more profitable. It will focus on increasing the amount of British produce procured by the public sector, improving planning processes for farmers and improve supply chain fairness. This will be linked to the Farming Profitability Review by Baroness Minette Batters which is expected to be published this month.

Budget Headlines

- Income tax thresholds freeze extended until 2031.
- Sugar tax extended to milk-based drinks such as milkshakes and coffees.
- National Living Wage increases in April 2026 to £12.71 for workers over 21 and £10.85 for workers between 18-20 years old.
- Update to inheritance tax: £1m APR allowance can be transferred between spouses or civil partners.
- “Mansion tax” will come into place in 2028. It is an annual charge of £2,500 for properties worth more than £2 million, and £7,500 for properties worth more than £5 million.
- Electric cars will be subject to a tax of 3p per mile, and plug-in hybrid cars 1.5p per mile.
- The 5p fuel duty cut will continue until September 2026.
- Increased tax for landlords of 2% higher than the current rates will apply from 6 April 2027.
- Tourism tax - English regions would be given the power to impose a tourism levy, or tax, on overnight stays.
- From April 2029, employer and employee NI contributions will be charged on pension contributions made by the employee above £2,000 per annum made via salary sacrifice.
- Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) from 1 January 2027. The inclusion of indirect emissions will be delayed until 2029 at the earliest.

Stewardship option guidance

Countryside Stewardship, Environmental Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship Payments are due from the 1st December.

Skylark Plots (AB4)

Make sure your skylark plots are sprayed out of winter cereal crops by 31st December. Each plot must be at least 3m wide and a minimum area of 16m².

AB12 / AHW2 / CAHW2 Supplementary winter bird food

You need to start supplementary feeding winter bird food from the 1st December. The mix needs to be a maximum 70% cereals and 30% small seeds. You cannot use tailings/screenings. Remember to keep your invoices and a diary of when, where and how much you feed.

HS1 / HS8 / HEF1 / HEF2 Weatherproof buildings

It is a good time to clear out gutters and check roofs, and traditional farm buildings are weatherproof.

BE3 / HRW2 / CHRW2 Hedgerow Management

You can now cut your hedges until 28th February. You can either cut:

- If on a three-year cutting regime – cut a third of the length in this option.
- If you have a two-year cutting regime then you cannot cut until 1st January.
- Or if under the SFI, cut the hedges incrementally on an annual basis.

Hedges and Tree planting

If you are planning on planting any new hedges or gapping up existing hedgerows or planting new woodlands this is a good time to start this work.

Compliance

It is a good time of year to take photos of options in each field as evidence such as winter bird food plots, winter bird food on improved grassland, over winter stubbles, cover crops and companion crops.

Compliance

Farming Rules for Water

There are no closed periods for FYM spreading but remember no manures should be spread if the land is flooded, waterlogged, snow covered or frozen for more than 12 hours in the previous 24 hours.

NVZ Spreading Restrictions

For high readily available nitrogen organic manures, no spreading*:

On grassland

- Shallow or sandy soils – 1st September to 31st December
- All other soils – 15th October to 31st January

On tillage land

- Sandy or shallow soils – 1st August to 31st December
- All other soils – 1st October to 31st January

For manufactured fertilisers, no spreading*:

On grassland

- From 15th September to 15th January

On tillage land

- From 1st September to 15th January

**There are some exceptions.*

If you need any help with environmental scheme management or compliance, please get in touch with your local rural consultant.

Scottish Update

Scottish Land Reform Bill

The Land Reform (Scotland) Bill has been passed by the Scottish Parliament and is awaiting Royal Assent before it becomes law. The Bill which was introduced in March 2024 aims to regulate the ownership, management and transfer of large rural estates, increase transparency, strengthen community rights and modernise agricultural tenancy law.

Part 1 of the bill to Reform of large landholdings and community rights will:

- Requires owners of very large estates to produce and publish a Land Management Plan, showing how land use contributes to public goals,
- Introduces prior notification provision: if a large estate is to be sold communities must be given notice and opportunity to consider purchase,
- Provides authorities power to require “lotting” (splitting up) of very large estates when they are sold.

Part 2 of the bill for Agricultural holdings and tenancy law will:

- Modernises tenancy laws for agriculture, including rules on rent review, compensation, good estate management / good husbandry,
- Gives more rights and protections to tenant-farmers and small landholders; aims to make it easier for new entrants to access land,
- Introduces a “land management tenancy”, a new form of lease allowing more flexible uses of land (e.g. for environmental restoration, regenerative agriculture), in line with public-policy goals.

This bill could substantially shift land ownership patterns in rural Scotland, giving more access to smallholders, tenant farmers, and community organisations.

If you need any help or further information, please contact Lewis Butlin or Sara Barrett.

Farmers’ Mental Health and Wellbeing

December provides a moment to celebrate the achievements on farm and prepare for the year ahead. It is advised to use this quieter period to reflect on your progress, set goals for the forthcoming year and catch up on any outstanding paperwork. But for many this can be daunting.

Supporting mental health in our farming communities is something we can all contribute to. Whether through conversation, community events, or simply checking in on a colleague, small actions can have a powerful impact.

That’s why Agrovista are partnered with the Farming Community Network and RSABI to help support our growers.

The Farming Community Network (FCN) provides pastoral and practical support from volunteers who understand the challenges of farming life. Call the help line on 03000 111 999 or email helpline@fcn.org.uk.

The RSABI supports people in Scottish Agriculture by providing practical, emotional and financial support. Call the helpline on 0808 1234 555 or email helpline@rsabi.org.uk.

If you’re reading this and feeling overwhelmed, please know that help is out there, and that reaching out is the first step towards support. The work you do is invaluable, and the wellbeing of the people who sustain our landscapes must always come first. You are not alone.