

Rural Insight

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English Update

Farming Roadmap 2050: Growing England's Future

The UK Government has published the 'Farming Roadmap 2050' which sets a long-term vision for English agriculture, aiming to create a farming sector that is profitable, productive, sustainable and resilient. For farmers, it means increasing support for innovation, improving soil and water management, strengthening animal health and welfare, expanding environmental schemes, and creating fairer supply chains. Rather than prescribing one approach, the roadmap encourages farms to adapt in ways that suit their businesses while balancing food production with nature recovery and long-term economic viability. To read the report in full click [here](#).

Capital grants 2026

Capital grants will open this month (**July**) with £225 million available to help cover the cost of one-off investments on farms. Funding limits will remain the same as previous rounds, with a maximum of

- £25,000 for water quality,
- £25,000 air quality,
- £25,000 natural flood management,
- £35,000 for boundaries, trees and orchards.

Some items require Catchment Sensitive Farming approval, which is now very limited and, some offices are no longer accepting advice requests.

Farming Innovation Programme (FIP)

Feasibility Studies (Round 5) opens on the 15th July 2026 for testing early-stage solutions with the potential to improve the sustainability, productivity and resilience of UK farming.

Sustainable Farming Incentive 2026

The first window of the SFI 2026 launched on the 30th June for applications from farm businesses without any existing environmental schemes or less than 50 ha. The budget allocation for window 1 of SFI 2026 applications is £60 million.

In September, window 2 will open for all eligible farm business of any size that was registered with the RPA by 1 January 2026, and the SFI had a minimum of 3 ha of agricultural land. The budget allocation for window 2 is £180 million and any money left from window 1 will be included. If you have an SFI or Countryside Stewardship Mid-Tier agreement ending in 2026 you can also apply in the September window before your agreement has expired.

As a reminder, the key SFI 2026 information includes:

- Agreements will be capped at £100,000 per year per farm business.
- A farm business can have only one SFI26 agreement.
- Rotational actions will not be able to increase the area beyond what is applied for in year 1. Each year you can increase / decrease the area to fit your crop rotation but not above the area entered in year 1.

Farming Equipment and Technology Fund (FETF)

If you applied earlier this year, almost 7,000 agreements have been issued and more will follow over the coming weeks.

Stewardship option guidance



AB5/AHW5 Nesting plots for lapwing and stone curlew

Cultivated areas must be retained until 31st July. After they can be sprayed off, cultivated and sown with mustard/turnips to provide extra partridge holding cover.

AB6/AHW7 Enhanced overwinter stubble

Keep stubble and any subsequent regeneration until 31st July.

AB14/AHW10 Harvested low input cereal

Do not harvest before 15th July.

GS2 / LIG1 / LIG2 / LIG3 / CLIG3 Manage grassland with very low inputs

From the 1st July, you can now cut for hay or silage, as long as you do not disturb nesting birds.

GS4 / CSAM3 – Herbal leys

Do not graze or cut herbal leys for a 5-week period between May and the end of July.

IGL3 / CIGL3 - 4m–12m Grass buffer strip on improved grassland

Remember to leave buffer strips if you are grazing or foraging grassland.

GS1 / IGL1 / CIGL1 – Take grassland corners or blocks out of management

Remember you must not cut or graze these areas.

GRH7 – Haymaking supplement

Do not graze or cut the sward for at least 8 continuous weeks in spring and summer before harvesting hay. Harvest no earlier than late June (outside SDAs) or mid-July (in SDAs) and leave an uncut margin.

SW1 / AHL4 – 4-6m buffer on cultivated land

You can cut between 1-3m of the strip next to the crop edge after 15th July.

SW3 / WBD3 – In-field grass strip

You can cut the entire area after 15th July.

SW4 / BFS1 / AHL4 12-24m buffer

You can cut the 6m next to the crop should be cut after 15th July.

SOH3 – Multi-species summer sown cover crop

A multi-species cover crop with at least 4 species, 2 from 2 or more different plant families must be established between June and August which will not be harvested as a cash crop

NUM1, IPM1 and SAM1 Management plans

Remember to complete your Nutrient (NUM1), Soil (SAM1) and Integrated Pest (IPM1) management plans for each year of your SFI agreement. For the SAM1 you need to have a in date (not before July 2021) soil samples and organic matter tested for each land parcel in the agreement. If you fail to provide these upon request from the RPA, then you are in breach of your agreement.

Soil sampling and grain testing

With the changes in the Farming Rules for Water regarding phosphorus last year, and increasing levels of Phosphates detected within soils, harvest is a great time of year to check whether these high phosphates are available to growing crops by taking a grain sample. Talk with your Agronomist or Precision specialist now to discuss options before the combines start rolling.

Remember to take photos of flowering plants in pollen/nectar mixes, herbal leys, legumes in grassland, wildflower margins and spring / summer cover crops. Also keep grazing records including animal type, numbers, age group.

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



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Scottish Update

Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS) 2026

The AECS 2026 stand-alone organic application window closes on the **31st of July**.

Preparing for Sustainable Farming (PSF) scheme

Since the PSF scheme finished at the end of 2025, there is no indication that there is going to be any further funding for soil sampling at the moment. By the **15th May 2028** farms will need to have all their Region 1 fields sampled within the previous 5 years. As harvest approaches and we start to look ahead at cropping for 2027, it is also a great time to see which fields still need to be soil sampled. Get in touch with your agronomist, precision specialist or rural consultant to discuss options available to you.

Grain sampling for Phosphorus

There are areas across Scotland that are seeing increasing levels of Phosphates within their soils. Harvest is a great time of year to check whether these high phosphates are available to growing crops. Taking a grain sample from each field that is high in Phosphates and having it analysed will show whether the grain and therefore the plant is able to extract this Phosphate from the soil. Talk with your Agronomist now to discuss options before the combines start rolling.

Farming Advice Service Funding

Funding for specialist advice is available again through the Farming Advice Service. The service, having been suspended at the end of 2025, is now open again for on-farm specialist advice on topics such as Biodiversity Action Plans, Soil and Nutrient Management and Water Management being just three of the 13 specialist advice plans available along with Whole Farm Integrated Land Management Plans which look at your whole farm business. Lewis Butlin is a registered deliverer for the Farming Advice Service, and he can be requested to carry these out for you by contacting the Farming Advice Service on 0300 323 0161.

Reminder of the EFA Key changes

SAF applications should now have been submitted for 2026. This year it was not necessary to submit EFA maps as part of the application. However, these should still have been produced and available on farm should an inspection be carried out or a request to send them to the Department is received.

This year you have until the **15th of July** to establish any new EFA features which have been declared on your 2026 SAF.

EFA's will be increasing from 5% to 7% of arable area in 2027. It is not too early to start considering where these extra features are going to be located, especially if they are going to be established ahead of sowing cash crops in the autumn.

Requirements for Whole Farm Plans is still in place, with the need to have all those relevant to your business being required in due course. It's a good time to consider which ones you still need to complete and look to getting these completed. Surveys for Biodiversity Plans are better carried out in the summer months when species are more easily identifiable.

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

Welsh Update

Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS)

We are now halfway through 2026, and if you have applied to enter the Universal Layer of the SFS, you need to make sure you are progressing all the Universal Actions (UAs) which are applicable to you by the end of the year. You will need to confirm on the SFS Universal Dashboard by 15 January 2027 that you have met the requirements for the Universal Actions.

As a reminder the 12 Universal actions include:

UA1 – Soil Health Test approximately 20% of improved land each year so all eligible fields are tested over a five-year cycle, and use the results to inform nutrient and soil management.

UA2 – Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Complete an annual IPM assessment and keep records of plant protection product use to encourage targeted, lower-risk pest control.

UA3 – Benchmarking Carry out annual business and technical benchmarking (for example, physical and financial performance) to help identify opportunities to improve productivity.

UA4 - Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Complete at least 6 hours of approved learning each year, including a mandatory health and safety element.

UA5 – Habitat Maintenance Maintain existing habitats on the farm, such as species-rich grassland, heath, wetlands or other mapped habitats, in accordance with the scheme guidance.

UA6 – Temporary Habitat on Improved Land Create temporary habitat on improved agricultural land where required to help meet the scheme's habitat objectives.

UA7 – Designated Site Management Plan If your holding includes designated land (such as an SSSI), prepare and follow an approved management plan. This only applies where relevant.

UA8 – Hedgerow Management Manage hedgerows to improve their condition and biodiversity, including appropriate cutting and protection practices.

UA9 – Woodland Maintenance Maintain existing woodland to improve its health, resilience and biodiversity where woodland is present on the holding.

UA10 – Tree and Hedgerow Planting Opportunity Plan Prepare a plan identifying suitable locations for future tree and hedgerow planting. The action is about planning rather than mandatory planting.

UA11 – Historic Environment Identify and protect historic and archaeological features on the farm and manage them appropriately.

UA12 – Animal Health and Welfare Complete an annual Animal Health Improvement Cycle with your vet and implement biosecurity and herd/flock health measures appropriate to your enterprise.

Farming Connect

Farming Connect has secured a new round of funding, meaning all farmers will need to re-register to continue accessing its support, advice, and services. Open to all eligible farm businesses in Wales, the new programme provides a wide range of fully funded and subsidised options aimed at improving business performance, resilience, and long-term sustainability. Farming Connect can help to achieve UA3 Benchmarking (FARMDATA+), and UA4 Continuous Professional Development – CPD.

If you need any help with SFS compliance then please contact your agronomist, precision specialist or Phil Edenborough.