

Rural Insight

November 2025



Welsh Update

Sustainable Farming Scheme

Due to launch on the 1st January 2026, the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) is the Welsh government's post-Brexit agricultural policy, designed to replace the EU's Basic Payment Scheme. It will reward farmers for undertaking environmental actions such as planting trees, improving soil health, enhancing biodiversity, and cutting carbon emissions. In preparation for the scheme, the Welsh Government have announced the availability of rural schemes to support farm businesses transition. A selection of the schemes is outlined in the table below.

	Opening Date	Closing Date
Yard coverings	13 th October 2025	21 st November 2025
Carbon	3 rd November 2025	12 th December 2025
Landscape & pollinators	12 th January 2026	27 th February 2026
Efficiency	12 th January 2026	27 th February 2026
Agriculture Diversification and Horticulture	29 th September 2025	5 th December 2025
Growing for the Environment Spring and Summer crops	6 th October 2025	14 th November 2025

If you would like any support on the SFS, please contact Phil Edenborough.

English Grant Update

Countryside Stewardship Mid-Tier

DEFRA have announced a one-year extension for Countryside Stewardship Mid-Tier agreements that are due to expire on 31 December this year. This will move the end date of your agreement to the 31 December 2026. The RPA will contact eligible agreement holders by the 6th November to offer the extension, and you must reply to the offer if you want the extension. You cannot use the extension offer to add, remove or replace items. If you have not heard from the RPA by Thursday 6th November, then please get in touch with your local rural consultant to help.

Farm Equipment and Technology Fund (FETF)

Applications scoring above 0.37 for the Animal Health and Welfare, Productivity and slurry management have been offered grant funding agreements (GFA's) under the FETF fund. Make sure you accept the GFA before the deadline, if not the GFA will be withdrawn and you will not be able to claim your items.



Created by Abbie Allen-Webb

For more information:

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Stewardship option guidance

AB12 / AHW2 / CAHW2 Supplementary winter bird food

Get ready to start feeding on the 1st December although there is a significant benefit for your farmland birds from starting to feed sooner.

The mix needs to 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

AECS confirmed for 2026

It has been confirmed that there will be a 2026 round of the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS) and it will open for applications in early 2026. Details on the offer of the round will be confirmed later this year and will be communicated via the Scottish Rural Payments and Services website. The recent announcement also indicates that the AECS scheme will continue to be funded until 2030.

The Budget for the Future Farming Investment Scheme (FFIS) has been increased

The budget for the FFIS has been increased to £21.4 million due to high demand of applications. The FFIS was designed to offer flexible capital grants to support investments in efficiency, nature and climate friendly farming. More than 7,500 farmers and crofters applied, and those who have applied for the grant will be given notification by October 31.

Last few months of claim for the Preparing for Sustainable Farming Scheme

Preparing for Sustainable Farming (PSF) scheme focuses on incentives to Scottish farmers and crofters to help them understand their soil nutrient status, carbon emissions, and sequestration. It also identifies practical solutions that can increase production efficiencies and lower emissions.

The three options currently being funded include:

- Soil sampling and analysis (pH P K C),
- Carbon audits,
- Animal health and welfare interventions.

Activities performed during 2025 can be funded and claims will be accepted up until the end of February 2026.

Greening Rules set to change in 2026

From 1 January 2026, significant changes to Scotland's greening rules will come into effect under the Enhanced Greening framework. The two grassland exemptions have been removed which now means if you're a farmer or crofter with more than 15 hectares of arable land (including temporary grass), you'll now be required to manage 5% of that area as EFA's.

In addition to the EFA options available in 2025, there will be 4 new EFA options in 2026 which are:

- Low input grassland,
- Herb and legume rich pastures,
- Agro-forestry low density planting,
- Unharvested crop.

Other changes include the EFA map no longer needs to be submitted to Scottish Government along with your Single Application Form and you no longer need to produce a fertiliser and lime plan as this is addressed within the Whole Farm Plan.

Continue your preparation for your Whole Farm Plan

In 2025 you were only required to complete 2 of the 5 plans and audits for your Whole Farm Plan (WFP). However, you will need to include all 5 plans and audits of the WFP by 2028. The plans and audits are:

- Animal Health & Welfare Plan,
- Biodiversity Audit,
- Carbon Audit,
- Integrated Pest Management Plan,
- Soil Analysis.

If you need any help with any of the above schemes, please contact Lewis Butlin or Sara Barrett.