

Agricultural Reform Route Map

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Introduction

Scotland's agricultural sector is at the heart of our economy and our rural communities. As we take on unprecedented economic and environmental challenges, we want to make sure the sector continues to thrive.

That is why we have set out an ambition to make Scotland a global leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture. To do that, we must transform the support we give to our farmers and crofters.

This year sees the first changes as part of that journey. We will continue to offer the essential support that direct payments provide but we are also asking farmers and crofters to do more for climate and nature in return.

Changes in 2025

We are beginning to introduce the Whole Farm Plan. This will help farmers and crofters to create a baseline of current agricultural practices, allowing them to measure progress over time. It can help highlight the good practices already being undertaken and identify where efficiencies could be made, help to cut emissions, or increase biodiversity.

We have also introduced a new calving interval for the Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme. This will help reduce emissions and encourage efficient beef production.

Finally, we have introduced new protections for peatlands and wetlands. This will help to make sure these important natural assets are protected.

Future support

As we modernise our support framework, we will continue to support high quality food production and monitor our food security. This is vital for our domestic needs and to meet consumer appetite across the world for Scotland's iconic produce.

We will also help Scotland's agricultural sector to accelerate its journey to net zero. Our assistance will encourage actions that support food production, reduce emissions, guarding ourselves against the damage of climate change and protecting and restoring nature.

In doing this, we will take a balanced approach. We know that farmers and crofters deliver multiple outcomes – they are custodians of the land, they sustain local communities and, of course, they produce the food we rely on.

Farmers and crofters have been at the heart of this work from the very beginning and we will continue to work closely with the agriculture industry to meet our shared objectives.

Mairi Gougeon, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

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What is changing now?

In 2025, new rules will apply to agricultural payments in Scotland. There are three changes:

- the start of the Whole Farm Plan
- new protections for peatlands and wetlands
- a new calving interval requirement for the Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme

The Whole Farm Plan

The Whole Farm Plan requires you to review your current land and livestock management practices.

There are five audits and plans that make up the Whole Farm Plan. You only need to carry out the ones that are relevant to your agricultural activities:

Animal Health and Welfare Plan	Biodiversity Audit	Carbon Audit	Integrated Pest Management Plan	Soil Analysis
Only required if animals kept. Needs updated annually.	Only required if permanent land is claimed. Needs updated once every 5 years.	Required for all claimants. Needs updated once every 5 years.	Only required if Plant Protection Products are used. Needs updated annually.	Only required if permanent Region 1 land is claimed and fertiliser/manures are applied. Needs updated once every 5 years.

They can help you to get a better picture of how efficient your business is today so you can look for improvements. That could include opportunities to reduce your costs, cut emissions, and protect biodiversity.

In 2025, if you want to claim Basic Payment Scheme support, you should have completed at least two from the list of five audits and plans listed above. You should confirm which ones you have completed on your Single Application Form.

Find out more:

- [Quick guide to the Whole Farm Plan](#)
- [Whole Farm Plan guidance](#)

Cross Compliance - New protections for peatlands and wetlands

Peatlands and wetlands play an important role in storing carbon and slowing down the effects of climate change. That is why we are prohibiting activities that could damage them.

From 1 January 2025, new requirements have been added to GAEC 6: Maintenance of soil organic matter. This will prohibit a range of activities on peatlands and wetlands including:

Ploughing Cultivating Reseeding Draining	Applying pesticides fertilisers & lime Creating new roads or tracks	Planting trees Other activities that damage the vegetation and expose the soil
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Find out more:

- [Cross Compliance quick guide](#)

Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme (SSBSS)

There is a new calving interval requirement for the Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme.

The longer it takes to get a cow back in calf, the more time she will:

- incur maintenance costs (e.g. feed, veterinary care)
- emit greenhouse gases without contributing to beef production.

That is why, from 1 January 2025 onwards, we will only support calves who are either:

- the first offspring registered to the dam, or

- born to a dam with an established calving interval of 410 days or less.

This will help reduce emissions and encourage efficient beef production.

The 410 day calving interval threshold will remain unchanged for the 2026 scheme year.

Find out more:

- [Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme \(SSBSS\) quick guide](#)
- [Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme \(Mainland and Islands\) full guidance](#)

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What will change in 2026?

Enhanced Greening

The main change in 2026 will be an increase in the number of arable businesses required to manage Ecological Focus Areas (EFA).

If you have more than 15 hectares of arable land, you will need to manage EFAs in 2026.

This will mean that more land in Scotland is farmed in a way that protects nature and is good for the climate.

What is an Ecological Focus Area (EFA)?

An EFA is an area of arable land managed for the benefit of the climate and the environment.

What do we mean by “arable land?”

Arable land is land cultivated for crop production. This includes fallow areas and temporary grassland.

It does not include areas under permanent crops.

[Quick guide to Enhanced Greening](#)

[Enhanced Greening Guidance](#)

Whole Farm Plan

There are five parts to the Whole Farm Plan. You only need to carry out the ones that are relevant to your agricultural activities.

In 2026, if you want to receive support from the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS), you will have to have completed at least two of them. This is the same as in 2025.

You may already have some of these plans and audits in place. If they meet the minimum standards, and they are in date when you complete your SAF in 2026, you won't need to take any further action.

Type of audit/plan	Who is it for?
Animal health and welfare plan	All farmers and crofters who keep livestock
Biodiversity audit	All farmers and crofters that claim permanent land
Carbon audit	All farmers and crofters
Integrated pest management plan	All farmers and crofters that use pesticides and herbicides
Soil analysis	All farmers and crofters that claim Region 1 land and apply artificial fertilisers and/or organic manures to it

[Whole Farm Plan quick guide](#)

[Whole Farm Plan guidance](#)

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How we will support farmers and crofters in the future

Our future support will help to deliver five goals:

- High Quality Food Production - We want Scotland's food production sector to be a successful part of the economy and to meet more of our own food needs sustainably.
- Thriving Agricultural Businesses - We want profitable and resilient agricultural businesses that support local livelihoods, supply chains and the wider rural economy.
- Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation - We want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector. We also want to help farmers and crofters be more resilient to the impacts of climate change.
- Nature Restoration - We want to protect and restore Scotland's natural environment.
- Support for a Just Transition - We want to support farmers and crofters through the climate and nature transition.

All the changes to agricultural support announced to date will be delivered using the systems and processes predominantly designed for CAP. We are working towards a new Future Operating Model that will support the delivery of the Vision for Agriculture in full.

We continue to prepare the technical landscape to be able to deliver future policy. Where required, these IT systems will be upgraded, enhanced and replaced both to deliver new capability and to ensure that they remain secure and operational for now and into the future. This will make sure farmers and crofters have the support they need to deliver these outcomes.

The way that Scotland delivers its public services is also changing. We want to modernise and improve efficiency and user experience. We also need to give farmers and crofters a modern, easy-to-use service. This service must meet their needs while supporting them to farm in a way that protects our environment.

Four Tiers of Support

Delivering all this will require a comprehensive organisation redesign. As we reform our agricultural support, we will move to a four-tier model.

Tier 1: Base

Tier One will provide direct payments to support active farming. We will start off using the current Basis Payment Scheme (BPS) and add new conditions over time.

The first changes are being introduced this year. These are

- Whole Farm Plan
- the calving interval for the Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme
- protections for Peatlands and Wetlands under Cross Compliance

Tier 2: Enhanced

Tier 2 will support farmers and crofters to do even more for climate and nature.

The first change will be asking more arable farmers to manage Ecological Focus Areas. The details of this change will be published in summer 2025.

Tier 3: Elective

Tier 3 will support action that protects habitats or species or improves business sustainability.

The first example of this is the new Future Farming Investment Scheme. This will provide flexible capital grants to drive efficiency, reduce emissions or support nature and climate friendly farming.

Tier 4: Complementary

Tier 4 will help to grow skills and capabilities. This will include training and advice.

Future Operating Model and Transition Plan

We will present a list of options for the Future Operating Model to Ministers and key stakeholders in 2025. We are committed to iterative co-development with industry to ensure the success of the project. The stakeholder engagement will help inform a final version of the Future Operating Model at the start of 2026. This will include projected annual operating costs.

Once we have an agreed Model, we will prepare a Transition Plan during 2026. This will set out how we can make the move from the current system to the future operating model. This will include the costs associated with the transition. These will include the set-up costs for any required IT and options for how it could be delivered.

It is our goal to have the Future Operating Model and accompanying Transition Plan completed by the end of 2026. Implementation will commence in the early part of the next parliamentary term.

How will funding be targeted?

To give farmers and crofters an indication of how funding will be targeted, we have made three commitments:

- over time, at least half of all funding will be targeted towards nature restoration and climate mitigation and adaption
- 70% of funding will be allocated to Tiers 1 and 2
- we will apply a funding split of 70 / 30 between Tiers 1 and 2

We believe those commitments represent an investment which will reap rewards for our wider economy.

- underpinning food production and our world class food and drink sector
- enhancing nature
- supporting emissions reductions
- keeping people on the land

You can find out more about the types of actions that may be required in the future in the [Agriculture Reform List of Measures](#) . It is not a final list of measures but has examples to help the agriculture sector to plan for future changes.

We will continue to publish more information as early as we can to give you time to prepare.

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How will schemes change as we move towards a new framework?

To give farmers and crofters security and stability, we kept all schemes and support the same until the end of 2024. The first changes to schemes begin this year. There will be more changes each coming year.

You will continue to claim support in the same way. You will continue to fill out the Single Application Form until at least 2027. The timetable for submission and payments is expected to continue until then as well.

Basic Payment Scheme

We have made a clear and firm commitment to continuing direct payments to the farming sector.

In the short term, this will continue to be delivered through the Basic Payment Scheme. Longer-term, we will consult widely on any proposed requirements and rules prior to making changes.

The current region model will remain in place in 2025 and 2026. However, it will be reviewed by 2027 to ensure that it is fit for purpose. We will not make changes to the region model without consulting widely on any new proposals first.

Greening

Greening requirements will not change in 2025.

New Greening Requirements will be introduced in 2026. There will be an increase in the number of arable businesses required to manage Ecological Focus Areas (EFA).

We will also be updating the requirements of the existing EFA options and adding new options. This will make sure that all businesses have a range of suitable EFA options that will deliver biodiversity and climate change benefits.

Cross Compliance

There are new protections for peatlands and wetlands. Peatlands and wetlands play an important role in slowing down climate change. That is why we are prohibiting activities that could damage them.

From 1 January 2025, new conditions have been added to GAEC 6: Maintenance of soil organic matter. If you have peatlands or wetlands, you will not be able to do certain things on those areas.

[Read the scheme guidance.](#)

Voluntary Coupled Support

Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme (SSBSS)

From 2025 onwards, calves will only be eligible for a SSBSS payment if

- their dam has a calving interval threshold of 410 days or less,
- or if the calf is the first registered birth associated with that dam.

This is designed to help balance productivity and profitability with the opportunity to address climate impact of emissions.

The calving interval threshold of 410 days will apply to both the 2025 and 2026 scheme years. The threshold may reduce in future years, but it will not reduce by more than 10 days in any given year. Details will be provided in advance of any future change to the calving interval threshold.

The free-to-use [MyHerdStats](#) tool allows farmers and crofters to view performance indicators for their herds. It allows them to identify opportunities for improvements to herd efficiency, including calving intervals.

- [Read the Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme quick guide](#)
- [Read the full scheme guidance](#)

Scottish Upland Sheep Support Scheme (SUSSS)

SUSSS is expected to continue in 2025 and 2026 but may be delivered using a different model from the current one.

Less Favoured Area Support Scheme (LFASS)

This scheme is expected to continue to at least 2026. We are working with stakeholders on how best to deliver this type of support under the new framework.

Changes may be introduced to support the transition toward a more sustainable model for the farmers and crofters who need this support the most. It is expected that in the future this funding will be made available through Tier 2.

Agri Environment and Climate Scheme (AECS)

This scheme is expected to continue until at least 2026 to deliver elements of Tiers 3 and 4 until new Elective and Complementary Support mechanisms are introduced. Some of the options currently available through AECS are being considered for inclusion in Tier 2 over time so that more people can implement them. Changes may be made to the scoring, budgets or options to support a Just Transition towards a more economically and environmentally sustainable model for the sector.

Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS)

This scheme is expected to evolve and continue to deliver elements of Tier 3 and 4 until new Elective and Complementary Support mechanisms are introduced. Some of the options available under this scheme are being considered for inclusion as eligible measures/activities in Tier 2 over time so that more people can implement them. Changes may be made to the scoring, budgets or options to support a Just Transition toward a more economically and environmentally sustainable model for the sector.

Targeted Capital Support - Agricultural Transformation Fund, Crofting Agricultural Grant Scheme, Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund (KTIF), and Food Processing, Marketing and Cooperation (FPMC)

These schemes will continue until at least 2026. We may make changes to the scoring, budgets or options available under these schemes. These changes would be to make sure they support

the transition towards a more economic and sustainable model for the sector. Any changes will be communicated to farmers and crofters in advance.

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What is available now to support climate and biodiversity targets?

Preparing for Sustainable Farming

To help farmers and crofters to prepare for these changes, we have introduced [Preparing for Sustainable Farming \(PSF\)](#) .

PSF support includes:

- financial support towards the cost of soil analysis
- £500 towards having a Carbon Audit performed
- up to a maximum of £1,750 over three years, with £750 for the first claim and then £500 annually, to deliver a list of animal health and welfare measures

PSF was introduced in 2022 and has helped thousands of businesses to manage change. PSF support is transitional – it is there to help farmers and crofters manage change and prepare for the new future support framework. The scheme will come to a close at the end of 2025, so we strongly encourage farmers and crofters to act now to make use of this support.

[Preparing for Sustainable Farming full guidance](#)

MyHerdStats

Information is also available to cattle keepers through [MyHerdStats](#) . This is a an online tool that securely presents herd management information within the ScotEID system, utilising existing login details. It provides cattle keepers with a consistent and accurate insight into their herd performance to help highlight opportunities to improve business and environmental benefits. Cattle keepers can gain access to a selection of herd performance indicators and trends on metrics including:

- percentage of cows retained
- number of calves registered
- number of cows calved
- values of cow and heifer efficiency, including calving intervals
- cow and calf mortalities
- sale date profile for breeding and youngstock

Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS)

The [Agri-Environment Climate Scheme \(AECS\)](#) provides financial support to farmers and crofters to take action to tackle climate change and protect nature.

It promotes land management practices that:

- protect and enhance Scotland's biodiversity
- improve water quality
- manage flood risk
- mitigate and adapt to climate change.

[Find out more and apply.](#)

Investing in Agriculture

At least £14 million of capital support will be delivered through the new Future Farming Investment scheme in 2025.

This will be designed to help make sure farmers and crofters are equipped and ready to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities of the future.

This investment will take the form of flexible capital grants. These grants will support work that will drive efficiency or support nature and climate friendly farming.

We will consult with stakeholders to ensure the capital grant scheme guidance works for a range of agricultural businesses and that the application process is simple and straightforward.

Forestry Grant Scheme

Scotland's woodlands and forests are a vital national resource and play an important role in rural development and sustainable land use.

As well as helping to reduce the impacts of climate change and providing timber for industry, our forests enhance and protect the environment and provide opportunities for public enjoyment.

The [Forestry Grant Scheme \(FGS\)](#) supports:

- the creation of new woodlands – contributing towards the Scottish Government target of 18,000 hectares of new woodlands per year from 2024/25
- the sustainable management of existing woodlands

Peatland ACTION

[Peatland ACTION](#) supports on-the-ground peatland restoration activities and is open for applications from eligible land managers who have peatlands that would benefit from restoration. There are no geographical restriction or target areas for Peatland ACTION funding.

Farm Advisory Service (FAS)

Scotland's [Farm Advisory Service \(FAS\)](#) is funded by the Scottish Government and delivered by SAC Consulting, part of Scotland's Rural College, and Ricardo Energy and Environment. It provides advice and resources to help farmers and crofters across Scotland to increase the profitability and sustainability of their businesses.

FAS brings together the knowledge and experience of expert consultants, researchers and other farmers, sharing the latest information in Scottish agriculture. Grant support, a full programme of events and a range of articles, videos and publications form the core of this service which is designed to provide integrated advice for farmers and crofters across Scotland.

[FAS - Preparing for the future](#)

Integrating Trees Network

[Integrating Trees on Your Land Network](#) which covers the benefits that trees can bring to farming businesses. This network will host events for all farmers and crofters across Scotland and bring them together, along with experts, to share their practical knowledge, experiences and advice about the processes, objectives, challenges and outcomes of planting trees.

Monitor Farm Scotland

The [Monitor Farm Scotland](#) initiative is managed by Quality Meat Scotland and AHDB Cereals and Oilseeds with funding from the Scottish Government, and aims to help improve the productivity, profitability and sustainability of Scottish farm businesses.

The aim of the programme is to establish a group of farms to serve as monitor farms to help improve the profitability, productivity and sustainability of producers through practical demonstrations, the sharing of best practice and the discussion of up-to-date issues.

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Listening to farmers and crofters

We have committed to working with farmers and crofters to make sure that our support is informed by their needs and experience.

As part of this, we have been undertaking user research. Through surveys and focus groups, we have spoken to farmers and crofters to capture their views and expertise. This information will help inform our future support framework.

How can I get involved?

We want to make sure that farmers and crofters have a chance to shape the policies and support that affects them. That is why we are looking for volunteers.

Opportunities will include:

- interviews
- Surveys
- online and in-person workshops
- testing and trials.

You will be reimbursed for participating with the amount depending on the time and input required. Anyone can register interest using the form below. Be sure to have your BRN handy as the form will ask you for it.

[Agricultural Reform Programme - volunteer to take part in research and design](#)