Farm Environment Assessment (FEA)

This is an old version of the page

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Introduction

The purpose of the assessment is to identify opportunities for beneficial environmental management through a review of the habitats, species and pollution risks on the farm.

You must prepare a Farm Environment Assessment (FEA) covering the whole of your holding if you are applying to AECS, unless you are only applying for the following options:

- * Coastal Embankment Breaching, Lowering or Removal
- * River Embankment Breaching, Lowering or Removal
- * Restoring (Protecting) River Banks
- Organic Farming: Maintenance
- Organic Farming: Conversion
- Upland Habitat Impact Assessment for deer management (as standalone capital item)
- Wildcat friendly predator control , where this is the only option applied for
- *Water - use Efficiency - Irrigation Lagoon

* Note: although these options do not require a FEA, they do require a Diffuse pollution risk assessment .

If your farm business has a Business Registration Number that consists of several Location Codes, the Farm Environment Assessment needs to cover the entirety of any Location Codes included in your application.

FEA for Crofting Applications

If you are applying as a common grazing committee, the Farm Environment Assessment should cover the whole of the common grazing.

If you are applying as a single crofter with a common grazing apportionment (or designated cropped area), you should include the apportioned (or cropped area) in your Farm Environment Assessment.

FEA Payments

Please refer to the Funding, Claims and Payments guidance to find out about payments available for producing a Farm Environment Assessment.

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FEA Mapping

The assessments detailed below require the production of maps. You should refer to the AECS mapping guidance when undertaking this exercise.

How to produce your Farm Environment Assessment

You will need to produce the following documents:

- Farm Environment Map
- Farm Environment Table
- Farm Management Map
- Diffuse Pollution Risk Assessment
- Diffuse Pollution Steading Assessment (this is only needed if applying for certain water quality options as listed in the diffuse pollution guidance.

To complete the Farm Environment Assessment effectively you will need to identify basic habitat types and produce a Farm Environment Map showing these.

While mapping the habitats you will also need to consider the impact of current management and the needs of the key species present in these habitats, and any key diffuse pollution risks.

This information should then be added to the Farm Environment Table where you can provide more detail about habitat condition.

The process of collecting this information should help you to identify the priorities for management and the best options to apply for, both for the benefit of the habitats and species and to manage any diffuse pollution risks.

You will need to show your chosen scheme management options and capital items in a Farm Management Map.

Depending on the size and nature of your land and the risks identified, you may either identify and map the diffuse pollution risks within the general Farm Environment Assessment, or prepare a separate Diffuse Pollution Field Assessment.

Some of the management options or capital items you select may also require a specialist management plan which will ask you to go into further detail.

Farm Environment Map

The map should clearly show the following:

- farm boundary
- existing habitats, using the list provided in the Farm Environment Table template. Please note, this list currently aligns with the Habitat and Feature Key agreed for the Whole Farm Plan Biodiversity Audit (see below*)
- boundaries of the following protected places for nature, where they overlap your land: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- any historic sites, e.g. Scheduled Monuments. If this makes the map too complex, you may wish to provide a separate map but this must also show the farm boundary
- any diffuse pollution risks identified (unless showing them on a separate map). These should be identified on the map as a dot, line or shape, as appropriate, showing their location together with a number
- a key to the colour codes used in the map. **The colours you use in the FEA table must match the colours on your map**

Provide more than one map if necessary to ensure all the information is clear. For example, a map of the inbye fields and a separate map of the moorland.

If you are applying for Moorland Management, you have to provide a detailed map of the extent of the different moorland habitats. As this is provided as a separate moorland map within the Moorland Management Plan, the FEA map can be simplified for the moorland area, as explained in the FEA table template.

The map below is an example Farm Environment Map where the whole farm has been mapped. This would also meet the Biodiversity Audit habitat map standards (see below*).

Farm Environment example map to meet Biodiversity Audit requirements (PDF, Size: 147.0 kB)
doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Farm-Environment-example-map-to-meet-Biodiversity-Audit-requirements---Jan-2025.pdf

***Whole Farm Plan - Biodiversity Audit** If you use the approved key and assign a habitat to all land that you are responsible for, excluding seasonal land but including any land that is not currently mapped and does not have a LPID (white space), then your AECS FEA map can form the basis of the Habitat map required to satisfy the minimum standards for a Biodiversity Audit, as part of your business Whole Farm Plan. Please consult the detailed guidance on the Whole Farm Plan page .

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Farm Environment Table

You must use the template provided below. The table begins with a short summary paragraph describing the farm. This should include details, such as farm type, size, agricultural activities, livestock numbers and type, crops grown and tenure.

Each habitat present should be described in the separate rows provided in the table. Provide a short description of the habitat and its condition, together with any issues, risks or opportunities. You should note the presence of any species of interest, especially any protected species or vulnerable priority species .

Where diffuse pollution risks have been identified, list them in the table using corresponding numbers on the map and give a brief outline of the risk (unless identifying them in a separate table). If no diffuse pollution risks have been found, state, ‘no diffuse pollution risks identified’.

You can download the template for the table and an example of how to complete it below.

Farm Environment Table template (MS Word, Size: 45.1 kB)
doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/FARM-ENVIRONMENT-TABLE-TEMPLATE--2025-onwards.docx An editable template for the Farm Environment Table

Farm Environment Table example (PDF, Size: 226.1 kB)
doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Farm-Environment-Table-Example.pdf

Farm Management Map

The management map should clearly show where the proposed management options and capital items are to be undertaken on the farm. Please refer to the “Marking your maps” and “Management Map” details on the Mapping guidance .

Each management activity should be individually labelled with a map letter for identification purposes and shown using a clear coloured map key. These map letters must correspond to the map letters provided in the online application.

For example, **HM1** could be used for existing hedgerow management under the Management or Restoration of Hedgerows option, **HC1** could be used for new hedgerow creation under the Creation of Hedgerows option and **SRG1** could be used for Species-rich Grassland Management.

Associated capital items can have the same map letter to avoid the map becoming cluttered. For example, stock fencing and hedge planting capital items for the same new hedge could be identified by the same map letter.

Similarly, capital items associated with management options can be shown by a line or symbol and have the same map letter. For example, fencing a water margin, as long as the map key clearly identifies the capital items.

The map must include a colour key.

You should provide more than one map if that is necessary to ensure all the information is clear. For example, a large-scale map of the in-bye fields and smaller-scale map of moorland.

You can download an example of a Farm Management Map.



Farm Management Map (PDF, Size: 384.9 kB)
doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Farm-Environment-Management-Map---December-2015-2.pdf

Diffuse Pollution Risk Assessment

As part of the Farm Environmental Assessment process, you must undertake a field-based assessment to identify the diffuse pollution risks present on the holding. This will help to identify options or actions needed to deal with these risks and identify where they should be located to be most effective.

Returning applicants should survey for any new issues and also note where any issues were addressed in the previous AECS contract.

Please see full details in the diffuse pollution risk assessment guidance .

Diffuse Pollution Steading Assessment

If you wish to apply for certain options relating to water quality, you must also prepare a diffuse pollution steading assessment. The purpose is to consider the whole farm, identify potential pollution risks and select the most appropriate options which will help you to manage the risks effectively.

Please see full details in the diffuse pollution steading assessment guidance .

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