

Questions and answers: Extension to SAF 2016 closing date

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The Scottish deadline for farmers and crofters to submit their Single Application Form (SAF) has been extended, under flexibility from the EU, until 15 June, 2016.

Read the full news release here.

Q1: Why are we extending the deadline?

- The European Commission granted Member States the discretion to extend the application window again this year, in recognition of the challenges being experienced by nations across the EU in implementing the new, more complex Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).
- The Rural Payments and Services online application system continues to operate well. The Scottish Government expects to receive around 21,000 SAFs and for the vast majority of customers there is nothing to delay submission this year.
- However, a very small number of farmers (around 1,300) who were subject to land inspections in respect of their 2015 claims, have not yet been provided with fully updated mapping data on which to base their 2016 claim.
- In light of this, and following discussion with farming industry representatives on Friday, 6 May, the Scottish Government has agreed to extend the deadline by a month to 15 June, 2016.

Q2: Has the extended deadline been put in place because of the delay in customers receiving their updated maps?

- A small percentage of inspected cases from last year have experienced delays to their mapping information. Of the 1,300 cases subject to inspections, approximately 800 are still awaiting updated maps, because the Scottish Government has been prioritising the issuing of payments.

Q3: Will 2015 inspected cases receive updated maps by the end of the extension?

- We anticipate that with the exception of a small number of complex cases, e.g. cases awaiting information / clarifications from claimants etc, all 2015 inspection cases will have received new maps by 15 June, 2016.

Q4: Does this extension apply to both the application form and the supporting documents?

- The terms of the extension require that both the form and supporting documents must be submitted by 15 June, 2016.
- The terms of the extension offered by the EU means that there is **no separate penalty free period to amend a SAF**.
- A SAF can be amended after 15 June, 2016 by writing to the Scottish Government. SAFs amended, to add or increase a claim, between 16 June and 11 July, 2016 **will be subject to late penalties**.
- A SAF cannot be accepted if it is received after 11 July, 2016 unless Force Majeure or Exceptional Circumstance provisions apply.
- If a SAF is submitted on time (by 15 June) but the supporting documentation is submitted after this (between 16 June and 11 July) then **late penalties may be applied**.

Q5: Will there be an extension to the deadline for SAF amendments without reductions being applied?

- There will be no separate period after 15 June to amend a SAF. Requests to amend a SAF between 16 June and 11 July (inclusive) must be submitted in writing. Requests to add or increase a claim will be subject to late penalties.

- The deadline for LMO continuing commitments is 15 June. If a SAF 2016 is amended to add or increase a claim between 16 June and 11 July and it included an application for LMO, we will not be able to accept it.

Q6: Will there be an extension to the deadline for SAF amendments with reductions being applied?

- The deadline for submitting a SAF with late claim reductions will be extended until 11 July. No forms will be accepted after this date unless Force Majeure or Exceptional Circumstance provisions apply.

Q 7: Customers previously had until 10 June to decide if they wish to be paid in Euros or Sterling – has this date changed as a result of the extension?

- Yes, the date for notifying currency has been extended to 11 July 2016.
- If a customer has already submitted their SAF they can still change the payment currency without penalty, until 11 July 2016. This should be done by writing to their local area office.

Key dates for current schemes	Was	Now
Single Application Form		
Deadline to submit your SAF and supporting documents without late claim reductions	16 May	15 June
Deadline to let us know of any amendments to your SAF without reductions being applied	31 May	15 June
SAFs amended, to add or increase a claim, between 16 June and 11 July, 2016 will be subject to late penalties	-	11 July
Deadline to submit your SAF with late claim reductions. No forms will be accepted after this date	10 June	11 July
Agri-Environment Climate Scheme		
Deadline to submit supporting documentation for the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme	16 May	16 May
Beef Efficiency Scheme		
Deadline to submit applications for the Beef Efficiency Scheme	31 May	31 May

Q8: What knock-on effect will this have on when 2016 payments will be made?

- The application extension will inevitably impact the start of processing 2016 applications, including the programme of on-farm inspections. The Scottish Government will make every effort to mitigate this.
- At this stage, it is too soon to be able to estimate the impact in any more detail.

Q9: Will forms submitted by 16 May be prioritised for payment?

- We will not be prioritising payment based on when claims are submitted. There are a number of factors that influence how quickly we process the applications and the order of payment.
- Under the EU rules, every claim must be checked and, if we find discrepancies, we need to make the changes or contact the claimant for more information.
- The earlier SAFs are submitted, the earlier Scottish Government can begin the processing of 2016 claims, thereby mitigating the impact on the timetable of payments for 2016 claims.
- The EU rules require us to select a small percentage of applicants to be inspected. Payments cannot commence until all on-farm inspections are complete.

Q10: Can we provide dates for the 2016 payments – will they be made in December?

- The extension of the window will have an impact on the 2016 programme and the earlier SAFs are submitted, the earlier Scottish Government can begin the processing of 2016 claims, thereby mitigating the impact on the timetable of payments for 2016 claims.
- At this stage, it is too soon to be able to estimate the impact in any more detail.
- The Scottish Government will make every effort to mitigate this impact.

Q11: Will payments be made in one instalment this year?

- Our intention is to return to the established single instalment payment and this will be confirmed nearer the time.

Q12: How is the IT system performing?

- Performance has generally been good during the application window for 2016 and this has been recognised within the industry.
- Over the last year we have been continually working to improve the system performance and end-user experience. We have also invested in new infrastructure to allow for greater stability and availability. All these improvements are paying off with end users reporting a much better experience when using the application.
- System availability is currently at over 99.9 per cent since the SAF window opened on 15 March.

Q13: What effect will the extended deadline have on inspections taking place?

- The EU rules require us to select a small percentage of applicants to be inspected.
- Inspections will commence as soon as possible, which will be within the extended application window. The extension should not delay the start of inspections, but may impact on the time taken to complete all inspections.

Q14: Will there be flexibility on the inspections programme? For example will there be an extended window for the Greening inspections to take place?

- No, the EFA and crop diversification management prescriptions have not changed. The inspectors will target the inspection visit to validate the activities appropriate to the management prescription, e.g. inspect EFA fallow prior to 16 July.
- Please be aware that once you have been notified of an inspection you cannot withdraw and resubmit your application.

Q15: Do I need to do anything if I've already submitted my SAF for 2016 but was inspected in 2015?

- This is the applicant's decision
- The extent of the mapping changes resulting from 2015 inspections will depend on how accurately the 2015 claim reflected reality on the ground. The more accurate your claim the less need to resubmit.
- We'll continue to issue maps to inspected cases where changes were identified as soon as we can.
- Applicants can:
 - leave the SAF as submitted and notify us of changes in writing without penalty to 15 June
 - or withdraw and resubmit their SAF

Q 16: If I submit my SAF early am I more likely to receive an inspection?

- No

Q17: Will an extended deadline mean that all 2015 payments will be made by the end of June?

- The Scottish Government is doing everything in its power to make as many farm payments as quickly as possible within the EU payment window which runs until 30 June.

Q 18: Will the area offices be open the weekend before the extended closing date?

- The area offices will not be open the weekend of 11 and 12 June. The closing date now falls in the middle of the week with three full working days immediately prior to it. Therefore it should not be necessary for the offices to open over weekends. Normal office hours will apply on Wednesday 15 June (8.30am to 5pm).

Q19: Will area offices stay open on the weekend of 14 and 15 May given that the application date has been extended?

- No.

Q20: What effect will the extended deadline have on other schemes? e.g. BES closing 31 May, AECS closing 16 May?

- The deadline for submitting supporting Agri-Environment Climate Scheme documents remains unchanged at May 16, 2016.
- The amended deadline will not affect the Beef Efficiency Scheme (BES) closing date of 31 May.
- If customers have any queries about registering for the new system or completing their SAF, then they should contact their local RPID area office by phone or visit in person.

Q21: Is there a helpline that farmers can contact?

- Farmers should contact their area office with any queries regarding their SAF submission.
- In addition, we have a dedicated Entitlements and Payments Information Helpline that farmers and agents can use if they have any queries on the payments for 2015. The number is 0300 300 2222 and the helpline is open Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm and Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm.

Q22: Which other countries are extending the deadline?

- A recent statement from the European Commission, granting Member States the discretion to extend the application window again this year, recognised that other nations continue to have similar problems delivering the new CAP schemes.
- We have not yet been made aware of which countries may take up the extension.

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