Public funding update - England

Frequently asked questions

How many application windows are there for SFI26?
There are two applications windows for SFI26, the first application window has now closed. Window 2 is expected to open on the 22nd September.

How long will the application window 2 be open?
There is no fixed closure date for window 2, once the funding is allocated the application window will close. Defra will publish updates once 25%,50% and 70% of the funding is allocated.

Who can apply for window 2?
Growers can apply for a SFI agreement in window 2 if they meet all of the following:

- Are a farmer or land manager
- Have eligible land for the actions they wish to select (e.g. arable land for arable options and grassland for grass options)
- Have management control of the land in the scheme for the duration of the 3 year agreement
- Have at least 3 hectares of agricultural land linked to the SBI at the beginning of the application.

If a farmer was eligible for window 1 but didn't get an application submitted can they apply for window 2?
Yes, as long as they meet the eligibility criteria above they can apply for window 2. They can only have one application though, so if they applied in window 1 they cannot apply in window 2.

Can I do an application for SFI now and then submit it when the application window opens?
No, the application can only be started once the application window opens on the 22nd September.

If a grower currently has a live ELMS agreement on farm which includes limited area actions does that affect what actions they can apply for in SFI26?
Yes, when applying for a limited area action in SFI26, the 25% limit will take into account the area of any limited area actions that are in any of the following live agreements on farm:

- SFI 2023 agreements
- SFI 2024 agreements
- CSHT agreements from 2025 onwards

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- SFI 2023 agreements
- SFI 2024 agreements
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If a grower has got a live ELM agreement can they apply for SFI26?
Normally, growers with an existing ELM agreement have limited scope to apply for additional SFI actions on the same land. This is because overlapping actions are considered "double funding" and are not permitted.

For example, if a farmer has an active SFI23 agreement with a legume fallow option covering all of Field A, they would usually be unable to include many additional SFI actions on that field, as these would overlap with the existing agreement.

However, SFI26 introduces new functionality that allows farmers whose current ELM agreement finishes by the end of Feb 27 to apply for the full range of eligible SFI26 actions on that land. This is because the new agreement will not begin until the existing agreement has ended, avoiding any overlap.

In the example above, although Field A is currently under a legume fallow action within SFI23, the farmer could still apply for any eligible SFI26 action on that field. They could choose to continue with legume fallow or select an alternative action, such as pollen and nectar mix or winter bird food.

This functionality is available where the existing agreement expires by the end of Feb 27 under one of the following schemes:
SFI23
Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier (CSMT)
Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT)
Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)

The cap of £100,000, is that an annual cap or is that for the whole 3 year agreement?
That is an annual cap, the total annual value of the scheme cannot be more than £100,000.

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Will there be a new SFI scheme available every year?
We do not know if there will be a scheme available each year, however DEFRA have confirmed that they plan to offer a SFI27 scheme in 2027.

Will there be any budget available for window 2? I hear window 1 has now closed, this must have used up all the budget?
Window 1 and Window 2 have separate budgets, the budget for window 1 was £60 million and the budget for Window 2 is £230 million, plus any unspent money from Window 1.

Can anybody apply for SFI26 for my farm business?
Whoever completes the SFI26 application must have the correct permission levels for the business on the RPA account.
To have the correct permission level, they must have one of the following:

- Business Details: Full
- BPS: Submit
- CS Applications: Submit

To check and change permissions the grower needs to:

1. Sign in to the Rural Payments service
2. From 'Business Overview', select 'Give people permission to act for this business"

Whilst on the RPA account the grower should ensure their contact details are up to date, specifically their email address. Only the email address registered to the account can be used to contact the RPA, so it's important this is correct. This can be done by:

1. Sign in to the Rural Payments service, then select 'View personal details'.
2. Click on 'Amend personal details'.
3. Check the information RPA holds about you and update any details. You will get an error message if you try to enter an email address that is already registered to another user on the Rural Payments service. Enter a unique email address to continue.
4. Click 'Submit changes'.