

Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)

Handbook for the SFI 2023 offer

This document contains a list of the main changes which have been made to the Handbook for the SFI 2023 offer (the 'SFI handbook') since it was published in June 2023.

List of changes – April 2025

Action	Page and paragraph or table number	Heading	Change
IPM4	Page 15	Rotational SFI actions	Added sub heading: How to tell us about the future area and location of your rotational actions
IPM4	Page 16	Rotational SFI actions	<p>Added: If your SFI agreement includes IPM4 (no use of insecticide on arable crops and permanent crops), you can only do this action on the total available area in a land parcel.</p> <p>When you complete your rotational actions declaration, you'll need to change the total available area entered into IPM4 if you want to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• move the location of IPM4 to a land parcel which has a larger or smaller total available area for this action (see example A)• leave IPM4 at its current location

			<p>and move another incompatible rotational SFI action into the same land parcel as IPM4 (see example B)</p> <p>Example A: If you move the location of IPM4 to another land parcel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for agreement year 1, the total available area in the land parcel for IPM4 was 10ha – this means 10ha was entered into IPM4 • for agreement year 2, IPM4 is moved to another land parcel which has a total available area for IPM4 of 8ha – you need to enter 8ha into IPM4 on your rotational actions declaration <p>Example B: If you move an incompatible SFI action into the same land parcel as IPM4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for agreement year 1, the total available area in the land parcel for IPM4 was 10ha – this means 10ha was entered into IPM4 • for agreement year 2, IPM4 is left at its current location but 2ha of an
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			incompatible SFI action is moved into the same land parcel which means the total available area for IPM4 is now 8ha – you need to enter 8ha into IPM4 on your rotational actions declaration
IPM4	Page 60	This action is rotational. You can do it on the same area of eligible land each year of your 3-year SFI agreement, or you can move the area each year.	Added: Read the guidance on ‘Rotational SFI actions’ on pages 15 and 16 of this Handbook to find out how to complete your rotational actions declaration for the second and third years of your SFI agreement.

List of changes – January 2025

Action	Page and paragraph or table number	Heading	Change
	Page 56, Table 18	Actions or options that can be located on the same area within a land parcel as IPM3.	Added: SW6 in the CS options line as SW6 in CS is compatible with IPM3.
	Page 137	SFI management payment	Amended section relating to adding land to be eligible to receive a management payment top-up. Added: ‘You may be eligible for a one-off SFI management payment top-up if:

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the SFI management payment in your SFI 2023 agreement is based on less than 50 hectares you apply for an expanded SFI offer agreement to add more land-based SFI actions and eligible land by month 2 of the second or third years of your SFI 2023 agreement <p>Providing you're eligible, the SFI management payment top-up will be paid at £20 per hectare, up to 50 hectares, for the remaining duration of your SFI 2023 agreement. It will be based on the difference between the number of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> eligible hectares we already use to calculate the SFI management payment value for your SFI 2023 agreement, and total eligible hectares registered to your Single Business Identifier (SBI) at the start of the relevant year of your SFI 2023 agreement, up to a maximum of 50 hectares <p>We'll write to tell you if you're eligible for an SFI management payment top-up when your expanded SFI offer agreement is 'live'.</p>
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List of changes – November 2024

Action	Page and paragraph or table number	Heading	Change
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	Page 12, Section 1.2.4	Eligible land for an SFI agreement	Corrected heading format and moved bullet point text ‘how to apply’ to the bullet list above the heading.
	Page 15, Section 2	Rotational SFI actions	<p>Added ‘If you choose a rotational SFI action, you’ll tell us the area and location of that action for the first year of your SFI agreement in your application.</p> <p>It will be possible for you to vary the coverage of rotational actions, so they work with your crop rotation and different sizes of land parcels. This means that in the second and third years of your agreement, you’ll be able to do the action on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a larger area than you entered into the action for the first year of your SFI agreement • a lower area, as long as it’s at least 50% of the area you entered into the action for the first year of your agreement – for example, if you enter 10ha into a rotational action for the first year, you can decrease that area to 5ha for the second year and then either keep it as 5ha for the third year or increase it again <p>You need to complete a ‘rotational actions declaration’ to tell us the area and location of your rotational SFI actions for the second and third years of your SFI agreement. We cannot pay you for the relevant agreement year until you submit your rotational actions declaration.</p> <p>Your rotational actions declaration will be available in the Rural Payments service once you’ve submitted your annual declaration</p>

			<p>(read section 5.2.4 'Submitting an annual declaration'). We'll tell you when it's available.</p> <p>To complete your rotational actions declaration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sign into the Rural Payments service • from your 'Business overview' screen, click on 'Sustainable Farming Incentive 2023' • select the green 'Rotational Actions Declaration' button <p>If you do not want to change the area or location of your rotational SFI actions, complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 1 'Confirm if you want to make a Rotational Actions Declaration' and select 'No, I do not wish to make changes to my rotational actions' • Section 3 'Review and submit your rotational actions declaration' <p>If you want to make changes to any of your rotational SFI actions, complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 1 'Confirm if you want to make a Rotational Actions Declaration' • Section 2 'Confirm rotational actions' • Section 3 'Review and submit your rotational actions declaration'
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List of changes – May 2024

Action	Page and paragraph or table number	Heading	Change
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	Page 15, Section 2	SFI actions with an area limit	Added: 'If you exceed the limit, you will not be offered an SFI agreement. We will write to let you know how you have exceeded the limit and ask you to resubmit your SFI application.'
	Section 2.1	SFI actions you can do on different eligible land types and features	'SFI limited area action' column added to all action tables

List of changes – March 2024

Action	Page and paragraph or table number	Heading	Change
	Page 10, Table 1	Additional payments	Common land payment increased to £7 per hectare. SFI management payment clarified as £40 per hectare in year 1 of the agreement, up to a maximum of £2,000. The payment rate is £20 per hectare in years 2 and 3 of your agreement.
	Page 11, Section 1.2.5	About SFI agreements and payments	Common land payment increased to £7 per hectare. SFI management payment clarified as £40 per hectare in year 1 of the agreement, up to a maximum of £2,000. The payment rate is £20 per hectare in years 2 and 3 of your agreement.
	Page 14, Section 2	SFI actions with an area limit	Section added

IGL3	Page 100	Eligible land for IGL3	Section referring to SFI limited area actions removed, as this action is not included in the SFI limited area actions
	Page 130, Section 4.4.4	Additional payment for a single entity on common land	Payment increased to £7 per hectare
	Page 136, Section 5.2.2	How we'll calculate your payment	Common land payment increased to £7 per hectare
	Page 136, Section 5.2.2	SFI management payment	Payment increased to £40 per hectare in year 1 of the agreement and £20 per hectare in years 2 and 3 of the agreement

List of changes – September 2023

Action	Page and paragraph or table number	Heading	Change
	Page 117, Section 4.3.3	Sites of Special Scientific Interest	Last paragraph '...and they will offer your SFI agreement' replaces '...your agreement will start'

List of changes – August 2023

These changes were published in August 2023 (please see version 2 of the [SFI handbook](#)). They're identified in the SFI handbook in **highlighted blue text**.

Changes to Section 2 – Details of the SFI actions

Action	Page and paragraph or table number	Heading	Change
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NUM3	Page 16, table 2	SFI actions you can do on different eligible land types and features	NUM3 is now rotational
AHL1	Page 16, table 2	SFI actions you can do on different eligible land types and features	AHL1 is now rotational
SAM1	Page 19	Where you can do this action	Wording clarified about total SFI available area
SAM1	Page 20, table 4	Other land management actions or options you can do on the same area as SAM1	Table updated to add CS lowland heathland options

Action	Page and paragraph or table number	Heading	Change
SAM1	Page 21	What to do	Wording updated about taking soil samples on areas containing historic or archaeological features
SAM1	Page 22	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
SAM2	Page 25	When to do it	Wording updated on timing of doing the action
SAM2	Page 26	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
SAM3	Page 28, table 8	Other land management actions or options you can do on the same area as SAM3	Table updated to add OT1 and OR1
SAM3	Page 30	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
MOR1	Page 31	Where you can do this action	Wording clarified about total SFI available area
MOR1	Page 33	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
HRW1	Page 35, table 11	Actions or options that can be done with HRW1	Replaced individual SFI pilot standards with consolidated wording

HRW1	Page 35	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
HRW2	Page 36, table 12	Other land management actions or options you can do with HRW2	Replaced individual SFI pilot standards with consolidated wording
HRW2	Page 38	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
HRW3	Page 39, table 13	Other land management actions or options you can do with HRW3	Replaced individual SFI pilot standards with consolidated wording
HRW3	Page 40	What to do	Wording updated and link added to CS Capital Grants for planting hedgerow trees

Action	Page and paragraph or table number	Heading	Change
HRW3	Page 40	What to do	Wording updated to give flexibility to cut the hedgerow trees if there's a clear need
HRW3	Page 40	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
IPM1	Page 44	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
IPM2	Page 46	Where you can do this action	Wording deleted about not doing IPM2 on land containing historic or archaeological features
IPM2	Page 47	What to do	Deleted 'throughout your agreement' as this action is rotational
IPM2	Page 48	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
IPM3	Page 51	What to do	Wording updated to clarify using a companion crop that's been established before an SFI agreement starts
IPM3	Page 51	When to do it	Wording updated to clarify when to do this action

IPM3	Page 51	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
IPM4	Page 53	Where you can do this action	Wording clarified about total SFI available area
IPM4	Page 54, table 20	Other land management actions or options you can do on the same area as IPM4	Table updated to add the advanced level of the SFI pilot arable and horticultural land standard
IPM4	Page 55	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
NUM1	Page 57	What to do	Wording updated about taking soil samples on areas containing historic or archaeological features

Action	Page and paragraph or table number	Heading	Change
NUM1	Page 58	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
NUM2	Page 60, table 23	Other land management actions or options you can do on the same area as NUM2	Table updated to add OT1 and OR1
NUM2	Page 61	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
NUM3	Page 64	Where you can do this action	NUM3 is now rotational
NUM3	Page 65	What to do	Wording updated to allow cutting to control other annual grass weeds
NUM3	Pages 65 and 66	When to do it	Wording updated as this action is now rotational
NUM3	Page 66	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
AHL1	Page 68	Where you can do this action	AHL1 is now rotational
AHL1	Page 70	When to do it	Wording updated as this action is now rotational

AHL1	Page 71	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
AHL2	Page 74	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
AHL3	Page 78	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
IGL1	Page 83	What to do	Wording updated to allow localised cutting to control injurious weeds or invasive non-natives, soft or hard rush, nettles or bracken
IGL1	Page 83	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance

Action	Page and paragraph or table number	Heading	Change
IGL2	Page 86	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
AHL4	Page 87	This action's aim	Wording updated to include heritage features
AHL4	Page 89	What to do	Wording updated to clarify what we mean by 'some heritage features'
AHL4	Page 90	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
IGL3	Page 91	This action's aim	Wording updated to include heritage features
IGL3	Page 93	What to do	Wording updated to clarify what we mean by 'some heritage features'
IGL3	Page 94	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance
LIG1 / LIG2	Page 98	How to do it	Wording updated and link added to voluntary guidance

Changes to Section 3 – Applying for an SFI agreement

Page and paragraph number	Heading	Change
Page 103, paragraph 3.1.3	Checking hedgerows	Wording updated to remove the need to check digital maps for the SFI actions for hedgerows (HRW1, HRW2 or HRW3)

Changes to Section 4 – Eligible land for an SFI agreement

Page and paragraph number	Heading	Change
Page 116, paragraph 4.3.2	Historic and archaeological features, including scheduled monuments	Clarified you must request an SFI HEFER even if you've already obtained one for an SFI22 standards agreement or a CS agreement
Page 116, paragraph 4.3.2	Historic and archaeological features, including	Deleted IPM2 from SFI actions that cannot be done on areas containing

	scheduled monuments	historic or archaeological features
Page 117, paragraph 4.3.2	Completing SFI actions on land containing historic or archaeological features	Wording updated to clarify soil sampling on land containing historic or archaeological features

Annex A: How to take photographic evidence for SFI actions

Page number	Change
Page 157	Wording updated to clarify that this guidance is voluntary