

# Sustainable Farming Scheme – Starting 1 January 2026



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



**The Sustainable Farming Scheme is designed to support you in the sustainable production of high-quality food, help you to improve productivity, and adapt to the impacts of climate change. We have retained the Universal, Optional and Collaborative Layers as the best way to do this.**

**You will receive an annual Universal Payment for completing a set of Universal Actions:**

**UA1 Soil health:** Testing soil over a five-year period to help inform your soil health planning decisions and benefit your crops and pasture.

**UA2 Integrated Pest Management (IPM):** Complete an annual assessment of Plant Protection Products used, and alternative methods to reduce chemical use – which can save money and reduce waste.\*

**UA3 Benchmarking:** Complete an annual measuring and monitoring assessment to help you identify savings or improvements.

**UA4 Continuous Professional Development (CPD):** Build on your existing skills and knowledge through learning on a range of subjects, including improving health and safety on farms.

**UA5 Habitat maintenance:** Maintain the semi-natural, or newly created habitats on your farm to benefit grazing livestock and wildlife.

**UA6 Temporary habitat creation on improved land:** Create additional temporary habitat to meet the Scheme Requirement for 10% habitat on each farm.\*

**UA7 Designated Site Management Plan:** Improve the management of Designated Sites (e.g. SSSIs),

by agreeing a Management Plan with NRW, and then accessing further Optional funding.\*

**UA8 Hedgerow management:** Manage bigger and denser hedgerows to provide shelter for your livestock, crops and wildlife.\*

**UA9 Woodland maintenance:** Maintain existing woodlands to increase the benefits for livestock, nature and business diversification.\*

**UA10 Tree and Hedgerow Planting Opportunity Plan:** Complete an opportunity plan for additional trees and hedgerows to identify where they can benefit your farm. We are asking you to plant at least 0.1 ha of trees by the end of the 2028 scheme year (or have arrangements by then to plant by the end of March 2029), with funding available in the Optional Layer.

**UA11 Historic environment:** Protect and enhance important heritage features to conserve our distinctive cultural character.\*

**UA12 Animal Health and Welfare:** Work with your vet to support continuous improvement in health and welfare of your livestock.\*

**\* If these actions do not apply to your farm, in any given year, you do not have to complete them. This will not affect your Universal Payment.**

### The Universal Payment is made up of:

- The **Baseline Payment** reflects the costs incurred and income foregone for undertaking the Universal Actions across the Whole Farm area (all eligible land), and payments for habitat and woodland areas.
- A **Social Value Payment** – single payment rate per hectare (all eligible land) to recognise the direct and indirect benefits sustainable farming provides to society.
- A one-off **Stability Payment** of £1,000 – available in 2026 for farms up to 100ha.
- Higher value SFS payments will be subject to a cap.

**'Eligible land'** is the total farm – including areas such as trees, scrub, scree and bracken. Areas such as ponds (over 1 ha), rivers, hardstandings, buildings and yards are not eligible.

See our **'Ready Reckoner'** for an indication of your SFS Universal Payment. Some payments may be subject to capping.

### Common land

The Universal Payment will include payments for common land if you have a legal right to use it (will be apportioned in a similar way to BPS). Habitat Wales Scheme (Commons) payments will continue in 2026, and collaborative payments for enhanced management are available, for example through the Integrated Natural Resources Scheme (INRS).

### Scheme administration

You will declare your land details on the SAF annually by 15 May. An RPW Online dashboard will be available and show progress against the Universal Actions applicable to your farm. Universal Payments will commence in October followed by a balance payment from December.

We are working with stakeholders to ensure RPW Online is as easy and straightforward as possible. This includes developing 'earned recognition' to avoid duplication where you may already be doing equivalent actions through commercial contracts or farm assurance schemes.

### Optional and Collaborative Actions

Options available for you to choose from include; improved productivity, enhanced biosecurity, targeted habitat management and tree planting. Payments include one-off capital payments, or multi-annual area-based payments.

### How to prepare

Complete the SFS Data Confirmation 2025 exercise to check your habitat and tree cover details.

See which preparatory schemes may be suitable for you including Growing for the Environment, Organic conversion, or Woodland Creation Grants.

Talk to Farming Connect about the support already available and how to complete training courses this year to count towards UA4 Continuous Professional Development for 2026.

For more scheme information including the SFS Ready Reckoner visit:  
**[gov.wales/sustainable-farming-scheme-guide](https://gov.wales/sustainable-farming-scheme-guide)**

