

# Introduction and updates

**Date published: 2 June, 2025**

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the [bottom of the page](#) .

**This guidance is effective from 1 January 2026.**

This guidance provides details on the Enhanced Greening conditional elements of the Basic Payment Scheme and should be read in conjunction with the guidance for the Basic Payment Scheme and Cross Compliance.

- [Basic Payment Scheme](#)
- [Overview of Cross Compliance](#)

Please ensure that you read all the relevant elements of this updated guidance (including [the annexes](#) ) if you are intending to apply under the Basic Payment Scheme.

## **Scheme and other changes for 2026**

- Removal of the 75% exemption for Temporary Grassland on arable land
- Removal of the 75% exemption for Grassland on Claimed land
- Removal of the requirement to have a Lime and fertiliser plan
- You now only need to retain a map detailing your EFA Locations and Areas. This no longer needs submitted along with your Single Application Form

## **Rule Changes to existing EFA requirements**

Changes for EFA fallow:

- you no longer have to submit an EFA map, but you must retain an up to date copy for your business. These maps will be asked for at an inspection to help identify EFA locations
- the ground cover from 15 January to 15 July inclusive must be either a diverse mix Temporary Grassland or Wild Flower Mix or a Wild Bird Seed mix or a Soil Conditioning crop. This can be established during the Fallow period
- where you use Temporary Grassland (TGRS) for your fallow, it must have at least three flowering species. If you intend to claim EFA Fallow on Machair Common Grazing you must only manage the fallow as natural regeneration from stubble
- clarification: you must not apply herbicide before establishing a wild flower or wild bird seed mix

Changes for EFA Margins 2026:

- you no longer have to submit an EFA map, but you must retain an up-to-date copy for your business. These maps will be asked for at an inspection to help identify EFA locations
- we have increased the minimum field margin size to 3 metres wide from 1 metre to increase the biodiversity benefit
- where a new margin comprising a grass sward is being created it must be a diverse grass sward containing pollen bearing plants, examples of these can be found within the best practice section of this document

Changes for EFA Catch Crop 2026:

- you no longer have to submit an EFA map, but you must retain an up-to-date copy for your business. These maps will be asked for at an inspection to help identify EFA locations
- the number of crop types that can be under-sown has been expanded to include oilseed rape and maize, not just cereals
- you can now control injurious weeds and invasive weeds with herbicide post-harvest. (refer to the [Overview for guidance on Cross Compliance requirements](#) )

Changes for EFA Green Cover 2026:

- we have increased the number of species that can be included in cover crop mix. Including alsike clover, crimson clover, persian clover, buckwheat, kale, stubble turnip, forage rape, winter beans
- we have removed the restriction on grazing before 31 December

- we have added these sentences in helpful tips: If you are in any doubt about your ability to establish the Cover crop by 1 November you should choose another EFA option

#### Changes for EFA Nitrogen-Fixing Crops 2026:

- you no longer have to submit an EFA map, but you must retain an up-to-date copy for your business. These maps will be asked for at an inspection to help identify EFA locations
- we have increased the number of eligible crops to include:
  - alsike clover
  - berseem clover
  - red clover
  - sweet clover
  - fenugreek
- we have removed the requirement that prevented the crop being harvested before 1 August
- you are now allowed to apply herbicide to control grass weeds, or fungicides to control chocolate spot

#### Changes for Enhanced Greening Hedges 2026:

- you no longer have to submit an EFA map, you just have to retain an up to date copy for your business. These maps will be asked for at an Inspection to help identify their location
- definition of a hedge has changed: previously any gap of up to 20 metres counted as part of the hedge. This has been reduced to 5 metres to encourage replanting (excluding gateways)
- the dates for hedge trimming have changed. Previously you could not trim hedges or lop branches off trees during the bird nesting and rearing season starting on 1 March and ending 31 August except for road safety. This window has been extended so you cannot trim hedges or lop branches off trees during the bird nesting and rearing season starting on 1 March and ending on 1 December except for road safety reasons, or when establishing a winter crop (you no longer need permission from RPID to trim the hedges to establish winter crop). Best practice is to team a hedge with a margin to mitigate the need to trim hedges when establishing Winter crop
- introduction of new EFA options
  - **low input grassland**
  - **herb and legume rich pastures**
  - **unharvested Crop**
  - **agro-forestry Low Density Planting**

#### Establishment of EFA options for 2026 only

Due to the level of change for 2026, we are allowing a period of establishment up to the 15 July 2026 for activities that are associated with the creation of an EFA option. There should be no production activities other than what is permitted within the EFA option guidance but cultivation and sowing to create a habitat that has been specified within the EFA option guidance will be permissible. We would recommend retaining seed labels to evidence what you have sown in case of crop failure.

#### Examples:

- sowing wild bird seed into an area declared as EFA fallow on 10 June 2026
- sowing a wild-flower mix into an area declared as EFA margin on 20 March 2026
- stitching a diverse seed mix into pasture to meet herb and legume grassland requirements on 15 April 2026

## [Previous versions](#)

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