

Greening guidance (2026)

Guidance for the Greening rules that form part of the Basic Payment Scheme.

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Greening FAQ

1 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

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2 Overview

Date published: 2 June, 2025

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This guidance is effective from 1 January, 2026

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Greening was introduced to improve the environmental performance of farming in 2015. A new Enhanced Greening payment “for agricultural practices beneficial for the climate and environment” will be introduced as a part of the Agricultural Reform Programme (ARP), it will be a supplementary payment to the Basic Payment Scheme from 2026.

Under reform of the ARP, applicants to the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) who comply with Enhanced Greening requirements will receive a Greening payment that currently equates to 30% of the full BPS payment.

The Enhanced Greening requirement applies at a business level. This is the land under one Business Reference Number (BRN) – all the land your business claimed on your Single Application Form. Enhanced Greening is paid in accordance with the number of entitlements claimed against eligible hectares in the region concerned in each year of application, subject to meeting the requirements.

You may be subject to inspections throughout the year to ensure you are adopting relevant Enhanced Greening practices. If you fail to meet your Enhanced Greening requirements, this will result in a proportionate reduction being applied to your Enhanced Greening payment. In addition to this reduction, you may incur an administrative penalty which can be applied to your Basic Payment.

What does Enhanced Greening mean to me?

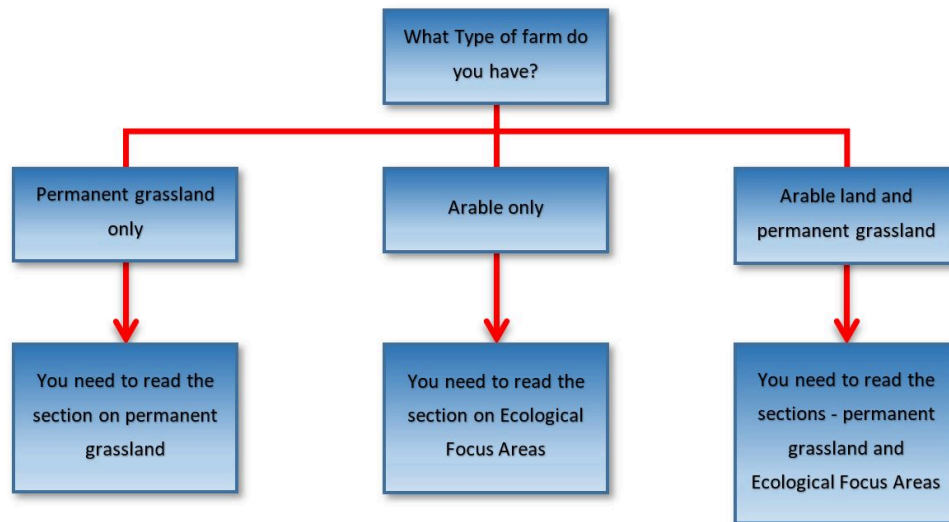
To make sure you receive the Enhanced Greening payment with your Basic Payment, you must comply with Enhanced Greening requirements. Many businesses already comply with Enhanced Greening requirements as part of their normal agricultural practices.

However, it is important you read this document to see which Enhanced Greening requirements apply to you. Enhanced Greening activities will include one or more of the following:

- protecting permanent grassland designated as environmentally sensitive grassland
- farming 5% of your arable area in a manner that promotes biodiversity, and or reduces emissions – known as an Ecological Focus Area (EFA)

What do I need to read?

This guidance will describe the Enhanced Greening elements and what you need to do for each of the requirements. Use our flowchart below to find out which parts of this guidance are important for you to read.



When considering this flowchart, for detailed definitions of arable and permanent grass, please see the [glossary](#).

Is Enhanced Greening the same as Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC)?

No, but a lot of the GAEC and Enhanced Greening practices complement each other. As with Enhanced Greening, you are also required to comply with GAEC, under Cross Compliance to meet Basic Payment Scheme requirements.

You should be aware of the following examples of GAEC:

- a requirement to keep a two metre buffer strip from the centre line of a hedge and a two metre buffer strip from the top of the bank of surface water
- GAEC 1 – you must not apply pesticides within two metres of the top of the bank of surface water unless the following exemption applies:
 - spot applications of pesticides to control injurious weeds, invasive species and, after prior written consent of the Scottish Ministers and / or other statutory bodies, certain other weed species
 - if you are carrying out this exemption, please be aware of SEPA's requirements for applying pesticides in or near water. Information on this can be found on [NetRegs website](#)
- GAEC 7 – you must not apply fertilisers or pesticides within two metres of the centre line of a hedge unless one of the following exemptions apply:
 - applications of fertilisers or pesticides to establish a new hedge. This applies from the time the land is prepared for planting the new hedge to the end of the hedge's third growing season
 - spot application of pesticides to control injurious weeds, invasive species and, after prior written consent of the Scottish Ministers and/or other statutory bodies, certain other weed species

This list is not exhaustive, the full guidance covering GAEC is available in the [Cross Compliance guidance](#).

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3 Permanent grassland

Date published: 2 June, 2025

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This guidance is effective from 1 January, 2026.

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Enhanced Greening requirements for permanent grassland

2026 Enhanced Greening marks the start of a transition period for permanent grassland where the Scottish Government will be recommending and providing links to best practice opportunities with the aim that customers will identify what could improve the biodiversity, carbon storage and effectiveness of the permanent grassland on their business.

The benefits that the large areas of permanent grassland within Scotland provide are recognised but there is still potential to improve. The Scottish Government encourages change and recognises the good practices that our industry is implementing.

From 2027, businesses may be mandated to perform a range of management activities in an equivalent manner to arable EFA which will reflect industry best practice focused on environmental and climate change benefit.

During the transitional period you should start to prepare now and review opportunities for change that would add benefit to your business and align with this transitional change.

Examples:

- regenerative grazing practices including mob or adaptive grazing
- reducing nitrogen application, low input grassland
- limiting areas of bare soils and poaching, especially next to water courses (GAEC 5), minimising soil disturbance
- wildlife friendly mowing of grassland
- summer grazing of hill ground to create a more diverse vegetation
- retaining TGRS grassland to PGRS to lengthen lengths of leys
- high nature value farming

Best Practice information:

- [Species Rich Grasslands guidance leaflet | NatureScot](#)
- [Grazing for Profit and Biodiversity \(fas.scot\)](#)
- [What is mob grazing?](#)
- [Grassland | Helping farmers in Scotland \(fas.scot\)](#)
- [Grassland | NatureScot](#)
- [Species Rich Grasslands guidance leaflet | NatureScot](#)
- [Building resilience in low input grassland systems - SRUC](#)
- [Managing permanent grasslands for carbon sequestration in Scottish soils \(ed.ac.uk\)](#)
- [Regenerative agriculture - Farming and Water Scotland](#)
- [Farming with Nature | NatureScot](#)
- [Climate Change resources for farmers from Farm Advisory Service](#)
- [Biodiversity | Helping farmers in Scotland | Farm Advisory Service](#)
- [Technical notes | SRUC](#)
- [Factsheets Archive | Moredun](#)
- [High Nature Value farming](#)

What is permanent grassland?

Permanent grassland and permanent pasture (together referred to as permanent grassland) means land used to grow grasses or other herbaceous forage naturally (self-seeded) or through cultivation (sown) and that has not been included in the crop rotation of the holding for five years or more.



Pictures above: examples of permanent grassland

For clarity, areas declared as Permanent Grassland (PGRS), Rough Grazings (RGR) or Open Woodland (grazed) (WDG) are all included within permanent grassland for the purposes of the Basic Payment Scheme and Greening.

Updated Environmental Impact Assessment regulations came into force in Scotland on 16 May 2017 and require that land managers should seek approval from the Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Division before carrying out certain projects (e.g. ploughing of unimproved land, drainage of wetlands or restructuring of agricultural land) if these projects are likely to have significant effects on the environment:

- [Environmental Impact Assessment guidance](#)

All farmers, including those farming organic land, are required to comply with Environmental Impact Assessment and Cross Compliance rules regarding ploughing of permanent grassland. If you have land in Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), you must also observe site requirements that may apply to grassland habitats on the site.

If you want more information about this you should [contact your local area office](#).

Enhanced Greening requirements for permanent grassland

Scotland's requirement for Enhanced Greening:

From 2015 onwards, the regulations require that the ratio of permanent grassland compared to the total agricultural area claimed must not decrease by more than 5%. The maintenance of this ratio will be monitored at a national level and it is only if there is a reduction in the ratio the Scottish Government will take action to increase the area of permanent grassland.

In addition, individual businesses must not convert or plough permanent grassland designated as Environmentally Sensitive Grassland (ESG) on their holding.

In Scotland, Environmentally Sensitive Grasslands have been defined as NATURA designated sites where land managers will already be bound by the existing specific management agreements in place to ensure they are protected and managed sympathetically.

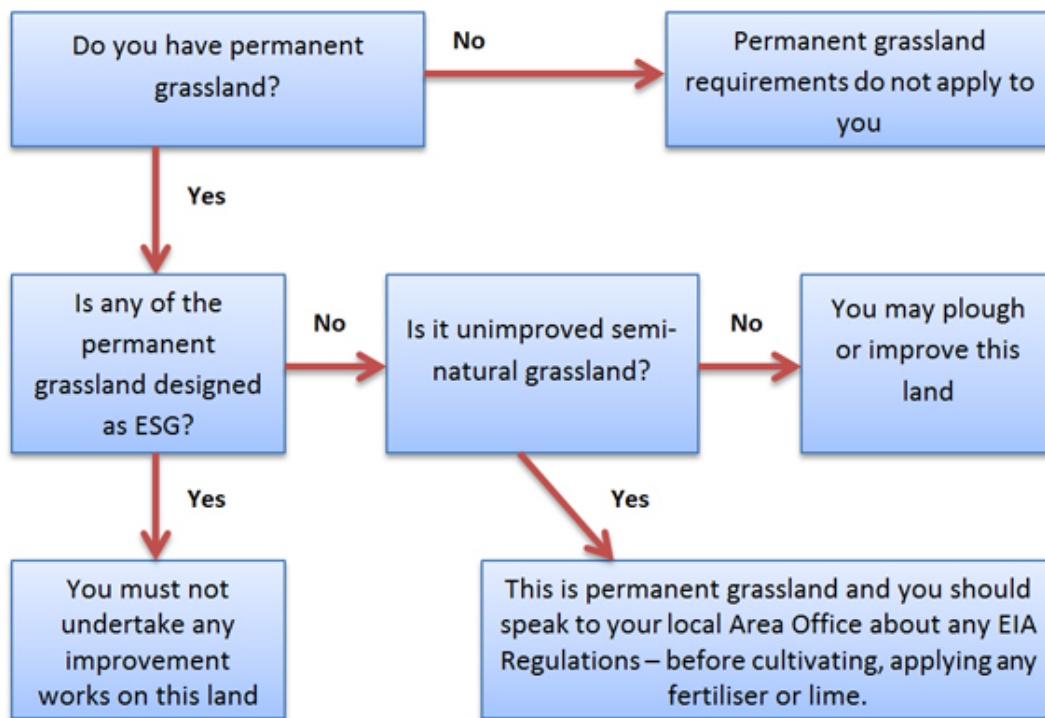
You can check the ESG on your holding using Map Viewer when you log in to Rural Payments and Services.



Pictures above: examples of environmentally sensitive grassland

What permanent grassland requirements apply to me?

Use our flowchart below to see what applies to you.



Rule Changes for Enhanced Greening 2026

The requirements for Enhanced Greening have changed there is no longer a requirement to complete (and retain) an annual nitrogen fertiliser and lime plan for fields of permanent grassland or open grazed woodland.

Helpful tips for Permanent Grassland

- permanent grassland is grassland more than five years old
- if your permanent grassland is designated (e.g. SSSI, SAC, SPA) in any way you should always consult NatureScot before carrying out any works
- if you cultivate permanent grassland to establish any other crop apart from grass, the land will convert to arable and future grass will be temporary (for at least five years)
- if you cultivate permanent grass and immediately sow a new grass ley, the land will retain its status as permanent grass
- if you use some of your permanent grassland area as EFA, i.e. a margin, this means that this area of EFA on your permanent grassland is now classed as arable land for the purposes of the Enhanced Greening calculation only. You will claim it as Permanent Cover (PC) on your Single Application Form and it will be added to your Enhanced Greening total arable area calculation. An example would be:

Total area of holding = 125 ha

Total arable area = 100 ha

EFA is 5% = 5 ha

If all the five hectares of EFA is sited on permanent grassland this would now become arable and would be added to give your new total arable area, for the purpose of Greening only.

Therefore: (original total arable area) 100 ha + 5 ha (EFA) = 105 ha (new total arable area). New area of EFA required is now 5.25 ha. 5% of 105 ha.

What is temporary grassland?

Temporary grassland is land that has been in grass or other herbaceous forage for five years or less.

How to claim your new grassland

There are four traditional ways of establishing a temporary grassland sward:

- example one: spring sown (prior to 15 May). This is the main crop for that year and will be claimed as temporary grass, for example 'TGRS1' on the Single Application Form
- example two: undersown grass where the main cereal nurse crop, for example 'SB' will be claimed on the Single Application Form
- example three: autumn sown grass where the previous arable crop, for example 'SO' will be claimed on the Single Application Form

- example four: permanent grassland cultivated post 15 May and sown out to a brassica crop and then sown to grass the following Spring

If the land remains in grass for a number of years following establishment, it should be entered on the Single Application Form as follows:

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Example one	TGRS1	TGRS2	TGRS3	TGRS4	TGRS5	PGRS	PGRS
Example two	SB	TGRS1	TGRS2	TGRS3	TGRS4	TGRS5	PGRS
Example three	SO	TGRS1	TGRS2	TGRS3	TGRS4	TGRS5	PGRS
Example four	PGRS	TGRS1	TGRS2	TGRS3	TGRS4	TGRS5	PGRS

Your arable land includes any temporary grassland in your crop rotation. Temporary grassland is grass that is five years old or less.

Recent changes

Section	Change
	Removal of reference to Crop Diversification

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4 Ecological Focus Areas

Date published: 11 July, 2025

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page.

This guidance is effective from 1 January, 2026.

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What is an Ecological Focus Area?

An Ecological Focus Area (EFA) is an area of land upon which you carry out agricultural practices that are beneficial for the climate and the environment.

The main aim of an EFA is to mitigate climate change and improve biodiversity.

There are 11 EFA options that can be used on their own or in combination to meet the EFA requirement:

- fallow land
- margins
- catch crops
- green cover
- nitrogen-fixing crops
- hedges
- agro-forestry
- low input grassland
- herb and legume rich pastures
- alternative EFA agro forestry option
- unharvested crop

If the EFA requirements apply to you, it means at least 5% of your calculated arable (including temporary grassland) area must be managed under one or more of the above types of EFA.

You will not be penalised for claiming and managing more EFA than required.

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I'm organic – am I compliant?

If all of your holding (all of the land claimed on your Single Application Form (SAF)) is certified as organic or in organic conversion, the Ecological Focus Area (EFA) requirements do not apply to you.

If part of your holding is certified as organic or in organic conversion, the claimed areas that are not certified as organic or in organic conversion need to be considered for your EFA requirements.

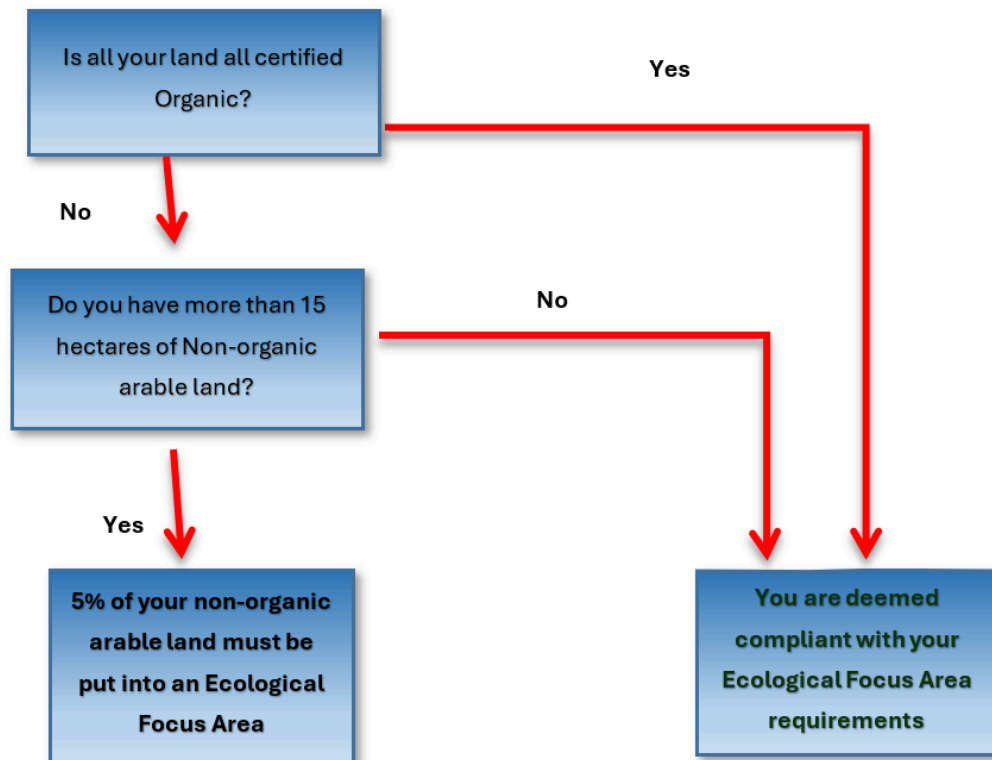
If your holding is only partly organic, you may choose not to benefit from the exemption for organic land.

Instead, you may choose to meet your Enhanced Greening requirements across all of your arable land.

For the Organic clause to apply you **must** submit your Organic certificate with your annual SAF application each year.

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Do the EFA requirements apply to me?



Note the areas of land refer to those claimed for BPS.

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What counts as arable land?

For the purposes of calculating your EFA requirement, your arable land must include all of the land used to grow arable crops, fallow, temporary grassland, leguminous crops and herbaceous crops that you claim for the Basic Payment Scheme.

If you use some of your permanent grassland area as EFA (for example, a margin) this means that this area of EFA on your permanent grassland is now classed as arable land for the purposes of the Enhanced Greening calculation only. You will claim it as Permanent Cover (PC) on your Single Application Form and it will be added to your total arable area calculation. An example would be:

Total area of holding = 125 ha

Total arable area = 100 ha

EFA is 5% = 5 ha

If all the 5 hectares of EFA is sited on permanent grassland this would now become arable, and would be added to give your new total arable area for the purpose of Enhanced Greening.

Therefore: (original total arable area) 100 ha + 5 ha (EFA) = 105 ha (new total arable area). New area of EFA required is now 5.25 ha. 5% of 105 ha

When calculating your arable area you should ensure that you include any land that is fallow, any land in an EFA margin and any land that is currently in an agri-environment scheme that does not allow production, which was formerly arable. For example:

- beetlebanks
- grass margins
- water margins where grazing is excluded

Permanent crops are not included in the calculation of your arable area (see the Annex C for a definition of permanent crops).

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What counts as permanent grassland for EFA calculation?

All land that is claimed for BPS on your SAF under a land use code of PGRS (Permanent grass) or WDG (Open woodland (Grazed)).

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EFA Area Calculator

You can use this calculator to help you check your arable areas and highlight the EFA commitments you must meet.



[EFA Area Calculator \(MS Excel, Size: 27.3 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Greening-2026---EFA-area-calculator---June-2025-v3.xlsx>

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How much does each of these options contribute to my EFA commitment?

The Scottish Government set out a number of weighting factors for the different types of EFA which will contribute to each EFA option. These factors allow for the fact that certain types of EFA deliver higher levels of environmental benefit.

When calculating your EFA obligation you will measure the actual area of the EFA feature and multiply by the appropriate weighting factor to give the equivalent area of EFA. The weighting factors are:

EFA	Location	EFA option code	EFA contribution
Fallow (area in hectares)	On arable land	EFAFAL	1
Margins (area in hectares)	On, adjacent to or within five metres of arable land or contiguous to a claimed EFA option	EFAM	1.5
Nitrogen-fixing crops (area in hectares)	On arable land	EFA-NFIX	1
Catch crop (area in hectares)	On arable land	EFACC	0.3
Green cover (area in hectares)	On arable land	EFAGC	0.3
Agro-forestry (area in hectares) including small and farm woodlands	Planted on arable land that was BPS eligible	EFAAF	1
Hedges (length in metres)	On, adjacent to, or within five metres of arable land or contiguous to a claimed EFA option: Hedges (length in metres) If the producer has the right to claim the whole (eligible) hedge the EFA contribution to be applied is	EFAH100	10 metres squared
	On, adjacent to, or within five metres of arable land or contiguous to a claimed EFA option: Hedges (length in metres) If the producer has the right to claim only half the hedge the EFA contribution to be applied is	EFAH50	5 metres squared

Low input grassland (area in hectares)	Permanent grassland which is not rough grazing	EFALIG	0.2
Herb and legume rich pastures (area in hectares)	On arable land (including TGRS)	EFAHLRP	1.5
Agro-forestry low density planting (area in hectares)	On arable land, or permanent grassland, not rough grazing	EFAAFLDP	2
Unharvested crop (area in hectares)	On arable land	EFAUHC	1.5

For example, spring barley under-sown with grass as a catch crop with a weighting factor of 0.3 – this means that 10 hectares of catch crop counts as 3 hectares towards your EFA requirements.

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Where can I put my EFA?

To be eligible to support EFA the land must be:

- used by the claimant
- on (or for EFA hedges adjacent) to a claimed agricultural parcel
- on (excluding EFA hedges) Basic Payment Scheme eligible land

You must locate your EFA fallow, EFA catch crop, EFA green cover and EFA nitrogen-fixing crops on arable land (EFA Agro-forestry on BPS eligible, arable land in 2015).

EFA Agro-forestry Low Density Planting must have been BPS eligible, arable land, or Permanent Grass Land, **not** Rough Grazing.

EFA margins and EFA hedges must be on, adjacent to, or within five metres of arable land or contiguous to a claimed EFA option.

You must locate your EFA Low input grassland on permanent pasture.

EFA Herb and Legume rich pastures must be on Arable land

The following are two examples of how you can meet the above requirements:

Diagram 1 (below) in this example the hedge is being claimed as an EFA Hedge as it is contiguous to a claimed EFA option, which is an EFA margin.

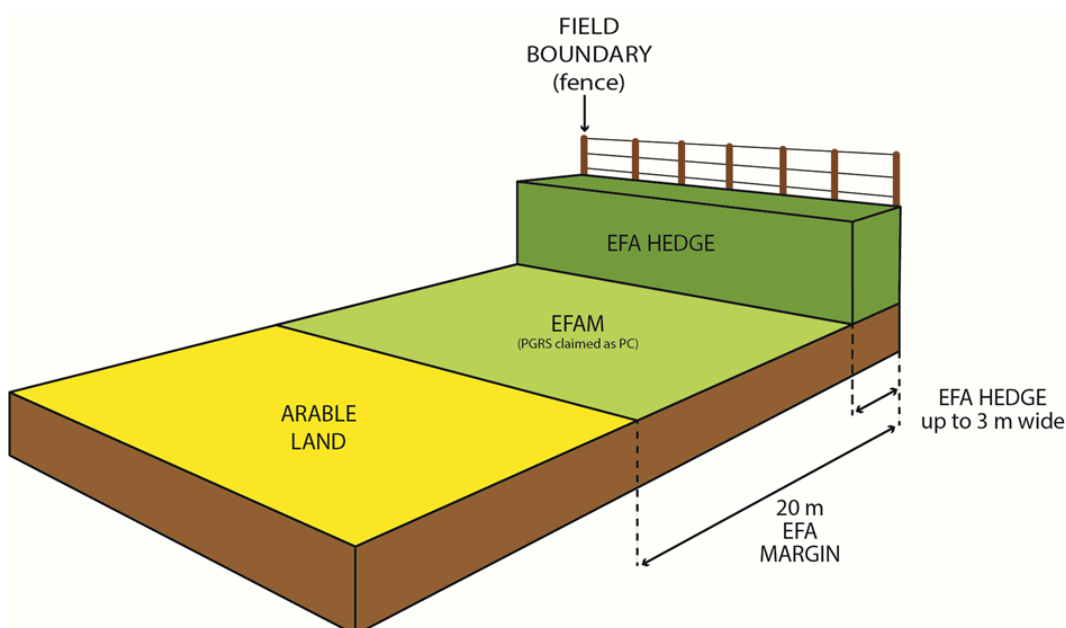
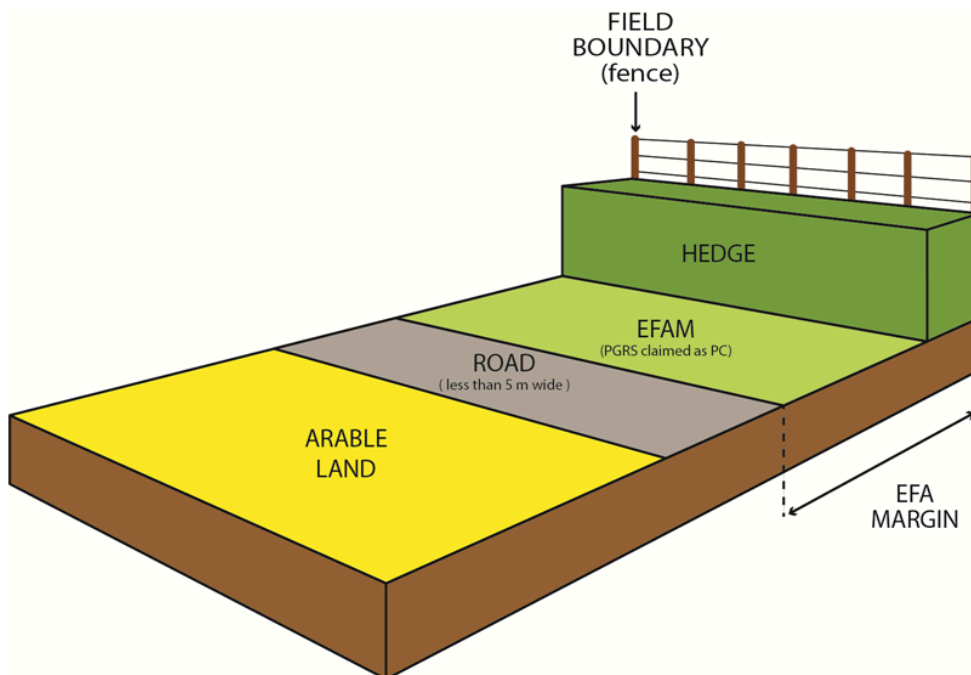


Diagram 2 below shows an EFA margin on permanent grassland (claimed as land use PC) within five metres of arable land.

In this example the road is less than five metres wide and the hedge may or may not be claimed as an EFA Hedge so can be included in the EFA margin area.



If you want to include areas in your EFA that are currently part of an agri-environment scheme you can do this. However:

- you must ensure that the management of the two schemes are compatible
- the payment you receive for your agri-environment scheme may be reduced to reflect the Greening payment you receive for your EFA feature
- there may be delays in the payment of your Basic Payment as both schemes will need to be validated

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Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS) participants

Businesses that hold AECS contracts and finds that their contract management obligations reduces their ability to deliver/meet their EFA requirements may apply to reduce one or more AECS commitments permanently to accommodate a broadly similar EFA requirement to the AECS option being reduced.

Please contact your local area office to discuss your proposed AECS reduction and EFA replacement in the first instance.

EFA mapping requirements

If you undertake any EFA on your holding, you no longer need to submit a map detailing the type, location and size of each EFA feature with your SAF. But you must retain an up-to-date copy of your EFA map for your business. These maps will be asked for at an inspection to help identify EFA locations.

The notes accompanying the map of EFA areas must include the following, where appropriate:

- LPID
- EFA option name
- area
- width and length

You only need to include plans of the field(s) with EFA options on them to meet your EFA map requirement.

If you have several parcels with EFA options on them, you can create individual maps if the parcels are some distance apart. This will allow for more detailed and clearer maps.

Your EFA map could be created by reusing your habitat audit map that you may have created for the new [Whole Farm Plan](#) audit requirements, by adding additional information to the habitat map as detailed above you can clearly identify your managed EFA options and utilise one map to meet both your requirements as long as it captures the information required for both schemes.

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Map viewer

We introduced a new Map viewer in 2022 to improve the mapping data available. You can find further information on its functionality in the [LPIS Guidance documents & tutorial videos](#).

With the introduction of the Map viewer we have introduced a new facility to create and submit EFA maps online.

An EFA feature which is an area that can be drawn on your EFA map using the EDIT EFAs layer on the External Viewer through the customer facing RP&S portal.

How do I draw an EFA area on my map?

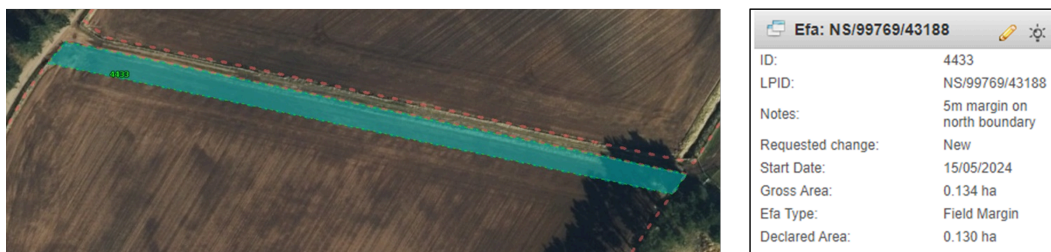
The following diagrams show examples of EFA maps created using the new EFA area function.

EFA Fallow (EFAFAL)

1. The following diagram shows an example of an online map where the whole parcel is claimed as EFA Fallow - EFAFAL

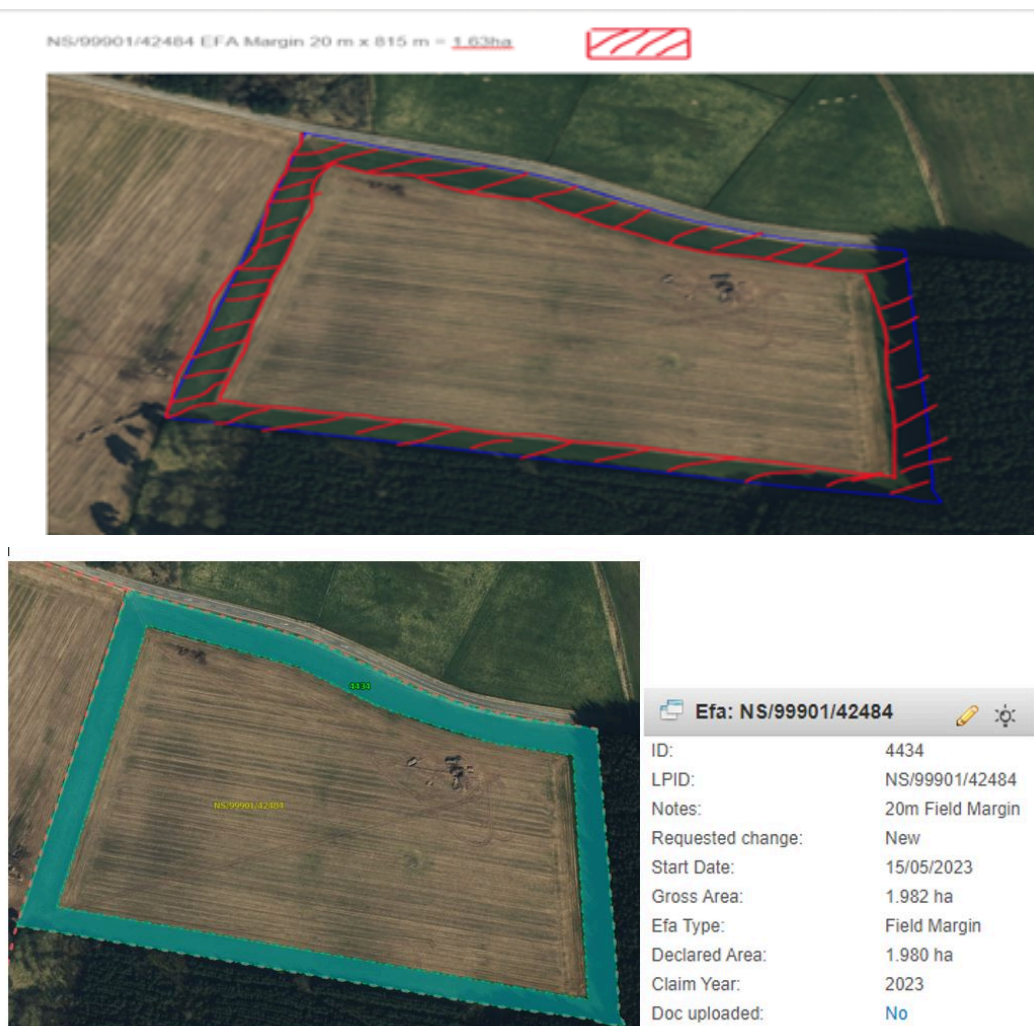


2. The following diagram shows an example of an EFA map showing in blue a claimed EFA margin created using the new EFA function within the Map viewer.



The details of the width of margin are in the Notes section.

3. This is an example of an EFA margin map submitted offline with a copy of an online version for comparison.



4. The following diagram shows an example of an online EFA map with two claimed EFA options: EFA Catch Crop (A) and Green Cover (B) (EFACC and EFAGC)



Efa: NS/99258/40897	
ID:	4429
LPID:	NS/99258/40897
Notes:	Undersown Spring Barley
Requested change:	Unspecified
Start Date:	15/05/2023
Gross Area:	6.430 ha
Efa Type:	Catch Crop Cover
Declared Area:	6.430 ha
Claim Year:	2023

Efa: NS/99636/41012	
ID:	4430
LPID:	NS/99636/41012
Notes:	will be sown with green cover mix after WB
Requested change:	Unspecified
Start Date:	15/05/2023
Gross Area:	7.941 ha
Efa Type:	Green Cover
Declared Area:	7.940 ha
Claim Year:	2023

5. The following diagram is an example of a map showing EFA Nitrogen fixing crops (EFA-NFIX) surrounded by an EFA Margin (EFA-M)



Efa: NT/00693/41504	
ID:	4431
LPID:	NT/00693/41504
Notes:	EFA margin around N-Fix average 5.5m x 230m
Requested change:	New
Start Date:	15/05/2023
Gross Area:	1.169 ha
Efa Type:	Field Margin
Declared Area:	1.160 ha
Claim Year:	2023

Efa: NT/00693/41504	
ID:	4427
LPID:	NT/00693/41504
Notes:	lupins for EFAN- fix
Requested change:	Modify
Start Date:	15/05/2023
Gross Area:	2.847 ha
Efa Type:	Nitrogen Fixing Crop
Declared Area:	2.840 ha
Claim Year:	2023

Efa: NT/00693/41504	
ID:	4426
LPID:	NT/00693/41504
Notes:	clover
Requested change:	Modify
Start Date:	15/05/2023
Gross Area:	2.275 ha
Efa Type:	Nitrogen Fixing Crop
Declared Area:	2.270 ha
Claim Year:	2023

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EFA fallow land (EFAFAL)

EFA Fallow land is arable land that has no crop production or grazing on it from 15 January to 15 July inclusive.

The ambition is to provide a biodiverse habitat that is beneficial for pollinators, birds, and soils.



Above pictures: (left) EFA fallow – example of wild flower mix and (right) EFA fallow –example of soil conditioning crop (Phacelia)

Rule Changes for Enhanced Greening - EFA Fallow 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 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. **These covers 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.**

What land is eligible to support EFA fallow?

Your land:

- must be arable land
- must be on your holding, on a claimed, Basic Payment Scheme eligible, agricultural parcel and claimed on your Single Application Form
- must have been in the preceding year fallow or an arable crop (including temporary grass, wild bird seed or wild flower mix)
- must be a minimum of 0.01 hectares in size
- must be clearly identifiable and distinguishable on the ground from 15 January to 15 July inclusive

Requirements for EFA fallow

You must:

- retain an EFA map relevant to your Single Application Form, detailing the location and size of your EFA Fallow land. See mapping requirements
- control injurious weeds, invasive weeds and other weed species by spot herbicide application or hand roguing (see details of GAEC in [the Overview](#))
- the ground cover from 15 January to 15 July inclusive must be 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 if it is not created the year prior.**
- where you use diverse mix **Temporary Grassland** (TGRS) for your fallow, it must have at least three flowering species – see table below for species
- where you use **Wild Flower Mix Grassland** it must be a mix, not stands of single species. Suitable species are shown in the table below
- where you use **Wild Bird Seed Mix** the mix must include at least two of the groups or species shown in the table below
- where you can sow stands of a single or mixed species of **Soil Conditioning Crops** from the list in the following table

- if you intend to manage EFA Fallow on **Machair Common Grazing** you must only manage the fallow following the traditional practice of leaving the land bare after cropping to allow natural reseedling of machair species

You must not:

- apply any plant protection products to the area of fallow from 15 January to 15 July inclusive, except by spot herbicide application for injurious weeds, invasive weeds and certain other weed species (refer to [the Overview](#) for guidance on GAEC requirements)
- undertake agricultural production between the dates of 15 January to 15 July inclusive. For example, this includes areas of land used in the establishment and growing of a crop
- store materials (including but not exclusively irrigation pipes, fuel bowsters, seed boxes, bales)
- use for the turning of machinery between the dates of 15 January to 15 July inclusive
- use for access (except for occasional use)
- undertake new drainage schemes in the period 15 January to 15 July (see flexibilities for maintenance of field drains below)
- change the land cover within the fallow period 15 January to 15 July inclusive with the exception of establishing diverse mix Temporary Grassland, Wild Flower Mix, Wild Bird Seed Mix, or a Soil Conditioning Mix as described in the table above
- apply herbicide before establishing a wild flower or wild bird seed mix.
- top the fallow between the dates of 15 January to 15 July inclusive
- apply any fertiliser, except to aid in the establishment of diverse mix Temporary Grassland, Wild Flower Mix, Wild Bird Seed Mix, or a Soil Conditioning Mix where you have sought advice from an agronomist or seed specialist, in the area of fallow from 15 January to 15 July inclusive
- cultivate the land and leave bare

You are allowed to:

- claim temporary grass as EFA Fallow if it has been declared as TGRS in no more than the five previous years (see below)
- change the ground cover to establish diverse mix TGRS, wild flower mix, wild bird seed mix, or a soil conditioning mix within the fallow area from 15 January to 15 July, if it has remained as stubble since harvest
- temporarily store farm yard manure for that field
- undertake maintenance of field drains in the period 15 January to 15 March, this is limited to investigation (inspection pits, etc.) and replacement of pipes or tiles where existing 'bursts' have been identified
- in exceptional cases (subject to prior approval) you may undertake maintenance of field drains in the period 15 March to 15 July. In such cases you must seek prior written approval from your local area office to undertake drainage which will only be approved if you can demonstrate that the works are essential and immediate (recently identified after heavy rain)

Enhanced Greening EFA Fallow			
Temporary Grassland (TGRS) <i>Must contain at least three flowering species such as:</i>	Wild Flower Mix <i>Must be a mix not a stand/s of a single species - examples below</i>	Wild Bird Seed Mix <i>Must include at least two from the choices below</i>	Soil Conditioning Crop <i>Can be mixed or single stands</i>
bird's-foot trefoil alsike clover balansa clover berseem clover crimson clover red clover sweet clover white clover knapweed lucerne vetch	bird's-foot trefoil alsike clover balansa clover berseem clover crimson clover red clover sweet clover white clover knapweed lucerne vetch black knapweed black medick red or white campion musk mallow	kale forage Rape swedes other brassicas linseed quinoa barley millet triticale wheat other cereal crops	phacelia mustard chicory ribwort plantain

	ox-eye daisy ribwort plantain sainfoin selfheal sheep's burnet sorrel wild carrot yarrow		
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Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Land use	SB	TGRS1	TGRS2	TGRS3	TGRS4	TGRS5	FALW
EFA option	0	0	0	0	0	EFAFAL	EFAFAL

Best practice for EFA fallow land

- if you choose to put temporary grass in fallow the land retains its arable status for the period it is claimed as EFA Fallow even if the grass is more than five years old
- if you've claimed temporary grass as EFA Fallow in one year and decide not to claim this as EFA Fallow in the following year, it will revert to being temporary grass if it's five years or younger, or permanent grass if it's older than five years
- you may be asked to provide a seed label if one element of your wild bird seed mix or wild flower mix or soil conditioning mix fails, to prove eligibility
- if weed control is a problem, then you may consider establishing a wild flower mix or wild bird seed mix to aid weed control. See the overview for guidance on GAEC requirement
- flowering species can be difficult to over sow into existing swards. They may need to be sown in the year prior to claiming it as EFA Fallow
- if you have established Wild flower or Wild Bird Seed mixes these can be left in situ till the end of the year or longer in the case of Wild Bird Seed, or be allowed to self-seed for the following year in the case of Wild Flower Mix
- consider Ground nesting birds before carrying out cultivations to establish Wild Bird Seed or Wild Flower Mix; It may be better to establish the cover in the Autumn of the preceding year. If you do have to carry out cultivations in the Spring nest should be avoided
- it may be useful to get advice from a FACTS qualified adviser. They can advise on the benefits of correcting soil nutrient deficiencies both for establishment of Wild Bird Seed mixes and to ensure livestock health where grazing or feeding of harvested forage takes place after 15 July
- Soil Conditioning Crops don't have to be destroyed promptly after 15 July. Keeping them for longer builds more plant mass above and below ground, increasing organic matter
- if you intend to destroy the cover in mid-July, then use mixes with earlier flowering species to maximise the benefits to wildlife
- sowing rates for Wild Flower Mix / Wild Bird Seed / Soil Conditioning Crops can be advised by agronomists or from the seed suppliers
- it can be beneficial for biodiversity to retain fallow for more than one year to encourage both annual and perennial plants
- stagger mowing to create a diversity of successional stages and to avoid seasonal gaps of plants in flower

Useful links:

[Advice on how to create Pollen and Nectar Rich Grassland](#)

[Unsprayed / unfertilised cereal headlands – CFE Online](#)

[Wild bird cover – CFE Online](#)

[Basis environmental advisers register](#)

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EFA margins (EFAM)

Margins provide an important habitat for farmland biodiversity, contribute to wildlife and ecological networks and benefit water quality. Margins must remain in place from 1 January to 31 December inclusive.

Conservation headlands, beetlebanks and grass margins, and watercourse margins around arable fields are a valuable feature for farmland biodiversity but also support sustainable food production. They support crop pollinators and pests' natural enemies helping deliver Integrated Pest Management, and function as a refuge after harvest. When adjacent to watercourses they act as a buffer preventing nutrient leaching, soil erosion and diffuse pollution.



Pictures above: (left) EFA Margin between 3 metres and 20 metres wide between two crops. (right) A 3 metres wide EFA Margin next to an EFA Hedge.

Rule Changes for Enhanced Greening – 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.

What land is eligible to support EFA margins?

Your land:

- must be; on, adjacent to, or within five metres of arable land or contiguous to a claimed EFA option
- can be around the margin of a field or splitting two crops within a field
- must be on your holding, on a parcel that is Basic Payment Scheme eligible and claimed on your Single Application Form
- must be between 3 and 20 metres wide
- must be a minimum of 0.01 hectares in size
- must be clearly identifiable and distinguishable on the ground from 1 January to 31 December, inclusive

Requirements for EFA margins

You must:

- retain an EFA map relevant to your Single Application Form, detailing the location and size of your EFA margins. See mapping requirements
- control injurious weeds and invasive weeds. This must be only done by spot herbicide application or hand rogueing. Other weed types may be treated by permission but again this must be only done by spot herbicide application or hand rogueing
- not breach Cross Compliance requirements – refer to [the Overview](#) for guidance on Cross Compliance requirements
- you must retain the seed label as evidence of attempted establishment of the margin so that in the event of crop failure you have evidence of the attempt to establish

You must not:

- graze or cut the margin before and including 15 July
- apply any plant protection products to the area of margin from 1 January to 31 December inclusive, except by spot herbicide application for injurious weeds, invasive weeds and other weed species (refer to [the Overview](#) for guidance on Cross Compliance requirements)
- apply any fertiliser with the exception that you may apply fertiliser to aid the establishment of a wild bird seed mix
- clean ditches and spread the spoil on any area which has been claimed as an EFA margin
- graze the margin if it contains or is adjacent to a watercourse to avoid diffuse pollution

- store materials - including but not exclusively irrigation pipes, fuel bowsers, seed boxes, bales
- use for regular access (except for occasional use including for hay and silage making)

You are allowed to:

- change the cover to establish a wildflower mix, wild bird seed mix or a diverse grass sward containing pollen bearing plants – remember the GAEC 1 and 7 rules regarding 2 metre buffer strips. Further information can be found on the [GAEC 1 page](#)
- apply fertiliser to aid establishment of wild bird seed mix
- cut after 15 July including for silage or hay
- graze after 15 July, if the margin does not contain or is not adjacent to a watercourse

Best practice for EFA margins

- hedges and ditches defined as eligible landscape features (hedges up to three metres wide and ditches up to two metres wide), may be included as part of an EFA margin
- if you have existing beetle banks created under a previous agri-environment scheme this can be included in an EFA margin. However this may result in potential double funding and a reduction in your agri-environment payment
- if land was sown out as temporary grassland a number of years previously and is now permanent grassland (i.e. more than five years old), the area is still eligible for an EFA Margin if it is adjacent or within five metres of arable land
- if the area of the EFA margin includes land ineligible for your Basic Payment this must be deducted from the area of the EFA Margin claimed
- any permanent grassland claimed as an EFA Margin is considered as 'arable' for the purposes of the Greening calculation (EFA area) and should be claimed as Permanent Cover (PC) on your Single Application Form
- if the EFA margin splits two crops these can be the same crop (such as a field of winter barley split in two by an EFA Margin)
- you can increase the benefit of the EFA Margins by making them wider than six metres. Margins near or adjacent to water could be used to manage for irregular flood alleviation

Additional Advice for EFA Margins

- species selection for new margins should take account of location, soil, the adjacent crop, and the planned lifespan of the margin. For example, ideal species composition for short term margins around potato and vegetable headlands will differ from long term margins that you plan to retain over a number of years
- you should also take into account pollen-bearing plants may not compete very well with sown rye grasses in establishment
- margin function is another important consideration for seeding mix, whether you want to attract pests' natural enemies such as hoverflies, ladybirds or parasitic wasps with pollen and nectar to fight aphids or attract and retain ground beetles with tussocky grasses to help fight slugs. Local pest and disease pressures should also be considered when choosing species to avoid creating reservoirs for ergot, clubroot, or slugs. To encourage pollinators, consider a range of flower species with different shapes and different flowering times
- if you are creating a new margin that you are planning to retain for a longer term, mowing or grazing in the first year is important to help perennial species establish and avoid annual weeds becoming dominant
- the list below can be used as an initial guide to species selection, with further advice being available from seed merchants and agronomists

Enhanced Greening EFA Margin		
Short term annual Diverse Grass Sward <i>suitable species</i>	Longer term Diverse Grass Sward <i>suitable species</i>	Wild Bird Mix <i>suitable species</i>
Flowering plants: Buckwheat Poppy Borage Calendula Corn Cockle Cornflower Corn Marigold Corn Chamomile Scentless Mayweed Legumes:	Flowering plants: Yarrow Oxeye Daisy Musk Mallow Red Campion White Campion Lady's Bedstraw Knapweed Wild Carrot Sheep's Parsley Common Hogweed Chicory	Wheat Oats Barley Rye Triticale Linseed Radish Rape Mustard Kale Quinoa Millet

Vetch Balansa clover Berseem Clover Crimson Clover Black Medick Low productivity grasses: Timothy Fescue Cocksfoot	Legumes: White Clover Red Clover Sainfoin Birdsfoot Trefoil Low productivity grasses: Timothy Fescue Cocksfoot	Sunflower Buckwheat
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- locating Margins next to water courses or combined with hedges and woodland edges delivers greater benefits for the farm and its biodiversity
- for Integrated Pest Management, margins placed in a sunny location and upwind of the main crop help to retain and disperse more natural enemies. Species choice is important too, because many natural enemies can't easily feed on deep flowered species like clover or vetch
- staggering mowing of areas in the margin will help to avoid removing all flower resources and shelter at the same time
- avoid spraying and fertilising within 2 metres of the margin to reduce damage to plant and invertebrate diversity, both above and below ground
- increasing the width of a margin from 3 metres to 6 metres will increase benefits and reduce any negative impacts of the adjacent field management, especially pesticides and fertiliser drift

Useful Links:

Further advice on the benefits and management of margins

[SRUC - Harnessing the Power of Nature: Arable Edges and Hedges report](#)

[Hedgerows and field margins | NatureScot](#)

Examples of EFA margins

The following illustrations provide examples of EFA Margins. Please note – these are indicative examples to help you when considering your EFA requirements. If you are unsure if your chosen area is eligible to count towards an EFA Margin, please contact your local Area Office with details and they will provide further guidance.

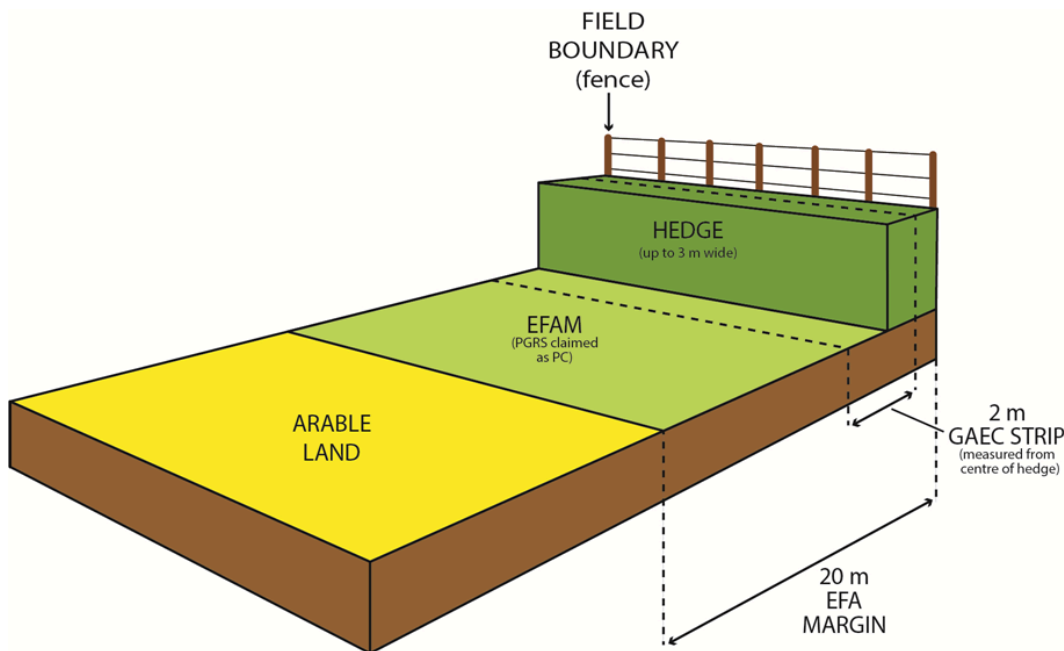
Example one – EFA margin in an arable field



Above is an existing grass margin (possibly a former agri-environment option or a margin established in grass) running from the centre of the hedge to the edge of an arable crop. The EFA Margin should be between 3 and 20 metres wide on arable land, in this example it is 5 metres wide from the crop to the centre of the hedge.

Example two – EFA Margin adjacent to hedge including GAEC strip and Basic Payment Scheme eligible landscape feature

In the example below an EFA Margin has been claimed and is EFA eligible as it is adjacent to arable land. The EFA Margin is between 3 and 20 metres wide and is claimed as Permanent Cover (PC) as it is on permanent grassland.



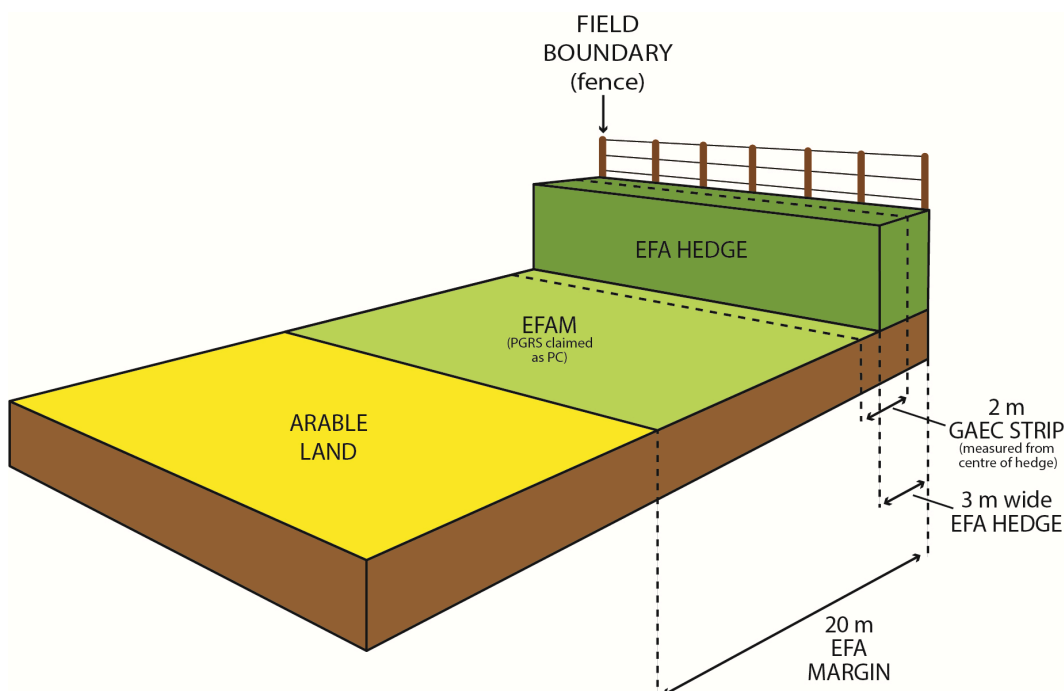
To be aware:

In this instance, there is a Cross Compliance requirement to maintain a two metre wide, uncultivated strip from the centre line of the hedge.

Example three – margin and hedge both claimed as EFA

The example below shows the hedge is eligible to be claimed as an EFA hedge as it is contiguous to the EFA margin (see guidance on Where can I put my EFA).

In this example the hedge is being claimed for EFA, noting any hedge up to three metres wide is eligible as an EFA hedge.



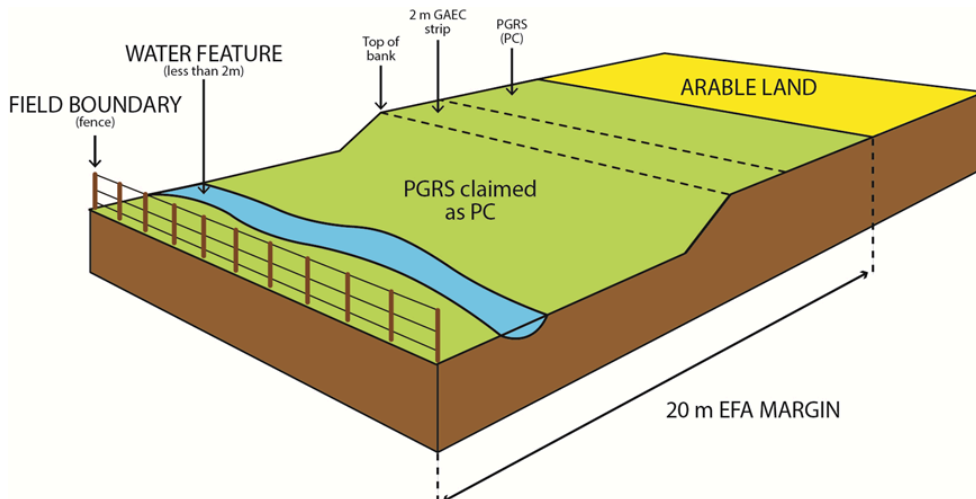
Example four – BPS eligible landscape feature included within the EFA margin

In the example below, the farmer has chosen to include an area from the fence to the edge of the cropped arable land.

This includes, as part of the EFA margin, the water feature as it is less than two metres wide (a Basic Payment Scheme eligible landscape feature) and the two metre wide, uncultivated GAEC strip for the water feature.

The two metre wide GAEC strip starts at the top of the bank (not from the water's edge). Refer to [the Overview](#) for guidance on GAEC requirements.

This permanent grassland, if claimed as an EFA margin, is considered as 'arable' for the purposes of the Greening calculation and should be claimed as Permanent Cover (PC) on your Single Application Form.



Example for implementing the five metre adjacent rule for an EFA margin

Example 5 - claimed EFAM within five metres of arable land, note the watercourse is an ineligible landscape feature and must be deducted from the EFA margin.

In the example below a parcel of arable land has a three metre road on its boundary. The applicant wishes to claim an EFAM on an adjacent parcel using the five metre adjacent rule.

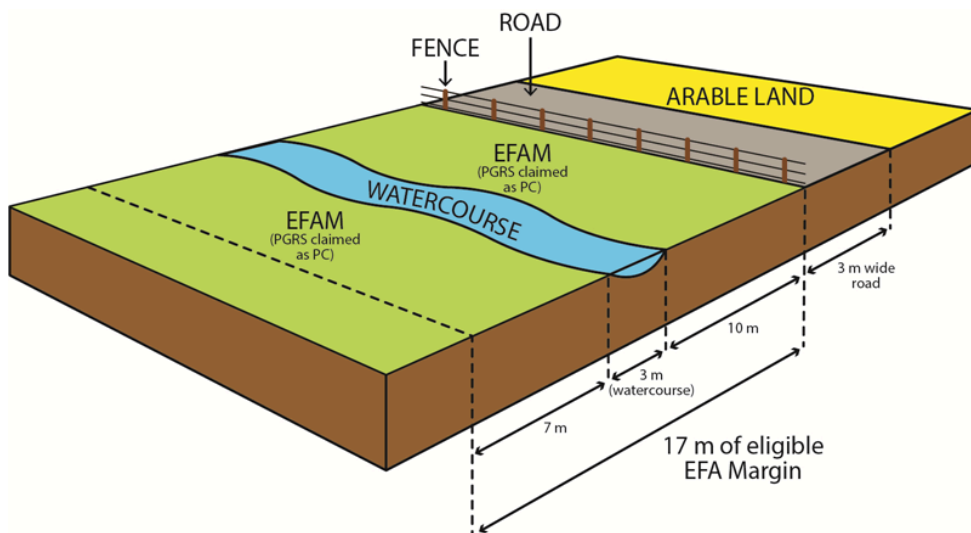
- Where do I start measuring the EFA margin from?

We would start measuring from the fence as the eligible land cover is within five metres of the arable land.

This width would be restricted to a maximum of 20 metres from this point. Any ineligible features found within this area would be excluded from the found area.

In this example, the EFAM claimed area is 20 metres wide however, as the watercourse is three metres wide (which makes it ineligible for BPS), it's area will need to be deducted from the overall area of EFAM to establish a net eligible area of EFA.

As the Permanent Grass (PGRS) is within five metres of arable land, we would claim this EFA supporting land cover as Permanent Cover (PC) and we would not include the road in the EFAM area.



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EFA catch crop (EFACC)

In Scotland, catch crops will be: a Cereal Crop under-sown with a legume or a diverse grass mix; **or** Oilseed Rape under-sown with a mix such as berseem clover and red clover as the catch crop; **or** Maize under-sown with a diverse grass mix, or Beans sown in conjunction with Barley or Wheat.

A catch crop can provide an enhancement to biodiversity, improve soil health, provide Nitrogen fixing, and prevent soil erosion and nutrient leaching along with protecting water courses.



Pictures above: EFA catch crop – barley under-sown with grass

Rule Changes for Enhanced Greening – EFA Catch Crop 2026:

Rural Payments and Services - © Crown copyright

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. Beans can be sown in a mix with Cereals.

You can now control injurious weeds and invasive weeds with herbicide post-harvest (refer to the [Overview for guidance on Cross Compliance requirements](#)).

What land is eligible to support EFA catch crop?

Your land:

- must be arable land
- must be on your holding, on a claimed Basic Payment Scheme eligible agricultural parcel, and claimed on your Single Application Form
- must be a minimum of 0.01 hectares in size
- must be clearly identifiable and distinguishable on the ground
- must be a cereal, oilseed, or maize crop

Requirements for EFA catch crop

You must:

- retain an EFA map relevant to your Single Application Form, detailing the location and size of your EFA Catch Crop. See mapping requirements
- under-sow the main crop
- maintain the EFA Catch Crop up to 31 December inclusive

You must not:

- use plant protection products from the date of harvest of the main crop to 31 December inclusive except for injurious weeds and invasive weeds (refer to the [Overview for guidance on Cross Compliance requirements](#))

You are allowed to:

- graze the EFA catch crop after harvest of the main crop

Best practice for EFA catch crop

- Arable Silage for Stock Feed (ASSF) is not eligible for EFA Catch Crop, as it is not a main crop as defined in the Regulations, (Spring Barley for example is a main crop type) this does not mean you cannot take the crop as an arable silage / whole crop. It must not be claimed for LFSS
- retain the seed label; you may be asked to provide this to prove eligibility if your EFA Catch Crop fails
- using a diverse mix of grass and legumes (such as clover) will increase soil health, produce biodiversity benefits and can reduce soil inputs
- while on most occasions you will know what is the appropriate mix to sow under your crops that suit your location, you may wish to seek advice from a qualified adviser regarding species mix, or to help confirm the benefits of correcting soil nutrient deficiencies both for crop establishment and to ensure livestock health where grazing or feeding of harvested forage takes place, after harvest of main crop
- mixtures of the species listed could be used to create a living mulch to help provide Nitrogen for the companion or following crops
- under sowing OSR may need a mix of clovers to ensure persistence to the end of December in the year of harvest. This means the catch crop can be grazed / topped / direct drilled through with the following crop

Enhanced Greening EFA Catch Crop	
Flowering Species <i>suitable species</i>	Grass Species <i>suitable species</i>
alsike clover balansa clover berseem clover bird's-foot trefoil crimson clover lucerne red clover	Italian rye grass perennial rye grass bent grass chewings/red fescue meadow fescue sheep's fescue smooth-stalked meadow grass

sweet clover white clover vetch knapweed other species Beans	timothy
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Useful Links:

[An introduction to cover crops](#) provides useful information on the management and potential benefits for catch crops

[How to manage living mulch growth](#)

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EFA green cover (EFAGC)

Green cover is the establishment of a temporary crop in the autumn that will provide an enhancement to biodiversity, improve soil structure and fertility, will prevent soil erosion and nutrient leaching, and may be grazed.



Rule Changes for Enhanced Greening – EFA Green Cover 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 species that can be included in cover crop mix. Including alsike clover, balansa clover, crimson clover, persian clover, buckwheat, kale, stubble turnip, forage rape, 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

What land is eligible to support EFA green cover?

Your land:

- must be arable land
- must be on your holding, on a claimed Basic Payment Scheme eligible agricultural parcel, and claimed on your Single Application Form
- must be a minimum of 0.01 hectares in size
- must be clearly identifiable and distinguishable on the ground

Requirements for EFA green cover

You must:

- retain an EFA map relevant to your Single Application Form, detailing the location and size of your EFA cover crop. See mapping requirements
- establish the EFA green cover by 1 November
- maintain the EFA Green Cover up to the 31 December inclusive. (However it can be retained for longer to maintain the benefits to the soil)

- establish a green cover consisting of two or more of the following crops as the predominant crops: alfalfa, barley, alsike clover, balansa clover, crimson clover, red clover, persian clover, white clover, buckwheat (can cause skin Photosensitisation), mustard, oats, phacelia, radish, rye, triticale, vetch, kale, forage rape, stubble turnip, beans

You must not:

- use plant protection products from establishment of the EFA Green Cover until the 31 December
- incorporate and sow any green cover to a winter crop in the autumn (prior to 31 December) of the year that it is claimed as an EFA
- take to harvest any crop sown as EFA green cover

Helpful tips for EFA green cover

- you may be asked to provide a seed label to prove eligibility, if one element of your EFA green cover fails
- if you intend to sow your EFA green cover immediately after harvesting another crop, you must remember you are required to establish it by 1 November. If you are in any doubt about your ability to establish the crop by 1 November you should choose another EFA option
- cover crops can be broadcast into standing crops, prior to harvest
- grazing or incorporating the cover can provide different benefits in terms of fertilization of soil from manure, or leaving for mulch, and/or root depth to put organic matter into soil

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EFA nitrogen-fixing crops (EFA-NFIX)

Nitrogen-fixing crops are plants that contain symbiotic bacteria called *Rhizobia* within the nodules of their root systems, producing nitrogen compounds that help the plant to grow and compete with other plants.

When the plant dies, the fixed nitrogen is released making it available to other plants and this helps to fertilise the soil.



The picture shows an EFA Nitrogen-Fixing crop with an associated claimed EFA margin.

Rule Changes for Enhanced Greening - 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

- balansa 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, and you are now allowed to apply Fungicide.

We have added a best practice section.

What land is eligible to support EFA nitrogen-fixing crops?

Your land:

- must be arable land
- must be on your holding, on a claimed Basic Payment Scheme eligible agricultural parcel, and claimed on your Single Application Form
- must be a minimum of 0.01 hectares in size
- must be clearly identifiable and distinguishable on the ground

Requirements for EFA nitrogen-fixing crops

You must:

- ensure that areas **claimed as EFA Nitrogen-Fixing Crops are surrounded by a claimed EFA Margin**. The margin must meet the updated guidance for 2026 EFA Margin rules, including retention and management until 31 December inclusive
- claim a minimum of two separate Nitrogen Fixing Crops
- sow either a single stand or mix of legumes ensuring that the nitrogen-fixing crop species are predominant by weight of seed if other crops are mixed with one or both of the EFA Nitrogen-Fixing Crops. The predominant nitrogen-fixing crop (for each claimed EFA Nitrogen-Fixing Crop area) should be declared as the **Land use** on your Single Application Form
- ensure that the main EFA claimed nitrogen-fixing crop is less than or equal to 75% of the total area of EFA claimed as nitrogen-fixing crops
- retain an EFA map relevant to your Single Application Form, detailing the location and size of your EFA Nitrogen-Fixing Crops. See mapping requirements
- ensure that the species mix contains **at least two** different nitrogen-fixing crops from the list below which will extend the flowering period for pollinators

Enhanced Greening EFA Nitrogen-Fixing Crops

At least two from the list below

alfalfa
beans (including Faba beans)
birdsfoot trefoil
chickpea
alsike clover
balansa clover
berseem clover
red clover
sweet clover
white clover
fenugreek
lentil
lupin
peas
vetch

You must not:

- use insecticide as they are prohibited on all areas of EFA Nitrogen-Fixing Crops from establishment until after harvest of the nitrogen-fixing crop

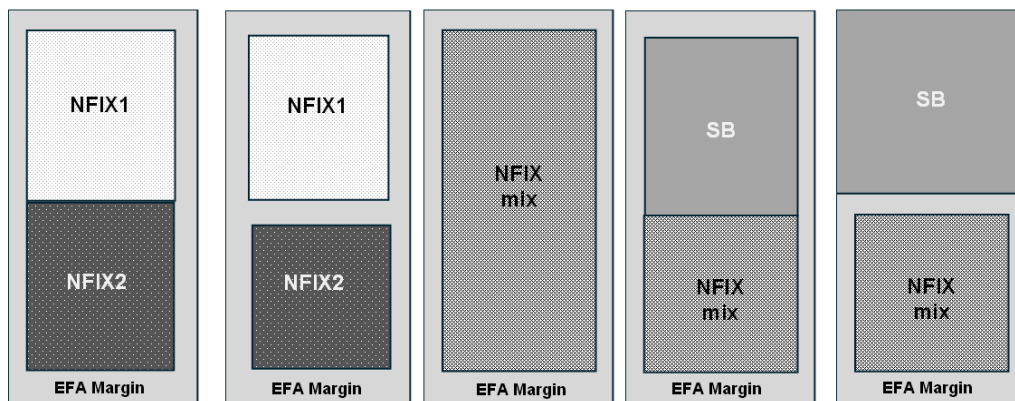
You are allowed to:

- apply herbicide to control grass weeds, and fungicide, following advice from an Agronomist

Best practice for EFA nitrogen-fixing crops

- the associated EFA Margin must be managed in accordance with the EFA Margin guidance. Therefore if you wish to graze the aftermath of the EFA Nitrogen-Fixing Crop measures must be put in place to exclude livestock from any EFA Margins adjacent to watercourses
- growing a nitrogen-fixing crop such as clover or vetches could bring significant benefits for pollinators when compared with peas which self-pollinate
- you may wish to seek advice from a qualified adviser regarding species mix, or to help confirm the benefits of correcting soil nutrient deficiencies both for establishment and following crops, or livestock health if grazed or forage harvested
- the James Hutton Institute has completed a project on [intercropping](#) which provides useful information and potential benefits from the management practice

Examples: the diagram below shows examples of an EFA Margin surrounding EFA Nitrogen-Fixing Crops.



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EFA hedges (EFAH)

Hedges provide a habitat and wildlife corridor for a variety of farmland birds, insects and mammals.

They increase farmland biodiversity and also protect arable crops from the wind, thereby reducing soil erosion and resulting pollution, or provide shelter for livestock welfare benefit on permanent pasture, and where forage crops are in an arable rotation.

The aim is to produce a hedge that is diverse and has a bushy structure so has plenty of nesting areas, flowers for pollinators, and berries for birds to feed on from late Autumn onwards.

What is an EFA hedge?

An EFA Hedge is:

- any hedge having a length of at least 20 metres
- any gap of less than 5 metres is treated as being part of the hedge
- a GAEC landscape feature and as such has no land cover and is fully eligible for BPS where it's 3 metres wide or less in any one field



Changes for Enhanced Greening 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 EFA managed 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
- added a recommendation that you should not cut any more than one third of the length of your hedges managed under this Enhanced EFA option
- added recommendations to manage in conjunction with a margin where possible
- added recommendations on best practice trimming

What land is eligible to support an EFA Hedge?

Your hedge:

- must be on or within five metres of arable land or contiguous to a claimed EFA option in such a way that the longest edge of the hedge is parallel to the field
- must be on your holding, or under your control/responsibility, on a claimed or adjacent to a claimed parcel (see example one below), that is BPS eligible and claimed on your SAF
- can be any height but must be up to and including three metres wide from the centre of the hedge (hedges wider than three metres from the centre of the hedge are BPS and EFA ineligible)

How much does my EFA Hedge contribute to my EFA requirement?

- an EFA Hedge is a linear feature. Each linear metre is worth 10 metres squared of EFA contribution if claimed in its entirety
- if the EFA Hedge forms a boundary between two parcels, the hedge in each parcel will count as 5 metres squared (50%) of EFA contribution

Requirements for EFA Hedges

You must:

- if you want to claim a newly planted hedge as an EFA Hedge it must have been established before the BPS application is submitted (prior to 15 May)
- retain an EFA map relevant to your Single Application Form, detailing the location and length of your EFA Hedge. See mapping requirements
- manage EFA Hedges in accordance with Cross Compliance ([GAEC 7 – Retention of landscape features](#)) - [cross compliance guidance](#) apart from the trimming dates

You must not:

- remove or destroy hedges without the written consent of the Scottish Ministers

- 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. Hedge laying can be carried out up to and including 31 March
- cultivate land within two metres of the centre line of a hedge unless one of the following exemptions apply:
 - cultivating to establish a green cover where one doesn't already exist. A green cover excludes crops that are grown for a commercial purpose, e.g. arable crops including crops that are under sown with grass
 - cultivating to establish a new hedge
- apply fertilisers (organic manure, chemical or nitrogen) or pesticides within two metres of the centre line of a hedge unless one of the following exemptions apply:
 - applications of fertilisers or pesticides to establish a new hedge. This applies from the time the land is prepared for planting the new hedge to the end of the hedge's third growing season
 - spot application of pesticides to control injurious weeds, invasive species and, after prior written consent of the Scottish Ministers and/or other statutory bodies, certain other weed species

Helpful tips for EFA hedges

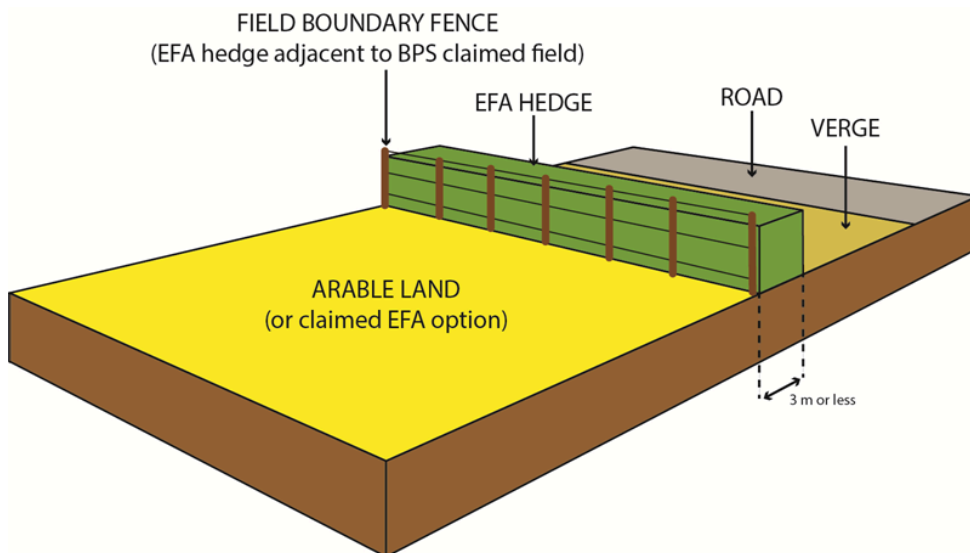
- hedges can include gaps, provided that no individual gap (not including gateways) is greater than 5 metres
- if a hedge contains any individual trees then they are considered as part of the hedge
- if the hedge is a boundary between two fields half the hedge should be claimed against each field
- if you want to include areas in your EFA that are currently part of an agri-environment scheme you can do this. However:
 - you must ensure that the management of the two schemes are compatible
 - the payment you receive for your agri-environment scheme may be reduced to reflect the Greening payment you receive for your EFA feature
 - there may be delays in the payment of your Basic Payment as both schemes will need to be validated
- you should not cut any more than one third of the length of your hedges managed under this option. Less hedge cutting helps with the reduced timescale for hedge management.
- Manage in conjunction with an EFA Margin to allow easier access for hedge cutting, and creating a mutually beneficial habitat.
- September/October cutting will score "poor" in a biodiversity audit. November/December trimming will score moderate. Nature Scot advise January/February trimming provides a good habitat score. This allows the maintenance of resources and shelter for as long as possible while respecting GAEC rules

How do I claim an EFA hedge?

Example one – EFA hedge adjacent to the boundary of a BPS claimed field

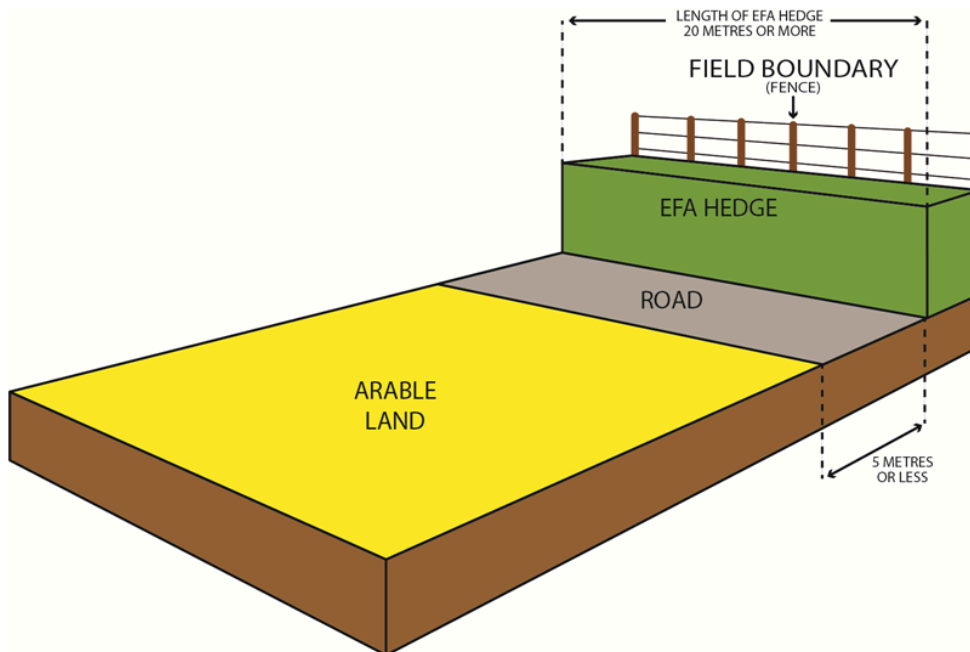
In this example the hedge is eligible to be claimed as an EFA hedge as it is within five metres of arable land and although the hedge is outside the field it is under the control/responsibility of the farmer and is adjacent to the BPS claimed field.

In this instance the EFA Hedge is 100% attributable to the farmer and can be claimed using the code EFAH100.



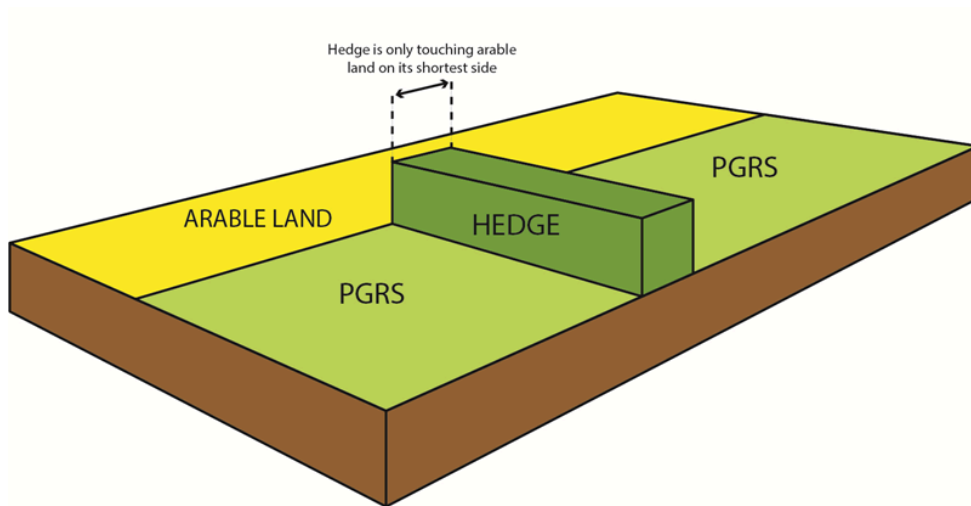
Example two – EFA hedge with a road adjacent to it

In this example the hedge is eligible to be claimed as an EFA hedge as the hedge is greater than 20 metres in length and it is within five metres of arable land. The farmer will claim using code EFAH100.



Example three – hedge with only shortest side touching arable land

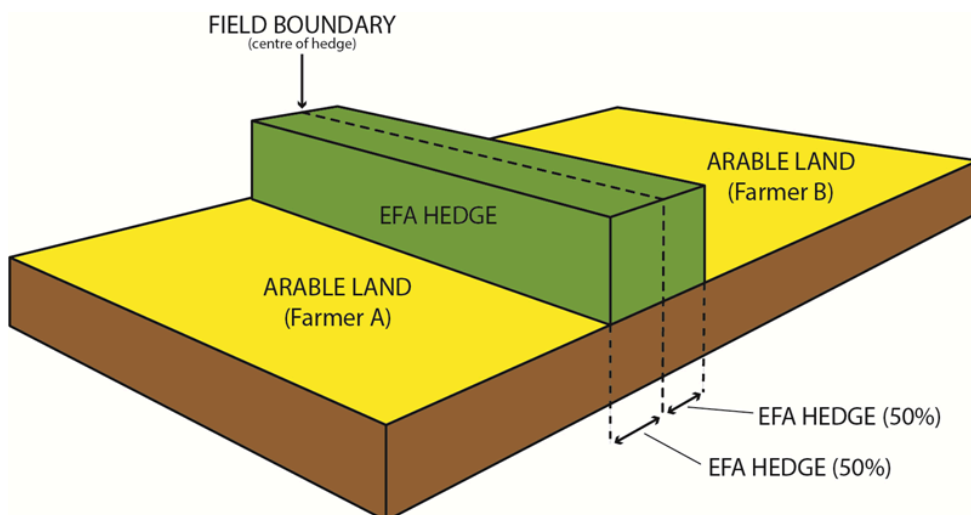
In this example the hedge is **ineligible** to be claimed as an EFA hedge as the hedge is surrounded by permanent grassland on its longest sides and is only adjacent to arable land on its shortest side.



Example four (A) – hedge claimed as an EFA hedge shared between two farmers

In this example a 'march' hedge is to be claimed as an EFA hedge by both farmer A and farmer B. As the field boundary runs along the centre of the hedge, each can claim their respective half of the hedge.

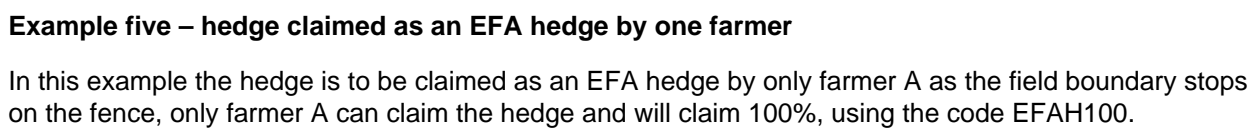
Both farmer A and farmer B would claim using code EFAH50 for their respective half of the hedge.



Example four (B) – boundary hedge between two arable parcels claimed as an EFA hedge by one farmer

In this example, the field boundary runs along the centre of the hedge. Farmer A can claim either EFAH50 in both of the parcels or claim EFAH100 in one of the parcels.

Please note the entirety of the hedge can only be claimed once, either claiming EFAH50 twice or EFAH100 once.



What land is eligible to support EFA Agro-forestry?

- must be permanently held by your business
- must have been BPS eligible, arable land
- must have been planted under a Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) (Pillar 2) Scheme since 2015

You must:

- retain an EFA map relevant to your Single Application Form, detailing the location and size of your EFA Agro-forestry. See mapping requirements
- ensure that the area is subject to an agreement with Scottish Forestry under agro-forestry (FGS082-01 or FGS082-02) and have been planted since 1 January 2015 or subject to an agreement with Scottish Forestry under Woodland creation – small or farm woodland' scheme (FGS081-009)

Helpful tips for EFA Agro-forestry

- for further details regarding Woodland creation – small or farm woodland' scheme (FGS081-009) requirements, please refer to the [Forestry Grant Scheme guidance](#) or the [Agroforestry guidance](#)
- if you want to include areas in your EFA that are currently part of an agro-forestry grant scheme you can do this. However:
 - you must ensure that the management of the two schemes are compatible
 - the payment you receive for your agro-forestry grant scheme may be reduced to reflect the Greening payment you receive for your EFA feature
 - there may be delays in the payment of your Basic Payment as both schemes will need to be validated

The following options are new for 2026.

EFA low input grassland (EFALIG)

The aim of this new option is to create low input grassland which is managed for grazing or cutting. This will enhance soil structure, increase biodiversity, improve water quality and limit carbon release. Costs to the business are reduced.



What land is eligible to support EFA Low Input grassland?

Your land:

- must be on permanent grassland
- must be on your holding, claimed as PGRS, Basic Payment Scheme eligible, agricultural parcel and claimed on your Single Application Form
- minimum size is 0.01 ha
- must be clearly identifiable and distinguishable on the ground from 1 January to 31 December, inclusive

Requirements for EFA Low Input grassland

You must:

- retain an EFA map relevant to your Single Application Form, detailing the location and size of your EFA Low Input Grassland. See mapping requirements. You will be required to produce this at inspection
- manage fields for grazing by carrying out one of the following:
 - grazing
 - rotational grazing, with rest periods
 - cutting for hay or haylage – with the grass tedded out
 - abide by any management plans on designated sites

- where this EFA Management is used on SSSIs and priority habitats, graze or cut to maintain the appropriate sward height for the grassland type
- manage grazed pasture with limited nutrient inputs – see “you must not” and “you are allowed” sections below
- leave margins uncut
 - where fields are cut for forage, leave an uncut margin of least a 3 metres width to produce flowers and seed
 - it must be grazed after the grass has set seed

You must not:

- manage this option on Rough Grazing
- apply inorganic fertiliser
- allow overgrazing
- poach or track the area
- carry out supplementary feed of forage:
 - on areas of species-rich grassland
 - within 10 metres of open water

You are allowed to:

- Spread organic fertiliser, including FYM and seaweed.

Helpful tips:

- try to keep an average sward height of at least 5 centimeters over at least 75% of the area of grazed pasture during the growing season.
- while no supplementary feeding is a requirement to limit poaching on EFA Low input Grassland or within 10 metres of open water it is acknowledged that there may need to carry out short-term feeding of stock, with straights or a blend of hard feeds
- hedges and ditches defined as eligible landscape features under GAEC (hedges up to 3 metres wide and ditches up to 2 metres wide), may be included as part of an EFA Low Input grassland

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EFA herb and legume rich pastures (EFAHLRP)

The aim of this new option is to attain and maintain species diversity in existing rotational grass swards by over-seeding or reseedling with diverse species grass mix. This will extend the period of grassland in an arable rotation, building organic matter, and minimising cultivations which release Carbon.

This action will improve soil health and improve habitat conditions for pollinating insects, wild birds and small mammals, and can improve livestock health and performance.



What land is eligible to support EFA Herb and Legume Rich Pastures?

Your land:

- must be claimed as arable land (including TGRS) in 2025 or later

- must be on your holding, on a claimed, Basic Payment Scheme eligible, agricultural parcel and claimed on your Single Application Form
- must be a minimum of 0.01 hectares in size
- must be clearly identifiable and distinguishable on the ground from 1 January to 31 December inclusive

Requirements for EFA Herb and Legume Rich Pastures

You must:

- retain an EFA map relevant to your Single Application Form, detailing the location and size of your EFA Herb and Legume Rich Pastures. See mapping requirements
- ensure that there are **at least three different herbs or legumes** from the table below in your pasture mix on your claimed EFA area to extend the flowering period for pollinators. The mix must include **at least 1 legume**
- ensure evidence of diverse seed mix is retained – for example a seed label confirming three or more herbs and legumes (must include at least 1 legume)
- maintain the sward until at least 31 December

You are allowed to:

apply lime, and Phosphate (P) or Potassium (K) fertilisers – see further guidance in best practice.

Enhanced Greening EFA Herb and Legume Rich Pastures <i>Must contain at least three flowering species and include at least one legume</i>		
Legumes	Other Herbaceous Species	Suitable Grasses
Bird's-foot Trefoil	Burnet	Common Bent
Lucerne	Chicory	Crested Dog's Tail
Sainfoin	Poppy	Red Fescue
Red Clover	Yarrow	Sheep's Fescue
White Clover	Plantain	Cock's Foot
Crimson Clover	Cornflower	Sweet Vernal
Sweet Clover	Ox-eye Daisy	Grass Smooth-Stalked Meadow Grass
Alsike Clover	Sorrel Sheep's	Yorkshire Fog
Vetch	Parsley	Creeping Bent
Berseem Clover		Timothy
		Rye Grasses

You must not:

- apply inorganic Nitrogen fertiliser or any plant protection products to the area of EFA Herb and Legume Rich Pastures. An exception is spot herbicide application for injurious weeds, invasive weeds and other weed species (refer to the Overview for guidance on Cross Compliance requirements)
- manage this option on existing species rich or Permanent Grassland

Best practice tips for EFA Herb and Legume Rich Pastures:

- in year of establishment the EFA Herb and Legume Rich Pasture **does not have to be in place on 1 January but should be established by 1 July**
- this Grassland can be in place for multiple years and does not have to be cultivated every year and does not have to be destroyed after the 31 December
- select species that suit soil type. Producers should consider pH, and nutrient status of soil and use appropriate species. Species choice is not restricted to wild flowers, and producers can use clovers and other legumes on more fertile ground
- it is acknowledged that there may need to be short-term feeding of stock, with straights or a blend of hard feeds. Care should be taken in identifying a suitable location for this to avoid any unnecessary damage to sensitive habitats
- hedges and ditches defined as eligible landscape features under GAEC (hedges up to 3 metres wide and ditches up to 2 metres wide), may be included as part of an EFA Low Input Grassland or managed as EFA Hedge in conjunction with the EFA Herb and Legume Rich Pasture
- if applying organic manures or lime to these fields, soil sampling should take place prior to application to assess whether the application is required - and if so, to ascertain the most suitable

application rate. Legume rich grassland may not require lime or organic manure and application could lead to a reduced diversity of species within the sward

- reduction of inputs on this type of grassland is a way to improve profitability
- best practice is to regeneratively graze Herb Rich and Legume Rich pastures with cattle
- rotational grazing; for example grazing heavily for a short period of 1 or 2 days then resting for 42 days before grazing or cutting. Cutting can be useful for taking paddocks out of the rotation for mowing or shortening or lengthening the time cattle graze in a paddock
- EFA Herb and Legume Rich Pasture is beneficial for grazing animals (anthelmintic species, varied dietary mineral uptake) and for soil health
- use wildlife friendly mowing techniques to reduce mortality
- a higher vegetative output can be achieved with regenerative grazing
- where cutting for winter forage, the sward should be cut after the herbs and legumes have gone to seed. After cutting, the crop should be tedded to allow the seeds to shed. This will help to maintain the diversity of species
- when cutting, cut in a wildlife friendly manner where possible, and avoid topping during nesting periods where possible
- areas that are subject to flooding or close to river banks could be managed for flood alleviation or wildlife habitat (e.g. beaver habitat) Increasing diversity helps carbon capture in low carbon soils, though some may be at capacity. Land with a higher organic matter content has increased absorbency and improved water infiltration

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EFA unharvested crop (EFAUHC)

Areas of Unharvested Crop can provide an important habitat for farmland biodiversity, contribute to wildlife and ecological networks and benefit water quality.

Conservation headlands, around arable fields are a valuable feature for farmland biodiversity but also support sustainable food production. They support crop pollinators, and function as a wildlife refuge after harvest. They can also prevent nutrient leaching and soil erosion.



Photo credit: Hywell Maggs

What land is eligible to support Unharvested Crop?

Your land:

- must be on, arable land
- can be around the margin of a field (this can be one side) or splitting two crops within a field
- must be on your holding, on a claimed, Basic Payment Scheme eligible, agricultural parcel and claimed on your Single Application Form
- must be between **6** and **20** metres wide
- must be a minimum of 0.01 hectares in size
- must be clearly identifiable and distinguishable on the ground

Requirements for EFA Unharvested Crop

You must:

- retain an EFA map relevant to your Single Application Form, detailing the location and size of your EFA Unharvested crop. See mapping requirements

- maintain the area of Unharvested Crop until at least 31 December in the year of claim
- establish a single species; spring / autumn-sown cereal or oil-seed crop, or a spring sown pea or pulse crop.
- control injurious weeds, invasive weeds and certain other weed species by spot herbicide application or hand rogueing. You must not breach GAEC – refer to [the Overview](#) for guidance on GAEC requirements

You must not:

- apply any plant protection products to the area of unharvested crop from 1 January to 31 December inclusive, except by spot herbicide application for injurious weeds, invasive weeds and other weed species (refer to [the Overview](#) for guidance on GAEC requirements)
- apply any fertiliser with the exception that you may apply Phosphate or Potassium fertiliser to maintain soil fertility.
- graze the Unharvested Crop before 31 December
- use for regular access

You are allowed to:

- under sow the Unharvested Crop with a grass seed mix
- apply Phosphate or Potassium fertiliser to maintain soil fertility
- graze after 31 December

Helpful tips for EFA Unharvested Crop

- establishing next to Hedges and Field Margins creates a good Biodiversity Mix
- if the EFA UHC splits two crops these can be the same crop (such as a field of winter barley split in two by an EFA UHC)

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EFA agro-forestry low density planting (EFAAFLDP)



Photo credit: Forestry Commission

The environmental benefits of agro-forestry systems are that they provide a diversity of habitats for wildlife and can reduce run-off and soil erosion, provide shade for Livestock, and potentially provide income diversification.

What land is eligible to support EFA Agro-forestry Low Density Planting?

Your land:

- must be permanently held by your business
- must have been BPS eligible, arable land, or Permanent Grass Land, **not** Rough Grazing.
- minimum Area 0.5 hectares

Requirements for EFA Agro-forestry Low Density Planting

You must:

- retain an EFA map with your Single Application Form, detailing the location and size of your EFA Agro-forestry Low Density Planting. See [mapping requirements](#)
- declared area must have Low density (20 to 50 trees per hectare) / Protected with Cactus guard or similar and or plastic tree guard on Permanent Grassland. Or in arable situations trees should be planted in rows, spaced to enable machinery to operate in arable field. Protected with appropriate guards to prevent browsing
- trees must be native trees, including fruit trees

Helpful tips

- [Scottish Forestry - Environmental Impact Assessments](#) - If you are planning to plant trees you should check to see if the area you intend to plant is in a sensitive area. If it is there are thresholds that you may apply. Check if you are above or below the EIA screening threshold in the link above
- in arable situations you could plant the native trees in strips sown with a wildflower/grass mix
- if you want to include areas in your EFA that are currently part of an agro-forestry grant scheme you can do this. However:
 - you must ensure that the management of the two schemes are compatible
 - the payment you receive for your agro-forestry grant scheme may be reduced to reflect the Greening payment you receive for your EFA feature
 - there may be delays in the payment of your Basic Payment as both schemes will need to be validated

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General tips for all EFA options

- if you are unsure if your use of an area for access or tracking is more than occasional use then you should not use this as an EFA fallow area. Any consequences arising from access by a third party inconsistent with the Land Reform Act and the associated access guides will not be considered a breach of an EFA
- the definition of 'plant protection products' can be found at the following link: [Definition of Pesticides](#)
- if you use temporary grass as EFA fallow, this land will retain its arable status for Greening purposes (including your commitment to have 5% of your arable land subject to EFA). This applies for as long as you continue to use it for EFA fallow even if the grass becomes more than five years old
- remember – your arable land includes any temporary grassland that you include in a crop rotation. Temporary grassland is grassland that is five years old or less. **If you plough permanent grass and immediately sow a new grass ley, the land will retain its status as permanent grass and does not become temporary grass**
- if you choose to claim an EFA margin on permanent grassland, open grazed woodland or rough grazing – it must be adjacent to, or within 5 metres of arable land or contiguous to a claimed EFA option. You must claim this land as Permanent Cover (PC) on your Single Application Form. This permanent cover will be considered as arable land when calculating your total area of arable land for your Greening requirements including the area of EFA
- if you wish to undertake multiple EFA options in one field you can do this as long as you meet all the eligibility requirements of each and you are able to distinguish the location and extent of each option. In a practical example, this means you could have an area of fallow surrounded by a margin
- land can only count once as EFA so, as detailed above, you may have different EFA options in the same field, but the land can only contribute to your EFA commitment once. For example, it cannot be EFA fallow and EFA green cover in the same claim year
- many elements of EFA are complementary to GAEC. This means that margins or hedges can meet both GAEC and EFA requirements and be eligible land for the Basic Payment Scheme. Refer to the [Overview](#) for guidance on GAEC requirements
- there is no upper limit to the area you can manage and claim as EFA. So if you have a commitment of 10.6 hectares you can manage and claim above this figure. For example, 12.2 hectares, if you wish

- if you want to include areas in your EFA that are currently part of an agri-environment scheme you can do this. However:
 - you must ensure that the management of the two schemes are compatible
 - the payment you receive for your agri-environment scheme may be reduced to reflect the Greening payment you receive for your EFA feature
 - there may be delays in the payment of your Basic Payment as both schemes will need to be validated

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Flexibility under Greening rules

What is permitted under Scottish Greening rules within the Ecological Focus Areas (EFA's) as of 20 May 2025	
EFA fallow	Although no agricultural activity is allowed in EFA fallow between 15 January and 15 July , agricultural activity can be resumed after 15 July .
EFA margins	Can be grazed or cut from 15 July with the exception that livestock cannot graze in margins that contain or are adjacent to a watercourse.
EFA catch crops	The catch crop (grass) must be maintained until 31 December however, grazing can take place after the nurse crop (cereal) has been harvested.
EFA green cover	This has been updated to allow grazing once the farmer feels there is a suitable level of cover established. The land cannot be cultivated after green cover establishment until after 31 December .
EFA nitrogen fixing crops	Can be grazed or cut after 1 August with the exception that livestock cannot graze associated margins that contain or are adjacent to a watercourse.
EFA agro forestry including small and farm woodland	
EFA low input grassland	The strips sown with a wildflower / grass mix can be cut or grazed.
EFA herb and legume rich pasture	Can be grazed, or cut for winter forage after the herb and legumes have gone to seed.
EFA unharvested crop	You can under sow the Unharvested Crop with a grass seed mix and graze after 31 December .
EFA low density planting	Normal agricultural activities under taken between the trees.

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5 Case studies

Date published: 2 June, 2025

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Here are some examples of different types of farm businesses in Scotland and how the Greening requirements affect them with EFA requirements set at 5% of arable land and the only businesses deemed compliant are for Organic land or for business with 15 hectares or less of arable land. This might help you when considering your Greening requirements.

Case study one – arable farm

Jack Smith is an arable farmer with 100 hectares of cropped land (arable) and 50 hectares of permanent grassland. He needs to consider each of the greening elements.

He chooses to grow the following crops -

- 30 hectares winter wheat
- 25 hectares spring barley
- 24 hectares winter oilseed rape
- 4.40 hectares field beans + 0.6 hectares TGRS (associated EFA margins)
- 2.44 hectares peas + 0.36 hectares TGRS (associated EFA margins)
- 6 hectares seed potatoes
- 7 hectares fallow – (EFA fallow)

Using the table provided for EFA ([Annex A](#)), he also confirmed that to meet the EFA requirement he needs at least 5 hectares of EFA equivalent ($100 \text{ hectares of arable land} \times 5\% = 5 \text{ hectares}$)

Jack could meet his EFA obligation with one of the following options –

Fallow

5 hectares of EFAL (5 hectares \times 1 = 5 hectares EFA)

Jack's farm currently meets its EFA requirement by having seven hectares of fallow land.

However, if he decided to choose the EFA fallow prescription, he must decide between establishing a wild flower mix or a wild bird seed mix or a soil conditioning crop. Or if he is using his Temporary Grassland (TGRS) for his fallow, it must have at least three flowering species.

Alternatively, there are other ways in which he can meet his EFA requirements

Margin

3.4 hectares of EFAM (3.4 hectares \times 1.5 = 5.1 hectares EFA)

Note margins must now be at least 3 metres wide and where a new margin comprising a grass sward is being created, it must be a diverse grass sward containing pollen bearing plants.

Please note: if Jack includes any of his permanent grassland area as EFA i.e. a margin, this will mean that the area of EFA on his permanent grassland will now be classed as arable land. He must claim it as Permanent Cover (PC) on his Single Application Form and it will be added to his total arable area calculation, effectively increasing his EFA requirement.

N-Fix & margin

Jack has the following - 6.84 hectares of EFANIX (field beans 4.4 hectares \times 1.0 = 4.40 hectares and associated EFAM which is 3 metre wide = 0.6 hectares \times 1.5 = 0.9 hectares) and (peas 2.44 hectares \times 1.0 = 2.44 hectares and associated EFAM which is 3 metre wide = 0.36 hectares \times 1.5 = 0.54 hectares).

Totalling an EFA equivalent 8.28 hectares EFA.

For this option, Jack can decide not to claim all of his nitrogen fixing crops and margins as EFA, just what he requires to make up the 5 hectares. This could be 3 hectares field beans with 1 hectares peas and 1 hectares of margins to meet his greening requirement of 5 hectares.

Catch crop

16.7 hectares of EFACC ($16.7 \text{ hectares} \times 0.3 = 5.01 \text{ hectares EFA}$)

The range of crops which can be under-sown has been expanded so Jack could under sow his 24 hectares oilseed rape.

Green cover

16.7 hectares of EFAGC ($16.7 \text{ hectares} \times 0.3 = 5.01 \text{ hectares EFA}$)

The list of cover crops has been expanded and the restriction on grazing removed so Jack could sow a green cover mix after the harvesting of his 25 hectares of spring barley.

This is not an exhaustive list of options available to Jack, just are examples of how he may choose to meet his EFA requirement.

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Case study two – dairy farm

Neil Groves is a dairy farmer with 200 hectares of which 20 hectares is spring barley and 180 hectares is temporary grass.

Using the table provided for EFA ([Annex A](#)), Neil confirmed that to meet the EFA requirement he needs at least 10 hectares EFA equivalent ($200 \text{ hectares of arable land} \times 5\% = 10 \text{ hectares}$).

Neil could meet his EFA obligation with one of the following options –

Margins

6.67 hectares of EFAM ($6.67 \text{ hectares} \times 1.5 = 10 \text{ hectares}$)

These margins must be between 3 metres and 20 metres wide and adjacent to arable land (all Neil's land is arable). Where a new margin comprising a grass sward is being created it must be a diverse grass sward containing pollen bearing plants.

Fallow

10 hectares of EFAFAL ($10 \text{ hectares} \times 1 = 10 \text{ hectares}$)

Where Neil uses Temporary Grassland (TGRS) for his fallow, it must have at least three flowering species such as; bird's-foot trefoil, alsike clover, berseem clover, red clover, sweet clover, white clover, knapweed, ox-eye daisy, cornflower or vetch.

EFA Herb and Legume Rich Pasture

6.6 hectares EFAHLRP ($6.6 \text{ hectares} \times 1.5 \text{ hectares} = 10 \text{ hectares}$)

If Neil is establishing a new grass ley he may choose to establish a Herb and Legume Rich Pasture to increase the biodiversity on farm and reduce the amount of Nitrogen required. He must choose **at least three different herbs or legumes** for his pasture mix, the mix must include **at least 1 legume**. He could choose a mix containing Red clover, White Clover, and Plantain, along with Timothy, and Perennial Ryegrass, and Cocksfoot.

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Case study three – mixed upland farm

Hilary Chiles is a mixed upland farmer with 120 hectares of which 85 hectares is arable land (including 40 hectares of temporary grass) and 35 hectares of permanent grassland including two designated sites of Environmentally Sensitive Grassland.

Hilary needs to consider each of the greening elements:

Permanent grassland – there are 35 hectares of permanent grassland on the unit with two areas designated as Environmentally Sensitive Grassland. Hilary must ensure that the designated grassland is not converted (ploughed or cultivated) or improved. She is familiar with the land as it is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which has been notified and regularly reviewed by Nature Scot.

She chooses to grow the following crops:

- 15 hectares spring barley, under sown with grass
- 20 hectares spring barley, not under sown
- 40 hectares of temporary grass
- 10 hectares of kale for stock feed

Hilary checked our table on EFA ([Annex A](#)) and confirmed that to meet the EFA requirement at least 4.25 hectares EFA equivalent (85 hectares of arable land x 5%= 4.25 hectares) must be managed as EFA.

Hilary's farm could meet its EFA requirement by having at least:

- 4.25 hectares of fallow land (4.25 hectares x 1 = 4.25 hectares EFA) or
- 2.84 hectares of margins (2.84 hectares x 1.5 = 4.26 hectares EFA) or
- 14.17 hectares of catch crops (14.17 hectares x 0.3 = 4.25 hectares EFA) or
- 2.84 hectares of Unharvested crop (2.84 hectares x 1.5 = 4.26 hectares EFA) or
- 2.84 hectares of Herb and Legume Rich Pastures (2.84 hectares x 1.5 = 4.26 hectares EFA) or
- 3.70 hectares of Nitrogen-fixing crops (3.70 hectares x 1. = 3.70 hectares EFA) surrounded by hectares of margins (0.37 hectares x 1.5 = 0.55 hectares EFA) (3.70 + 0.55 = 4.25 hectares EFA) Nitrogen-fixing crops must be two crops associated with a margin. The first crop must be greater than 75% of the area this could be a grassland white clover mix with over 50% weight white clover, and the balance a red clover grassland mix with more than 50% weight red clover as the two crops or
- a combination of these to meet the required EFA commitment

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Case study four – hill farm

David Logan is a hill farmer with 300 hectares of which 10 hectares is forage rape, 40 hectares temporary grass and 250 hectares permanent pasture. David previously did not have an EFA requirement but now needs to consider each of the greening elements, and manage EFA for his arable area:

He grows the following crops:

- 200 hectares Rough Grazing
- 50 hectares Permanent grassland
- 40 hectares temporary grassland
- 10 hectares of forage rape

EFA –Using the table provided for EFA ([Annex A](#)), David confirmed that to meet the EFA requirement he needs to manage at least 2.5 hectares EFA equivalent (50 hectares of arable land x 5% = 2.5 hectares).

David has 4000 metres of Hedges around his arable fields

David's farm could meet its EFA requirement by having at least:

EFA Hedge 100

2500 metres EFA Hedge 100 (2500 metres x 0.001= 2.5 hectares EFA). As 1 metre of hedge is equivalent to 10 metres squared

Herb and Legume rich pastures

1.67 hectares EFA Herb and Legume rich pastures (1.67 hectares x 1.5 hectares =2.5 hectares EFA)

With this new option you must ensure that there are at least three different herbs or legumes in your pasture mix as listed in the option guidance.

Or

David could choose EFA Agro-forestry Low Density Planting. If he plants this on his Permanent Grassland this increases his arable area as the PGRS has to be claimed as PC. So he has to take account of this additional Arable area in his calculations.

David decides to plant 2 hectares of EFALDP on his PGRS this increases the amount of arable land he requires manage under EFA to (52 hectares of arable land x 5% = 2.6 hectares).

The EFA Agro-forestry Low Density Planting has a weighting of 2 (2 hectares LDP x 2 hectares Weighting = 4 hectares) so David has the equivalent of 4 hectares of EFA benefit covering his 2.6 hectares requirement.

David also checked his LPIS Viewer to ensure that none EFALDP planted on his PGRS was a SSSI and that he was conforming with the Forestry Scotland Environmental Impact Assessment rules.

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Case study five – mixed upland farm with woodland

Lucy Lavender is a Non-Organic farmer with 280 hectares, 195 hectares grass, 30 hectares of crops and 5 hectares of woodland which is managed under the [Forestry Grant Scheme - Woodland creation – small or farm woodland option](#).

The farm has the following crops:

- 20 hectares Spring barley
- 10 hectares stubble turnips
- 25 hectares Temporary grassland
- 100 hectares Rough grassing
- 70 hectares Permanent grassland
- 5 hectares New trees

Lucy needs to consider each of the greening elements: EFA – Lucy used our table on EFA ([Annex A](#)) and does have an EFA requirement as her arable land is not organic and she has more than 15 hectares of arable land.

To meet the EFA requirement Lucy needs to manage at least 2.75 hectares EFA equivalent (55 hectares of arable land x 5% = 2.75 hectares).

Lucy's farm could meet its EFA requirement by having at least:

2.75 hectares EFA Agro-forestry (EFAAF) including small and farm woodland

2.75 hectares of EFAAF (2.75 hectares x 1 = 2.75 hectares EFA)

EFA Margins

1.84 hectares of EFAM (1.84 hectares x 1.5 = 2.76 hectares EFA)

EFA Green cover (EFAGC)

9.17 hectares of EFAGC (9.17 hectares x 0.3 = 2.75 hectares EFA)

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Case study six – partially organic mixed farm

Fiona Sharp has a 200 hectare mixed farm. Half her land is organic which is deemed compliant with EFA requirements. The other 100 hectares is as follows:

- 35 hectares Permanent grassland
- 15 hectares spring barley, under sown with grass
- 20 hectares winter barley
- 40 hectares of temporary grass
- 10 hectares of turnips

EFA – Fiona used our table on EFA ([Annex A](#)) and does have an EFA requirement as she has more than 15 hectares of arable land which is not organic.

To meet the EFA requirement Fiona needs to manage at least 3.25 hectares EFA equivalent (65 hectares of arable land x 5% = 3.25 hectares).

Fiona could meet her EFA requirement by having at least:

EFA Unharvested Crop (EFAUHC)

3.25 hectares of EFAUHC (2.17 hectares x 1.5 = 3.25 hectares EFA)

EFA Herb and Legume rich pastures (EFAHL)

2.17 hectares of EFAHL (2.17 hectares x 1.5 = 3.25 hectares EFA)

Or

EFA Low Input grassland (EFALI)

16.25 hectares (EFALI) (16.25 hectares x 0.2 = 3.25 hectares EFA)

This is a new option which is not eligible on Rough Grazing, and you cannot apply inorganic fertiliser or carry out supplementary feeding of forage on areas of species-rich grassland.

Or

EFA Agro-forestry Low Density Planting (EFAFLDP)

1.63 hectares (EFALI) (1.63 hectares x 2 = 3.26 hectares EFA)

This is a new option which is eligible on arable land, or Permanent Grass Land but not Rough Grazing.

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Case study seven – moorland unit

Glen Hill has an extensive 10,000 hectares moorland unit which is all Rough grazing except 100 hectares of permanent grassland.

As there is no arable land on this unit they are compliant with EFA requirements.

Case study eight – upland farm

Noah Galloway has an upland farm comprising of 1000 hectares of rough grazing and 85 hectares of permanent grassland and 5 hectares of forage rape.

Noah used our table on EFA ([Annex A](#)) and does not have an EFA requirement as he has less than 15 hectares of arable land which is not organic.

Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)

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6 Glossary

Date published: 2 June, 2025

This guidance is effective from 1 January, 2026.

Arable crops

Land with arable crops including temporary grass and land lying fallow which is claimed by the business.

It does not include arable land used for organic production. See [Annex B](#) for Arable crop list.

Arable land

Arable land means land cultivated for crop production, including areas that are temporary grassland (grass up to five years old following an arable or break crop).

It also includes areas of land which are available for crop production but which are lying fallow. It does not include areas under permanent crops (see below).

The initial 100% arable area figure will be the area of determined arable land which is the arable land claims across the business following validation/inspection.

If you choose to claim an EFA margin on permanent grassland, open grazed woodland or rough grazing, it must be adjacent to, or within five metres of arable land or contiguous to a claimed EFA option.

You must claim this land as Permanent Cover (PC) on your Single Application Form (SAF). This Permanent Cover will be considered as arable land when calculating your total area of arable land for your Greening requirements, including the area of EFA.

If you have arable land registered for organic production or in organic conversion you may choose not to include this as arable land.

Agricultural area

Agricultural area means any area taken up by arable land, permanent grassland or permanent crops.

Claimed

Our regulations require beneficiaries to claim for eligible land when applying for support under a scheme, such as the Basic Payment Scheme.

Cross-border farming

There will be no cross border processing in 2026 and applicants will need to meet the relevant conditions for each administration they submit an application to.

For a claim submitted to Scotland, the Greening requirements can only be met on land located and claimed in Scotland.

Declared

The Commission requires that a beneficiary must record all the agricultural land on their holding on their annual Single Application Form.

EFA margins

EFA Margins is a collective term that includes both buffer strips and field margins.

Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC)

Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) refers to a set of European Union standards which are aimed at sustainable agriculture. Keeping land in good agricultural and environmental conditions is related to issues such as soil erosion, maintaining the total area of grassland and soil organic matter.

Many elements of EFA are complementary to GAEC. This means that margins along hedges and water courses can count for both GAEC and EFA and as eligible land for the Basic Payment Scheme (Refer to [Overview](#) for guidance on GAEC requirements).

Grass in a long rotation

Areas of grass which are more than five years old, including those that have been reseeded as grass without a break crop (arable or catch crop), are considered to be permanent grass and therefore do not count as arable area.

Hedge

A hedge means any hedge which has a length of at least 20 metres or a length of less than 20 metres where it meets another hedge at each end. Any gap of less than 20 metres is treated as being part of the hedge.

Injurious weeds

These are species specified in the Weeds Act 1959:

- Spear Thistle (*Cirsiumvulgare* (Savi) Ten.)
- Creeping or Field Thistle (*Cirsiumarvense* (L.) Scop.)
- Curled Dock (*Rumexcrispus* L.)
- Broad-leaved Dock (*Rumexobtusifolius* L.)
- Common Ragwort (*Seneciojacobaea* L.)

Invasive species

This means:

- Giant Hogweed (*Heracleummantegazzianum*)
- Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopiajaponica*)
- Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)
- Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*)

Organic land

Land that is in conversion or maintenance and has been certified by a recognised certifying body.

Permanent crops

Means non rotational crops other than permanent grassland and permanent pasture (including rough grazing) that occupy the land for five years or more and yield repeated harvests, including nurseries and short rotation coppice. See permanent crops, [Annex C](#) .

Permanent grassland

Permanent grassland and permanent pasture (together referred to as permanent grassland) means land used to grow grasses or other herbaceous forage naturally (self-seeded) or through cultivation (sown) and that has not been included in the crop rotation of the holding for five years or more.

For clarity, areas declared as Permanent Grassland (PGRS), Rough Grazings (RGR) or Open Woodland (grazed) (WDG) are all included within permanent grassland for the purposes of the Basic Payment Scheme and Greening.

Plant Protection Products

Plant Protection Products are 'pesticides' that protect crops. A 'pesticide' is something that prevents, destroys, or controls a harmful organism ('pest') or disease, or protects plants or plant products. The term includes, amongst others: herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, acaricides, nematocides, molluscicides, rodenticides, growth regulators, repellents, rodenticides and biocides. A more detailed definition can be found on the [European Commission website](#) .

Surface water

This can include coastal water, lochs, rivers, burns, streams and ditches which contain free water and also temporarily dry ditches.

Temporary grassland

Temporary grassland is land that has been in grass or other herbaceous forage for five years or less, (included in [Annex B](#)).

7 Annexes

Date published: 2 June, 2025



[Annex A - list of Ecological Focus Areas \(EFA\) \(PDF, Size: 56.5 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Greening-2026---annex-A---May-2025.pdf>



[Annex B - list of Arable crops for calculating your Greening requirement \(PDF, Size: 106.6 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Greening-2026---annex-B---May-2025.pdf>



[Annex C - list of Permanent crops for calculating Greening requirements \(PDF, Size: 33.2 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Greening-2026---annex-C---May-2025.pdf>

Annex D - Area Office contact details

[RPID Area Offices](#)

[Scottish Forestry](#)

[Nature Scot](#)

8 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Date published: 2 June, 2025

9 PDF versions

Greening 2025



[Greening Booklet - 2025 \(PDF, Size: 2.4 MB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Greening-guidance-2025-booklet.pdf> Greening guidance for 2025

Greening 2024



[Greening Booklet - 2024 \(PDF, Size: 2.4 MB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Greening-guidance-2024.pdf> Greening guidance for 2024

Greening 2023



[Greening Booklet - 2023 \(PDF, Size: 2.0 MB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Greening-Booklet---2023.pdf> Greening guidance for 2023

Greening 2022



[Greening Booklet - 2022 \(PDF, Size: 5.1 MB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Greening-booklet---2022.pdf> Greening guidance for 2022

Greening 2021



[Greening booklet - 2021 \(PDF, Size: 3.9 MB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/greening-guidance-2021.pdf> Greening guidance for 2021

Greening 2020



[Greening - 2020 guidance \(PDF, Size: 4.0 MB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/greening-guidance-2020.pdf> Greening guidance for 2020

Greening - 2019 guidance



[Greening booklet \(PDF, Size: 4.0 MB\)](#)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/greening_guidance_2019.pdf Greening guidance for 2019

Greening - 2018 guidance



[Greening booklet \(PDF, Size: 4.0 MB\)](#)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/greening_guidance_2018-3.pdf Greening guidance for 2018.

Greening - 2017 guidance



[Greening booklet \(PDF, Size: 3.9 MB\)](#)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Greening_Guidance_2017.pdf Greening guidance for 2017

Greening - 2016 guidance



[Greening booklet \(PDF, Size: 4.4 MB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Full-book.pdf> Greening guidance for 2016 - updated March 2016

Greening - 2015 guidance



[Greening booklet \(PDF, Size: 1.5 MB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Greening-Booklet-for-online---February-2015.pdf> Published February 2015 and sent to customers in March 2015. This is applicable to 2015 only.

10 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Date published: 9 June, 2025

Table of Contents

Questions relating to Enhanced Greening Scheme

Why are you changing the Greening scheme now for 2026?

Answer: As a transition to conditional support, Tier II Enhanced was aligned to the existing Greening scheme where we have started to implement changes to include more customers in the management of arable EFA and additional Policy value added to existing EFA options, with the intent that there will be more changes as transition toward's a new Agricultural Reform Program.

What are the intended benefits of Enhanced Greening?

Answer: By making changes to the current Greening scheme, we are increasing the number of businesses managing EFA and the total area being managed for biodiversity, environmental and climate change benefit.

Can Organic Farmers be deemed compliant / exempt from the Ecological Focus Areas?

Answer: Yes, if they are fully organic, they are deemed compliant. If they are partially organic, they can choose whether to meet the EFA Rules on their Organic land or just on their non-organic area.

Who have you worked with to develop the changes to Greening?

Answer: Enhanced Greening has been co-developed with the industry engaging with ARIOB members, the Food and Agriculture Stakeholder Taskforce (FAST), NatureScot, NFU, Policy Development group and a range of industry groups representing the wide range of business types including crofting.

Where can I find out more details about Enhanced Greening?

Answer: Detailed information is available on the [Rural Payment Services - all schemes](#)

I am a seasonal tenant; will these new commitments impact me?

Answer: If you claim BPS and more than 15 ha of the claim is for arable land (including TGRS) this land will be considered in the EFA calculations, and you will have to manage EFA to receive your full Greening payment.

In this currently uncertain world and with even less self-sufficiency in food in this country should we be encouraging lower food production through higher areas in EFA's?

Answer: The current changes allow additional flexibility to the customers adding more species types and continuing to allow EFA requirements to be met with limited impact to production due to the range of EFA options available. It is important that farmers and crofter recognise the requirement to justify the funding that they receive but we must continue to balance the policy benefit gained for biodiversity and climate change alongside our commitment to support Thriving agricultural businesses and high quality food production as detailed in the Vision for agriculture.

Is Greening EFA just set a side?

Answer: No, EFA is about improving the biodiversity of your land, and we have options that support production, improving soil structure, water quality as well as recognising bio-diversity features that you may already have like hedges.

How long is it envisaged the scheme will be in place for, I need the detail before I invest in trees or creating an option aimed for multi-year?

Answer: At this point we cannot confirm a closing date for the scheme or give any long-term commitment other than we would not be making these changes for 2026 if the intent were to close within a couple of years.

I only have seasonal land therefore low-density trees would not be allowed unless my landlord agrees.

Answer: There are Nine other options to choose from that would be more suitable for seasonal land other than planting trees

Enhanced Greening grassland guidance has changed, are we required to make changes based on this guidance?

Answer: The changes to the grassland guidance are to highlight what other businesses are doing, which may be different to your current grassland management practice. We are asking you to start looking to see if there are areas you can change to make your business more efficient and/ or better for the environment to start preparing for changes that will be coming in future years.

Questions relating to new Ecological Focus Area (EFA) customers

What is an Ecological Focus Area?

Answer: An Ecological Focus Area is an area of land upon which you carry out agricultural practices that are beneficial for the climate and the environment. The main aim of an EFA is to improve biodiversity. There are seven existing EFA options that can be used on their own or in combination to meet the EFA requirement and 4 new EFA options:

- Fallow land
- Margins
- Catch crops
- Green cover
- Nitrogen-fixing crops
- Hedges
- Agro forestry
- Herb and legume rich pastures
- Unharvested crop
- Low input Grassland
- Low Density trees

I only have Temporary grassland, which is defined as arable under the scheme guidance, will I have to manage arable EFA? I was previously exempt.

Answer: The EFA rules from 2015-2025 previously deemed most grassland farmers and crofters compliant with Greening have been changed. The new rule from 2026 forwards is, if you have more than 15ha of arable land (including TGRS) you must manage an area equivalent to 5% of your arable area as an EFA to receive your full Enhanced Greening Payment.

Livestock farmers who depend on straw from limited arable area and fodder will have to take some of that ground out of production to meet this new requirement.

Answer: We have added flexibility within existing and added new EFA options more focused on businesses of this type, there is a new option Herb and Legume rich grassland that still allow production and there is a range of options, for example hedges and margins that will have limited impact.

Questions relating to EFA managed area

What area do I have to manage?

Answer: The required managed area of EFA is currently based on 5% of your arable area for 2026, including your Temporary Grassland. Enhanced Greening has a section that fully explains this calculation.

Will this percentage stay at 5%?

Answer: We are implementing a transitional change process therefore the intent is to move to a 7% arable EFA from 2027 onwards.

Questions relating to EFA options

I have an existing EFA field margin, but it is only two metres wide, is it still eligible?

Answer: The updated guidance is that the minimum width is three metres therefore to make it eligible you must increase the width to at least 3m and ensure the land cover aligns with the new requirements, please refer to the latest published guidance.

I use grassland for EFA fallow, can I still use this area to meet my EFA requirement?

Answer: EFA fallow guidance has been amended but it still allows the use of grassland but there are new requirements to use a more diverse, environmentally beneficial seed mix, there is a choice of species in the EFA Fallow Section. Please refer to the latest published guidance.

Are there restrictions around the number of livestock grazing and times of year? Low input grassland

Answer: No. We tried to avoid these restrictions.

If I claim EFA Agro-forestry and have an FGS contract, for trees on BPS eligible land, can both areas be used to meet my EFA commitment and receive payment for the FGS contract?

Answer: Yes, that is correct. We want to encourage the uptake of agro forestry options but at this point we have had limited claims under EFA.

Would we need to submit the EFA map for Nitrogen fixing crop option to establish where the associated margin is?

Answer: No, producers must retain a copy and make it available on request, this is the same for all EFA options, please refer to the mapping section in the guidance.

Does Arable land include TGRS?

Answer: Yes, TGRS 1 to 5 is counted as arable land in the arable area calculation.

To sow species for options to create a multi-year land cover will likely end up with cover that doesn't enhance biodiversity after the first winter.

Answer: Farmers will be aware of the issues in their own Areas and can select the options that fit best. If multiyear species are not suitable in your area to establish Wild bird seed as an example, you must sow the area annually. Our advice would be to speak to local advisors/ specialists.

Will trees that are already planted be eligible under the low-density tree options e.g., an area planted in 2025?

Answer: Yes, if they are the correct type of tree, density and planted correctly meeting all elements of the options rules, they would be deemed eligible and count towards their EFA commitment.

Will an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) be required under the Low-density tree option?

Answer: YES, we refer to the forestry Scotland EIA rules and it will be the customer's responsibility to ensure an EIA is conducted if the area to be planted is a land type that requires it.

Hedges do not grow in Orkney and other parts of the country and low-density trees will not be an option for these areas.

Answer: There is an expectation that not all EFA options suit every business, but we have extended the offer to ensure that every customer will have at least 3 or 4 options that would suit their business if they were willing to adapt to their business practice.

Customers prefer low Risk options like Fallow as their rules are simple and easy to meet.

Answer: Going forward additional mandatory actions are required on fallow land, it will still be a good option for farmers and crofters, but we hope with the changes in 2026 customers will take the opportunity to relook at all the options and manage what is more suitable for their business type.

The green cover option is not suitable the further North you travel.

Answer: We have reworked the guidance to try and help with this but agree if crops are not removed due to a late harvest there is a risk that you may not manage to establish Green Cover before the 1st of November.

NFIX, it is the requirement for two crops and an associated margin that prevents uptake of this option, why were these elements not removed?

Answer: The benefits that NFIX brings for soil structure and fertility are accepted but to align to other EFA options we require the biodiversity benefit as well therefore having the associated EFA margin which can also be claimed under EFA is a key justification for the option.

What would happen if I had a crop failure, for example I sow wild bird seeds or tried to create herb and legume pasture, but it is not easy to identify the plant types?

Answer: Within the guidance we recommend that you keep seed labels and record sowing dates, this is the type of evidence that we would ask for and as long as you can demonstrate a meaningful attempt at creating the option and delivering the management as per scheme rules, we would normally accept.

NFIX, from a spraying perspective, insecticide is an impact for biodiversity but what concerns is there for fungicide as we would suggest allowing the spraying for brown spot etc. would significantly increase the uptake of these options.

Answer: We have updated guidance for EFA NFIX to allow the use of Fungicide based on feedback from consultants.

Why are we not changing the weightings of some of the existing EFA options, for example EFA Green cover, feels too low at 0.3 where EFA fallow is too high?

Answer: we decided not to change the weightings of existing EFA options to minimise change and confusion, but we have reviewed each option and for example increased the effort required to justify the weighting and for Green cover removed the date that you can allow livestock to graze and included fodder plants to make it more attractive

I have EFA fallow land that is natural regeneration, and I would state that it is diverse grassland?

Answer: If there are species that are defined in the guidance, we would suggest it will be eligible, but the preference would be to have seed labels to justify what you have created but we will perform a visual check at inspection.

Can I fully meet my EFA obligations with hedges?

Answer: If you have enough hedges to meet your requirements that are managed correctly then yes. Our preference to increase the biodiversity would be to manage a range of option but at this point there is no rule enforcing that.

I will have to increase the width of my margin to meet the new 3-metres rule, can I just leave stubble?

Answer: You would be expected to create a diverse grass strip, sow wild bird seed or wildflower on the extended area.

Can is still cut hedges in the restricted months for road safety reasons?

Answer: Yes, normal hedge cutting caveats applied and the main one is for road safety.

Low density trees, how do you measure the planted area?

Answer: If it is a fenced off area, we would measure that area but, in most cases, it will be the managed area so we will use plough lines or equivalent to pick up edge of area being managed, this may require a conversation with the customer.

Due to the timing of this change, we have limited time to implement the change, is there any flexibility?

Answer: Please refer to the guidance but for 2026 we will have introduced flexibility to allow you to create your managed area up to the 15th of July. We will be looking for meaningful attempt to create or start preparing areas, but this is just for 2026, thereafter management dates will apply.

Low input grassland, you must leave an uncut strip if cutting for hay or silage, can this be grazed or does it have to be fenced off?

Answer: If you decide to fence the strip off, we would not object, but we are happy that the area is grazed after the silage/ hay is removed.

Benbecula has arable land on the Machairs, how do these Crofters meet their EFA commitments?

Answer: Local practices will be accepted on the fallow land on the Machair, our guidance confirms the eligibility and flexibility offered.

I already manage a large area under the AECS scheme for the benefit of biodiversity and nature, why am I not exempt from these requirements as I am already contributing?

Answer: Managing AECS options does not make you compliant with the Greening scheme requirements. AECS is a separately funded scheme, we do acknowledge the policy benefits you are delivering but to continue to receive your full Greening payment there must be actions associated with the scheme to add value linked to this funding allocation.

EFA Green cover now has much more flexibility- in the past we have used this behind a cereal or carrots / potatoes. From 2026 would it be possible to establish stubble turnips behind a crop of grass silage and count as EFA green cover. This practice is undertaken currently on a number of farms in the area although obviously not used for EFA?

Answer: EFA Green cover can be established behind TGRS years 1-5. The business must meet the option rules, including; establish a green cover consisting of two or more of the following crops as the predominant crops: alfalfa, barley, alsike clover, balansa clover, crimson clover, red clover, persian clover, white clover, buckwheat (can cause skin Photosensitisation), mustard, oats, phacelia, radish, rye, triticale, vetch, kale, forage rape, stubble turnip, winter beans

Under the new EFA Catch Crop rules Oilseed Rape has been added to the list and the guidance suggests it could be undersown with a mix such as berseem clover.

When Winter Oilseed Rape is sown along with berseem clover to act as an N fixing crop to give the WOSR early cover and fix some nitrogen. In the spring the canopy takes over and the berseem clover can be shaded out. Then generally a winter crop would follow. Even in a spring crop the clover can be sown along with it but by harvest there may not be much left to retain until the 31 December.

Does the requirement to maintain the Catch Crop for berseem clover in WOSR stay until the 31 December?

Answer: The rule to retain the Catch crop up to the 31 December was purposely retained as it is important that the catch crop is for established longer than the cover crop and justify the weighting linked to policy outcome. Clover mixes can be used to ensure there is more chance of the catch crop being retained to the 31 of December.

But there is no concern about direct seeding a winter crop into the catch crop once the cover crop is harvested, this would not destroy the cover crop and ensure that it meets the scheme requirements which would not be the case for a tillage approach

EFA fallow for stubble that has been left over years, would this not be classed as TGRS and not eligible going forward?

Answer: Where it's stubble that has been left over years, and it has naturally regenerated we would be content if we can identify at least three of the species we would be content this formed wildflower mix. This can still be claimed under the land use Fallow.

Where it is still stubble this would not be eligible.

For EFA Fallow seed mix can the soil conditioning crop contain other species within the mix other than the four crops discussed in the guidance?

Answer: Other mixes can be acceptable; it's a non-exhaustive list. It can contain elements of the Wild flower mix as well.

If they have concerns, we would be happy to look at a mix they suggest, and confirm eligibility.

EFA fallow from 2026 onwards for EFA Fallow to be claimed as TGRS (temporary Grassland) would we be looking for a seed label etc to show the minimum three types of species?

Answer: EFA Fallow as temporary Grassland (TGRS), we would be looking for either inspectors to identify there was three different species or a seed label etc to show the minimum three types of species.

Can AECS Organic grassland on a farm be used for Low input grassland EFA? Would it be double funding?

Answer: While this moving EFA up the hill from the arable is not what the scheme is hoping to achieve as per the current compatibility Matrice For EFA and AECS Organic Conversion and Maintenance, the EFA could be carried out on organically managed land without a reduction in the AECS Organic management payment.

It would trigger a duplicate payment check on the SAF. That may increase the time it takes to process applications.

Why can I not use Arable Silage as a Catch Crop?

You cannot use the crop code ASSF on your SAF for EFA Catch Crops due to a technicality but you can harvest a cereal crop undersown with grass / or a grass mix as a catch crop for whole crop or arable silage.

NFIX, can I use a mix of Nitrogen fixing crops to meet the requirement for two crops and an associated margin that prevents uptake of this option?

No you can use mixes of EFA nitrogen fixing crops, but you still need to have at least two separate crops. For instance a peas and beans mix with the peas the main crop by weight in the mix, and a bean and peas mix with the beans as the main crop in the mix by weight of seed. The smallest of the two crops has to be larger than 25% of the total area claimed for EFA NFIX.

For EFACC, there are best practice tips to undersown spring barley with a diverse mix. Although I don't think it is a requirement. Can we still just undersow spring barley with the likes of Italian rye grass and nothing else?

Best practice is advice only, there is no defined mix requirements for Catch Crop.

Agro-forestry – Low Density Planting: I note that the proposed area 'must have been BPS eligible, arable land, or Permanent Grass Land, not Rough Grazing'

In the case of using PGRS, does that land have to be declared as PC (Permanent cover) or would PGRS continue to be appropriate?

Depending on the answer, the 'arable area' calculation will change.

Guidance has been updated and PGRS will be accepted to allow LFASS to be claimed on LDP.

Questions relating to EFA mapping

The guidance states that we no longer require an EFA map?

Answer: You must still maintain a map that clearly defines the EFA managed area, this map does not require to be submitted with your SAF but if we require it to help with inspections or claim processing it must be supplied when requested or penalties will be applied.

Can I still use a paper map?

Answer: Yes, you must keep a map that fully defines where all your EFA options are and make it available on demand, this map can be paper or digital, it also could be combined with your WFP biodiversity audit.

Questions relating to future changes

What changes are planned 2027 onwards?

Answer: Full details of changes for 2027 onwards are still being reviewed but the intent is to increase the arable EFA requirement to 7% and review the option to introduce mandatory PGRS EFA requirement with associated EFA options.