

Sustainable Farming Incentive – Arable and Horticultural Soil Standard

Standard	Payment rate £/ha		
	Introductory	Intermediate	Advanced
Arable and horticultural soils standard	£22	£40	Available 2023 onwards

Eligibility

Farmers who are eligible for BPS will be eligible for SFI.

Normally, whole fields must be entered into the scheme. The only exception would be where part of a field is not eligible. In that case, Defra will pay for the portion of the field that is covered by the agreement, for example:

- if a field is part woodland and part arable, only the arable portion would be eligible for the arable soil standard
- if part of a field is in a Countryside Stewardship agreement, that part would not be eligible if the measures were overlapping (**resulting in us paying twice for the same actions**) or contradictory.

Introductory level

- Test soil organic matter
- Undertake a soil assessment and produce a soil management plan
- 70% winter cover to protect soil:
 - At least 70% of land in the standard must have green cover over the winter months (Dec-Feb)
 - This can include any kind of green cover, including autumn sown crops and weedy stubbles
- Addition of organic matter:
 - Add organic matter to 1/3 of the land in the standard each year
 - This can include any kind of organic matter, including sown green cover crops

Intermediate level

Everything above, plus:

- 70% winter cover to protect soil:
 - This must include land with multi-species green cover, covering at least 20% of total land in this standard

- Addition of organic matter:
 - This will include multi-species green cover grown under the cover crop requirement above, plus the rest made up of other ways to add organic matter as per the introductory level

Advanced level

- Available from 2023
- Likely to include the use of no-tillage techniques.

Requirements of the intermediate level

Winter cover - farmers must ensure at least 70% of the total area of land entered into the standard has green cover over the winter months (December 1st – end of February). This must include land with multi-species green cover (covering at least 20% of total land in the intermediate level of the standard).

Addition of organic matter - farmers must take measures to improve soil health by adding to the organic content of soil on all land parcels entered into the standard over the course of the 3-year agreement. Measures should be taken on every land parcel in the standard at least one year in the 3-year agreement.

How:

- apply organic matter or manure
- use green manures, catch crops, or cover crops
- chopping and leaving (or incorporating) straw
- introducing grass or herbal leys into an arable rotation
- including legume species or legume rich mixes in rotations
- intermediate level – through the multi-species green cover

Key dates for 2022

Launch early Spring, first agreement in the Autumn, first payments at the end of 2022

Payments will be made quarterly in arrears