

2016 Guide to Land Eligibility



Department of
**Agriculture and
Rural Development**

www.dardni.gov.uk

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IN PEOPLE**

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To get a copy of this document in another format contact:

Area-Based Schemes Organisational Development Branch
Orchard House
40 Foyle Street
Derry/Londonderry
BT48 6AT

Tel: 0300 200 7848

Email: transformation.team@dardni.gov.uk

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Section 1 Introduction | 3 |
| Farm Maps | 4 |
| Section 2 General Conditions | 5 |
| Overview | 5 |
| Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme (ANC) | 8 |
| Land eligible for Agri-environment schemes | 8 |
| How DARD will check your claim | 9 |
| Summary | 9 |
| Section 3 Field Boundaries and Landscape Features | 10 |
| What is DARD's definition of a boundary? | 10 |
| Field Boundary Marker Features | 10 |
| Marker Posts | 11 |
| Concrete Slabs | 11 |
| Existing Marker Stones | 11 |
| Landscape Features | 12 |
| Hedges, earthbanks, stone walls, archaeological sites (historic monuments) | 12 |
| Sheughs | 13 |
| Designated streams, rivers and watercourses | 13 |
| Sheughs associated with another boundary feature, for example hedge, wall, or bank | 14 |
| Fences alongside sheughs | 14 |
| Presence of ineligible feature along a boundary | 14 |
| Section 4 Ineligible land | 18 |
| Land that is permanently out of agricultural use | 18 |
| Ineligible Vegetation | 19 |
| Scrub | 19 |
| Dense Scrub | 19 |
| Example 1 | 20 |
| Ineligible Vegetation - Bracken | 21 |
| Ineligible Vegetation - Rush | 22 |
| Scattered Ineligible Vegetation (Scrub, bracken and overgrown rush) | 22 |
| Scattered Ineligible Vegetation scorecard | 23 |
| Example 2 | 24 |
| Example 3 | 25 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Example 4 | 26 |
| Removal of scrub | 27 |
| Woodland/Trees | 28 |
| Agro-forestry | 29 |
| Grazed woodland | 30 |
| Scattered stones, scree and rock | 30 |
| Lanes and transport routes | 31 |
| Section 5 Marginal land | 32 |
| Bogland and Areas Covered with Heather | 32 |
| Heather | 32 |
| Mosaic of ineligible and eligible heather | 33 |
| Guidance on burning and flailing of heather | 34 |
| Blanket Bog in an Agri-environment Scheme | 34 |
| Calculating the eligible area of heather mosaics | 35 |
| Bogs, swamps, reed-beds and fens | 36 |
| Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Areas of Special Scientific Interest | 36 |
| Section 6 Temporary ineligible features | 38 |
| Activities associated with normal agricultural practice | 38 |
| Land temporarily out of agricultural use | 39 |
| Storage of silage bales, machinery or stones | 39 |
| Section 7 Agri-environment schemes and compatibility for claiming BPS | 40 |
| Section 8 Non agricultural activities on eligible land | 42 |
| Section 9 Common land | 42 |
| Section 10 Other issues | 43 |
| Split fields | 43 |
| Unverified fields | 43 |
| Turf production | 43 |
| Land under polytunnels | 43 |
| Land used for free range poultry | 44 |
| Land grazed by horses | 44 |
| Coastal cliff faces | 44 |
| Annex A | 45 |
| Annex B | 51 |
| Annex C | 53 |
| Annex D Contact Details | 56 |

Section 1 Introduction

This guide explains land eligibility rules for the:

- Basic Payment Scheme (BPS).
- Young Farmers Payment
- Greening
- Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) Scheme.
- Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme (NICMS).
- Organic Farming Scheme (OFS).

The guide should also be followed when submitting claims for Agri-environment schemes that started before 31 December 2007.

You are advised to read the guide carefully as you may be penalised if you claim under any of the above schemes for land that is not eligible.

It should be read in conjunction with:

- **Guide to Area-Based Schemes (Summary).**
- **Guide to the Basic Payment Scheme.**
- **Guide to the Greening Payment.**
- **Guide to the Young Farmers' Payment/Regional Reserve.**
- **Guide to the Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme.**
- **Forestry Grant Schemes Information Booklet.**
- **Guide to Business Changes.**
- **DARD Identification numbers for business customers, herd and flock keepers.**
- **Guide to Transfer of BPS Entitlements.**
- **Cross-Compliance Verifiable Standards Booklets (Full Version and Summary).**

You can also access the following information which will help you complete your Single Application:

- **Area-Based Schemes Single Application and Maps 2016 - Questions and Answers.**

Copies of all booklets are available online at www.dardni.gov.uk/grants-and-funding.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you only claim on eligible land and deduct all ineligible areas irrespective of what is indicated on your map.

This guide is not a full statement or interpretation of the law (which only the European Court of Justice can give) and it cannot replace specific advice on specific questions.

Farm Maps

Certain features which are not eligible for the Basic Payment Scheme are shown on your map as purple hatching. A description of the feature is provided in the Field Information Table that accompanies the map. These ineligible features have been deducted from the total area of the field to produce a Maximum Eligible Area (MEA) for each field. However you may need to make further deductions to the MEA.

Man-made (hard) ineligible features e.g. buildings, yards or lanes, are shown on your map if they are 0.001ha (10m²) or larger. Other (natural) ineligible features e.g. scrub are only shown if they are 0.01ha (100m²) or larger. Ineligible features smaller than this, and any temporary ineligible features, are not shown on your map but should still be taken into account when claiming for the Basic Payment Scheme.

DARD no longer routinely issues farm maps. You should therefore check DARD's Online Single Application and Maps service available on DARD online services for the most up-to-date map for each field that you are farming. Paper maps can still be obtained by contacting the SAF Advisory Team on 0300 200 7848 or by emailing us on areabasedschemes@dardni.gov.uk.

Maps are updated on a rolling cycle using aerial photography. However, you should not assume that the Maximum Eligible Area provided is necessarily still correct. It is your responsibility to ensure that the Maximum Eligible Area remains an accurate reflection of the situation on the ground.

If your map needs to be updated you can inform us about changes using DARD's on-line Single Application and Maps service, or using a LPIS Map Correction Form, which should be returned to your local DARD Direct office. More information on DARD online services is available at:

<https://www.dardni.gov.uk/services/dard-online-services>

Section 2 General Conditions

Overview

You must only claim aid on eligible land.

Eligible land must be:

1. A field parcel which is at least 0.1ha in size with a physically recognisable boundary;
2. Covered in eligible vegetation, be under your control and meet the conditions outlined in the DARD Guide to Land Eligibility 2016, from January to December 2016;
3. Used for agricultural activity in a significant and consistent basis during the year.
4. At your disposal on 15 May; and
5. Kept in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC).

1. **Field Parcel Size** - any individual field or area within a field that you declare for payment must contain at least 0.1 hectares of eligible land. Physical boundaries include a range of features such as permanent fences, walls, hedges, banks, metalled roads and water bodies or courses greater than 2m in width. A more comprehensive description of field boundaries is included in Section 3.
2. **The area must be comprised of eligible vegetation.**

Eligible vegetation includes any land that is classified as permanent grassland, arable land or permanent crops. -

a. Permanent Grassland

Permanent grassland is land used to grow grasses or other herbaceous forage (this can be self-seeded or sown) and that has not been used for an arable crop in the previous five years or more. In effect, this relates to six years (i.e. for 2016 this would relate to 2016 and the previous five years (2011 - 2015)). Therefore, if for example, you declared the land use of your fields on your Single Application Form Field Data Sheet (SAF2) as FR1 (grass) in six consecutive years they will be classified as permanent grassland in the year of the sixth application.

If permanent grassland is ploughed and re-seeded immediately with grass or other herbaceous forage, it will still be classified as permanent grassland.

Remember, however, that you cannot plough and/or convert permanent sensitive grassland in environmentally sensitive areas.

Other herbaceous forage includes only the following crops; clover, lucerne, sainfoin and forage vetches.

Grazed heather that meets the eligibility conditions (see pages 30 - 32) is also classified as permanent grassland. Wildfires or burning more than 20% of the heather area is not considered as controlled burning and therefore is not agricultural activity. If the fire is due to a reason beyond your control, you may submit a force majeure application within 15 working days of the event (being in a position to do so) for consideration.

b. Arable land

Arable land is land used to grow crops other than grass and permanent crops such as orchards, short rotational coppice, ornamentals and nurseries, and multi-annual crops. Forage crops such as maize, fodder beet, fodder rape, stubble turnips or any cereal crop used for forage are also regarded as an arable crop use. Sainfoin, clover, lucerne and forage vetches are regarded in the same way as grass and therefore are not deemed to be an arable use.

If your land will be used to grow an arable crop in 2016 or has been used to grow an arable crop in any of the years 2011 - 2015, then it will be classified as arable in 2016. Land used to grow grass in 2016 but which has been used to grow an arable crop in any of the years 2011 - 2015, i.e. temporary grassland, will also be classified as arable in 2016.

Areas available for crop production but lying fallow, including areas set aside under EU schemes, in any of the years 2011 – 2015 will also be classified as arable land. Fallow land in grass for six consecutive years will be classified as permanent grassland if it is not used as an ecological focus area.

c. Permanent crops

Permanent crops are non-rotational crops other than permanent grassland that occupy the land for five years or more and yield repeated harvests. The most common examples of permanent crops are orchards, short rotational coppice, miscanthus, ornamentals and nurseries, and multi-annual crops. Land used to grow these in 2016 will be classified as permanent crops. A list of examples of permanent crops is published on the [DARD website](#).

Details of land eligible for BPS can be found at Annex A. Eligibility of specific land types can be found in Section 4.

Remember, you must deduct all ineligible areas from the total area of the field and only claim for the eligible area. If the total ineligible area of the field does not exceed 0.01 ha (100 m²) then no deduction is required.

For BPS, the land must be at your disposal on 15 May and must be used for an eligible agricultural activity for the entire calendar year (1 January - 31 December), except in cases of force majeure or exceptional circumstances.

Land is only eligible for the Greening Payment and the Young Farmers' Payment if it is also eligible for BPS.

3. Used for agricultural activity in a significant and consistent basis during the year. The EU defines 'agricultural activity' as:

- (i) the production, rearing or growing of agricultural products, including harvesting, milking, breeding animals, and keeping animals for farming purposes;
- (ii) maintaining an agricultural area in a state which makes it suitable for grazing or cultivation without preparatory action going beyond usual agricultural methods and machineries.

Land is only eligible for BPS and ANC if the vegetation is kept in a state suitable for grazing or cultivation and agricultural activity is carried out over the entire area being claimed on a significant and consistent basis in the calendar year of the claim.

At inspection DARD will look for evidence of at least one of the following agricultural activities being carried out on all of the land being claimed:

- Grazing e.g. paths made by animals, animal droppings
- Growing and harvesting a crop
- Management of the vegetation such as flailing or controlled burning of heather.

Consequently for the land to be eligible it must be accessible for livestock and / or farm machinery. Where agricultural fields or parts of agricultural fields are covered with impenetrable or ineligible vegetation or inaccessible to grazing livestock or are not in agricultural use, they will be considered ineligible.

Placing small numbers of animals on large areas of bogland or heather is unlikely to make these areas eligible. In relation to land which is in an agri-environment agreement and subject to a low maximum stocking density and other grazing restrictions, you are advised to maintain a stocking density close to the maximum level permitted during most of the prescribed grazing period and ensure that the entire area is grazed in order for it to be considered eligible. Areas on which there is no grazing activity may still be eligible if other agricultural activity such as mowing or flailing of the vegetation is being carried out.

Similarly, the presence of animals on these areas for a short period is unlikely to make them eligible. Land being claimed must be eligible for the entire calendar year.

If evidence of agricultural activity is only present on part of a field, then the remainder of the field will be ineligible.

4. Land must be at your disposal on 15 May.

For NICMS and OFS you must have management control of the land for the whole claim year, that is, from 01 January to 31 December. For BPS and ANC land must remain in eligible condition for the entire calendar year.

5. Land must be kept in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition

All agricultural land within a business, irrespective of whether it is used to claim BPS entitlements or claim payment under another aid scheme, must be maintained in accordance with the Cross-Compliance Statutory Management Requirements (SMR's) and must be kept in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC). In addition Cross Compliance applies to all the agricultural activities you undertake.

The full set of Cross Compliance requirements can be found in the Northern Ireland Cross Compliance Verifiable Standards 2016 booklet.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme (ANC)

The Guide to the Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme booklet provides more detail on the scheme.

The guidance on land eligibility for ANC is similar to those outlined in this booklet.

Land eligible for Agri-environment schemes

The following schemes are referred to as Agri-environment schemes:

- Countryside Management Scheme (CMS - pre 2008);
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas Scheme (ESAS - pre 2008);
- Organic Farming Scheme (pre 2008);
- NI Countryside Management Scheme (from 1 January 2009);
- Organic Farming Scheme (from 1 January 2009).

Not all land eligible under an Agri-environment scheme is eligible for BPS. See Section 7 of this guide for further information.

How DARD will check your claim

EU legislation requires land to be eligible for the full calendar year of your claim and not just part of it. DARD will check the eligibility of your claim by conducting On the Spot Checks (OTSC) on your land. These will take the form of either a classic OTSC or will be conducted using Control with Remote Sensing (CwRS).

- Classical On the Spot Checks (OTSCs): These are on-farm inspections where an inspector will visit the farm and walk your declared farmed area
- Control with Remote Sensing (CwRS): At a particular time during the year, a satellite image will be taken of your declared area. Your field parcels will be later assessed and compared to your claimed areas.

In addition if further clarification is required we may conduct Rapid Field Visits or

Follow-Up Ground Checks. These are completed by an inspector visiting a particular field to confirm eligibility.

If your claim is selected for an OTSC an assessment will be made as to whether the land meets the eligibility conditions on the day of inspection or date the satellite imagery was captured. If the OTSC determines that the land is ineligible it will be considered ineligible for that scheme year and penalties may be applied to your claim.

The OTSC may also consider whether your land was ineligible in previous years using aerial photography or other available information. If the OTSC indicates that land claimed in previous years was ineligible, penalties may be applied retrospectively. Any action you undertake on land found ineligible at inspection will only be taken into consideration in the next scheme year.

Summary

It is your responsibility to ensure that you only claim on eligible land and that you deduct all ineligible areas irrespective of what is indicated on your latest map.

You should give very careful consideration to claiming areas which do not make a significant contribution to the agricultural activity of your business as there is a high probability that these areas are ineligible.

Land not in agricultural use is not eligible



Section 3 Field Boundaries and Landscape Features

Once you are satisfied that the field parcel you are intending to claim on meets the minimum area requirement of 0.1 ha, you should then consider eligibility of the field boundaries and landscape features.

What is DARD's definition of a boundary?

DARD field boundaries are mapped to the following types of physical features:

- Permanent fence (including post and wire fence)
- Wall
- Hedge
- Bank
- Metalled road (tarmac, concreted or compacted)
- Edge of a body of fresh water e.g. a lake
- Edge of a river or stream where the body of water is greater than 2 metres wide
- Edge of trees in arable land
- Sheughs
- High Water Mark Mean Tide
- International boundary as shown on Land and Property Services (LPS) (formerly Ordnance Survey NI) map
- Top of cliff or rock face

The eligibility of field boundaries should always be considered in conjunction with the guidance on ineligible features present along a field boundary.

Field Boundary Marker Features

Marker features (conforming to DARD's requirements) will only be recognised as a field boundary where it is not possible to erect a fence. This may apply to the following situations;

- Where fencing is not allowed or would cause unacceptable environmental damage e.g. on an Area of Special Scientific Interest.

- Where the land is not accessible to bring fencing materials to it, e.g. up a mountain, or surrounded by bog, but is itself eligible.
- Where, in mountain or upland areas, the length of boundary to be demarcated is in excess of one kilometre in any one parcel.
- If the ground is too hard or soft to drive posts although this might suggest that the land is ineligible.
- Where, in mountain or upland areas, there has been no history of fencing along or near that particular boundary.
- Where it is used to divide an arable field where there are more than one applicant growing a different crop in another part of the same original field.

Marker Posts

- **Wooden posts are the first choice** (e.g. for ease of sourcing and relative ease of transport to inaccessible areas) and others (concrete, plastic etc) considered where it is not possible to erect wooden posts or where this is not permitted for environmental reasons.
- A wooden post (preferably plastic-sleeved)
 - a. minimum dimension of 150 mm / 6"
 - b. minimum of **1.5 m / 5ft of post to remain above the ground**
- The post should be painted/re-painted e.g. black and white ring stripes.
- The distance apart will be dependent on achieving **direct line of sight** between each post.
- Posts should be given an **identity** and that this identity is used to attribute the GPS point taken to indicate the post's location.

Concrete Slabs

- Where no post could be erected, a concrete slab with minimum dimensions **450mm x 450mm (18" x 18")** should be used, with its identity scribed into the concrete while wet.

Existing Marker Stones

- These are not acceptable where posts or a concrete slab could be used.
- If, however, there are existing permanent stones these may be acceptable as a marker feature if given an identity in line with normal rules.

Landscape Features

Landscape features in the context of Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) comprise of dry stone walls, ditches or sheughs, hedgerows, including trees in hedgerows, earthbanks and archaeological sites.

Hedges, earthbanks, fenced off hedges, and stone walls are eligible provided their width does not exceed two metres from the centre (measured at the base) and where there are no ineligible features present in or adjacent to the boundary. Where the whole width of these boundaries exceeds two metres from the centre, the entire area becomes ineligible. Only features meeting the GAEC definition of a landscape feature as set out below and located in, or forming the boundary of an agricultural field parcel can be considered eligible for BPS and other schemes.

Landscape features are protected under GAEC and must not be removed except by prior written permission from DARD. This includes infilling or laying drainage pipes in open ditches or sheughs.

Hedges, earthbanks, stone walls, archaeological sites (historic monuments)

The Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) definition of a hedge or hedgerow is as follows:

A hedgerow is an in-field or boundary linear feature with hedge-like shape and characteristics. A hedgerow is composed predominantly of woody species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, whins and trees but may also include briars and bramble. Scrub encroachment and weeds such as nettles and thistles do not constitute a hedgerow. A hedgerow does not have to be stockproof and gaps of no more than 5m at canopy level are considered to be part of the hedgerow. To be a hedgerow the feature must be at least 5m long with bushes (excluding trees crowns) which at the top of the canopy are touching or almost touching or, in the case of newly planted hedges, will reach this standard when fully grown.

The Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) definition of an earthbank is as follows:

An earthbank is a man-made linear feature of limited occurrence, usually made up of a core of stones covered with sods. River banks, earth silo banks or mounds of earth resulting from excavation are not classified as earthbanks.

The Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) definition of a dry stone wall is as follows:

A dry stone wall is a linear in-field or boundary feature built without the use of cement/mortar with the exception of the capping layer. A dry-stone wall does not have to be stock-proof and may have gaps up to 3m within it. To be a dry stone wall the feature must be at least 3m long.

The Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) definition of an archaeological site in the context of GAEC is as follows:

A historic or archaeological site is one identified by the Department of the Environment in the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record.

Sheughs

The definition of a ditch or sheugh is as follows:

A ditch or sheugh is an open channel with water in it for at least part of the year and no more than 2 metres wide at the base. Naturally flowing streams and rivers of any width are excluded as are watercourses of any width maintained by the Rivers Agency.

Where a sheugh is at the boundary of a field which is eligible, the sheugh, as an open trench dug to improve the drainage of agricultural land, may be considered eligible and included in the area of the field.

In addition, sheughs should meet the following criteria to remain eligible:

- They must be maintained as part of a field parcel drainage system and not be encroached by scrub or other ineligible vegetation or features.
- They must have continuously or intermittently running water.

Designated streams, rivers and watercourses

Any designated streams, rivers and watercourses maintained by the Rivers Agency are ineligible as are all other naturally flowing streams and rivers of any width.



***Sheughs
are eligible.***

Sheughs associated with another boundary feature, for example hedge, wall, or bank

If a hedge, wall or bank is associated with a sheugh, you measure each feature separately. The sheugh is eligible. The hedge, bank or wall is also eligible if it is two metres wide or less from the centre of the boundary measured at the base.

Fences alongside sheughs

The presence of a fence in the field alongside a sheugh does not affect eligibility provided its sole purpose is to protect the sheugh and it is located no more than one metre from the top of the bank of the sheugh. If the fence is greater than one metre from the top of the bank of the sheugh and the area enclosed by the fence is not an ungrazed grass margin or riparian zone under an Agri-environment scheme agreement, the area between the fence and the field boundary (including sheugh and hedge if present) is ineligible.

This fenced off sheugh is eligible as there is less than one metre between the top of the bank of the sheugh and the fence



Presence of ineligible feature along a boundary

In some cases an ineligible feature may be present at a field boundary. Examples can include scrub vegetation or a lane.

Where an ineligible feature is present at a field boundary, areas taken up by hedges and sheughs (if present) located between the ineligible feature and the field boundary line must also be deducted.

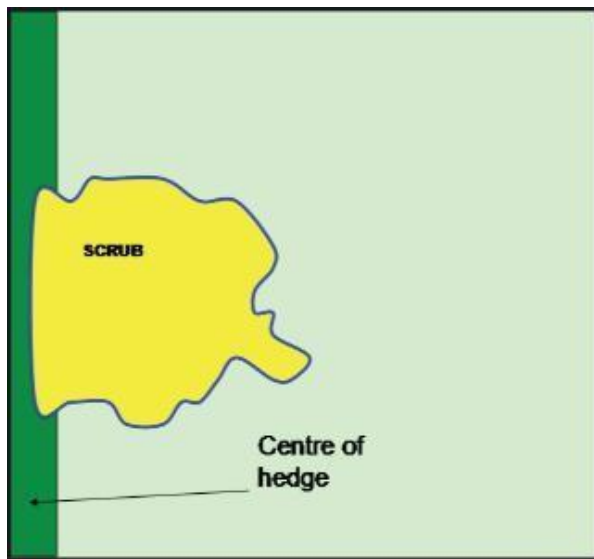
In other words, the area deducted must extend to the field boundary line which may be in the centre of the hedge.

An ineligible feature is deemed to be present at a field boundary if it is located within two metres of the field boundary feature (for example, the edge of the base of a hedge or fence or the top of a bank of a sheugh). Even if it is possible for cattle to graze up to the hedge, you must still deduct the ineligible feature and the entire area between the ineligible feature and

the field boundary line.

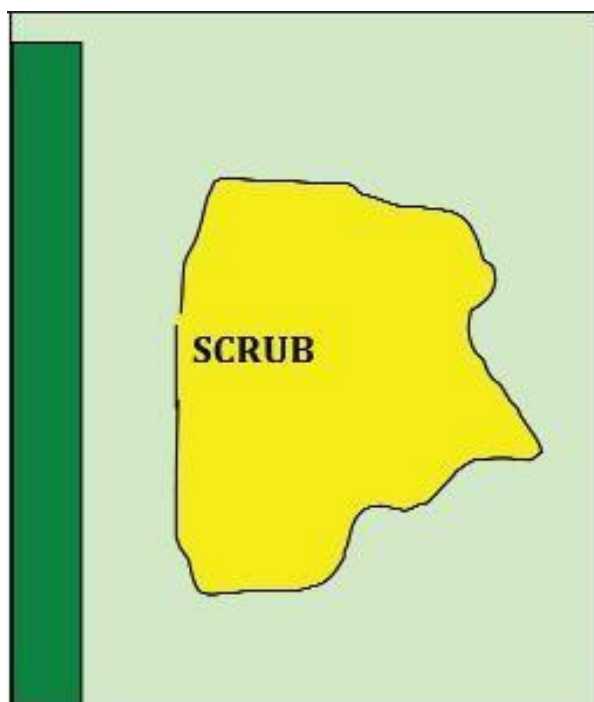
If an ineligible feature is fenced off from the field and the area between the ineligible feature and the field boundary is not used for agricultural purposes, then in all cases you must deduct the entire area between the fence and the field boundary line. In other words, you may only claim for the field up to the line of the fence.

Example 1



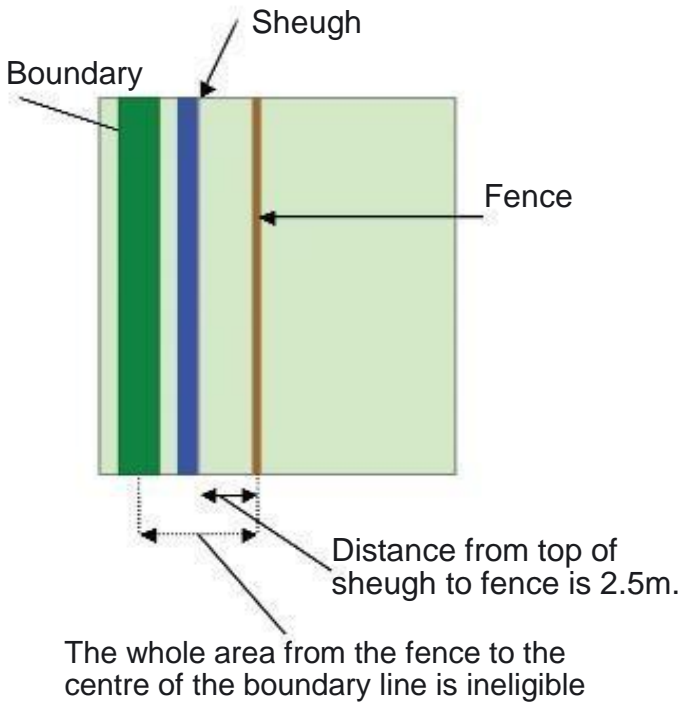
There is a patch of scrub/whin in the middle of a hedge such as in the diagram. You need to make a deduction for the scrub right back to the field boundary line which may be in the centre of the hedge.

Example 2



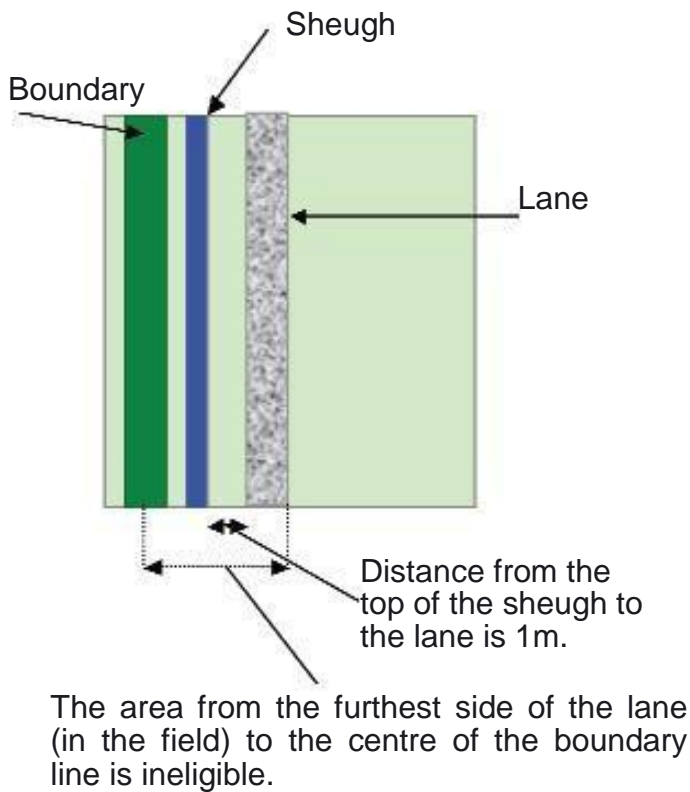
In this case the scrub is more than two metres away from the boundary. You still have to make a deduction for the scrub (see section on scrub on page 6) but you do not have to take the area back to the field boundary line.

Example 3



In this example, the fence is 2.5 metres from the top of the bank of the sheugh. As the fence is more than one metre from the top of the bank of the sheugh, the area between the fence and the field boundary (including sheugh and hedge) is ineligible. Consequently the whole area from the fence right back to the centre of the hedge is ineligible.

Example 4



In this example, there is a lane one metre from the top of the bank of the sheugh. As the lane is less than two metres from the top of the bank of the sheugh, it is considered as an ineligible feature at the field boundary. Consequently the whole area from the lane right back to the centre of the hedge is ineligible.

Section 4 Ineligible land

There are a range of examples where land should be classified as ineligible. This section lists the most common ones but in all cases you should apply the criteria;

- Is the vegetation eligible?
- Is the land kept in a state suitable for grazing or cultivation?
- Is agricultural activity carried out over the **entire area** on a significant and **consistent basis** over the calendar year?

Land that is permanently out of agricultural use

Typical examples include:

- Buildings, building sites and yards
- Gardens and parks
- Roads
- All laneways
- Hard standing
- Slurry storage sites
- Quarries

- Ponds, lakes and any designated streams, rivers and watercourses maintained by the Rivers Agency
- Scree and rocky outcrops
- Concreted areas

See section 8 and Annex C in relation to land used for non agricultural activities.

If any part of your holding has been permanently removed from agricultural use, you need to tell us and get your map updated.

You should remember that certain ineligible features may not be recorded on your map e.g. bare soil, deeply rutted tracks. Furthermore, particularly in relation to vegetation, it is not possible to determine the eligibility of some other ineligible features from an ortho picture e.g. rush density or heather height.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you only claim on eligible land and deduct all ineligible areas irrespective of what is indicated on your map.

Ineligible Vegetation

Ineligible vegetation includes scrub, impenetrable rush, bracken or a mixture of these.

If the area is a mixture of any of the other types of vegetation, e.g. scrub and impenetrable rush, scrub and bracken, then the whole area can be assessed as one feature and an assessment of the total density made.

The advice in pages 17-25 will help you work out what deductions you need to make for ineligible vegetation in your fields.

Scrub

Scrub may contain hawthorn, blackthorn, gorse (whin), bramble, honeysuckle, dog rose, bushy willows (sally), or stunted hazel, with few or no mature trees present.

Scrub may be dense or scattered.

Scrub tends to grow in confined areas within a field. It may be so dense that animals cannot penetrate it or there may be scattered scrub throughout the field.

You will have to calculate how much ineligible land (that is, scrub) is present. You need to assess how dense the scrub is and how much area it takes up. The guidance outlined below will assist you in the calculation.

You must ensure that the area of the ineligible land you deduct from your claim is at least equal to the area of scrub present.

To assess the amount of scrub in your field, you need to consider if there are:

- Areas of dense scrub;
- Scattered scrub which is confined to particular areas within a field;
- Scattered scrub which is spread throughout a field.

You should first of all calculate the deduction required for dense scrub before going on to consider scattered scrub.

Dense Scrub

Dense scrub is defined as areas within a field that contain scrub vegetation that is so dense that no grazing is possible within that area.

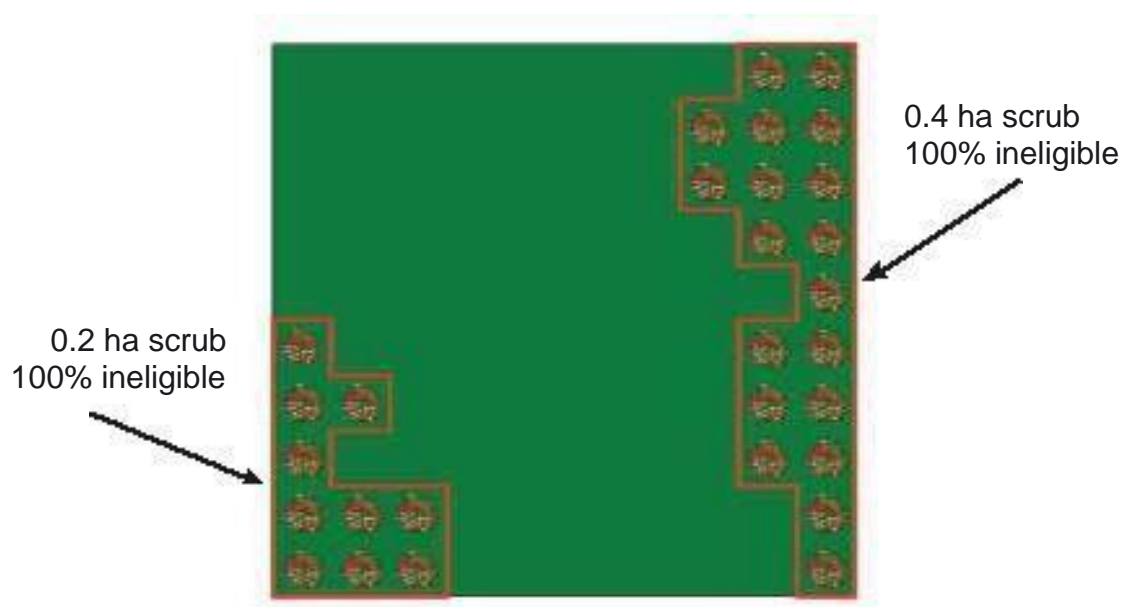
All areas covered by dense scrub must be deducted from your claim. If the total ineligible area of the field does not exceed 0.01ha then no deduction is required.

It is important that you check your LPIS map and assess your land accordingly as smaller areas of scrub less than 0.01 ha may not have been captured in the MEA and need to be deducted from your claim.

Example 1

Your field is 2 ha but there are dense patches of scrub. In this example, the dense scrub totals 0.60 ha.

This means that only 1.4 ha of the field is eligible.



| | Ha | % Ineligible | Total area to be deducted |
|------------|-----|----------------|---------------------------|
| Field Size | 2.0 | | |
| Scrub | 0.6 | 100 | 0.6 |
| | | Total deducted | 0.6 |

The eligible area for this field would be 2.0ha - 0.6ha = 1.4ha

In this example the LPIS map is showing the MEA to be 1.75 ha but your assessment is 1.4ha of the field is eligible. You will need to complete your field data sheet as follows:

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Field Number | Total Field Area (Ha) | Land Type | Field Classification | Maximum Eligible Area (Ha) | Eligible Usage Code | Area to establish and activate entitlements for Basic Payment and Greening |
| 1/012/025/15B | 2.00 | SDA | PG | 1.75 | FR1 | 1.75 |
| | | | | | | 1.4 |

Ineligible Vegetation - Bracken

Land covered in bracken is not eligible. You must deduct the area of the bracken from the area you are claiming even where bracken is present in only part of a field for 2 - 3 months of the year, as the field must be in an eligible land use for the entire calendar year.



Bracken is not eligible.

Ineligible Vegetation - Rush

Rush is an herbaceous, low-nutrient value forage plant which meets the definition of permanent pasture. Rush which is well managed (e.g. cut on a regular basis) will not generally make the field or area where rush is present ineligible.



Tall brown impenetrable rush is not eligible

Rush is ineligible if it is present in areas which are:

- inaccessible to grazing livestock, or
- abandoned, that is, not in agricultural use, or
- not grazed within the past two years, or
- cannot support grazing livestock, for example, if it is too wet (swamp in nature), or
- impenetrable (rank and difficult to walk through).

Areas of agricultural fields covered by rush which are impenetrable (tall, brown, difficult to walk through) are ineligible and must be deducted from the area you are claiming. Similarly, areas in fields which have no agricultural value due to the presence of rush combined with briars, nettles, etc are ineligible.

Scattered Ineligible Vegetation (Scrub, bracken and overgrown rush)

Scattered areas of scrub, bracken and overgrown rush can occur as numerous small bushes or clumps of vegetation with grazing possible between the clumps. In such cases, it would not be practical to calculate the area taken up by each individual clump. Therefore we have developed a scorecard on the next page to help you calculate the ineligible area which must be deducted from you claim.

The scorecard is **not to be used for dense areas of scrub, bracken or overgrown rush** - you must deduct these areas first in their entirety. In other words, only use the scorecard if it is not practical to deduct the area occupied by each portion of ineligible vegetation. **The scorecard must be applied only to the area where scattered vegetation is present. It must not be applied to the entire field unless the scattered scrub, bracken and overgrown rush are uniformly present throughout the entire field. Using the scorecard incorrectly when applying at field level, when there is dense ineligible vegetation and scattered ineligible vegetation is only present in a portion of the field, could mean that the area you calculate as ineligible may be too low and penalties may be applied to your claim.**

From an aerial photograph, the scattered scrub might look like this.



Scattered Ineligible Vegetation scorecard

Where there are patches of scrub, bracken and/or overgrown rush of more than 0.01 ha (defined as dense vegetation) you need to deduct these from the eligible area of the field and only claim the eligible area. Ineligible areas which are smaller than 0.01 ha but which add up to more than 0.01 ha within a field must also be deducted.

If there are very low levels of scrub, bracken or overgrown rush for example, several isolated clumps with grazing accessible on all sides and which cause no impact on the amount of grazing available, no deduction in area claimed is required.

| | % Density/Cover of feature | Examples | % reduction in area required |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| 1 | 5% or less | Small isolated clumps of ineligible vegetation which have a very minor impact on the area available for grazing. You are required to make a 2.5% deduction of the total area. | 2.5% |
| 2 | More than 5% but not more than 20% | Significant number of scattered clumps of ineligible vegetation but with some grazing beneath and between the clumps. You are required to make a 13% deduction to the area containing the scattered vegetation. | 13% |
| 3 | More than 20% but not more than 50% | Numerous clumps of ineligible vegetation with restricted grazing but there is an accessible area between clumps. You are required to make a 36% deduction to the area containing the scattered vegetation. | 36% |
| 4 | More than 50% | Clumps of ineligible vegetation occupy more area than that available for grazing. Access likely to be limited to defined paths. The whole area containing the vegetation is ineligible. | 100% |

Further illustrated examples of percentage ground cover are at Annex B.

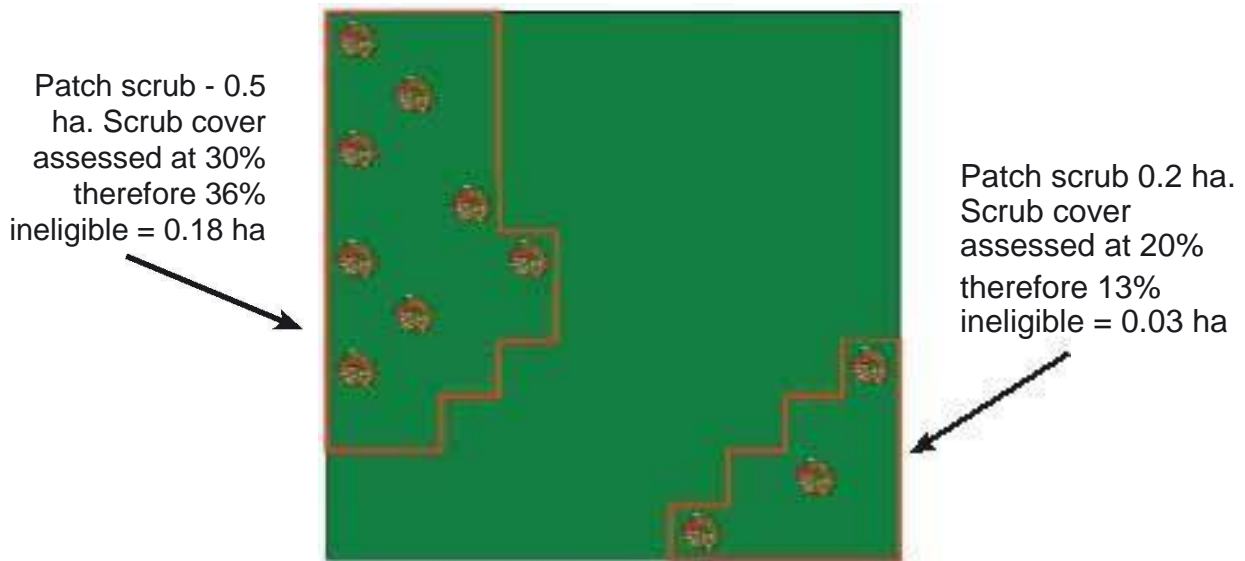
ALL REFERENCES TO SCRUB IN EXAMPLES 2, 3 AND 4 ALSO REFER TO INELIGIBLE BRACKEN AND OVERGROWN RUSH

Example 2

Scattered ineligible vegetation contained in two areas of the field

Your field is 2 ha but there are two patches of scattered scrub. A deduction has been made in the maximum eligible area of the field but you must check this.

You should apply the scorecard to the two areas to help you assess how much area you need to deduct.



In this case, using scorecard 3, you have worked out that the area of scrub of 0.5 ha is more than 20% and less than 50% dense, so you make a deduction of 36%.

Using scorecard 2, you have worked out that the other area of 0.2 ha of scrub is between 6% and 20% dense and you need to make a deduction of 13%.

| | Ha | % Ineligible | Total area to be deducted |
|------------------------|------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| Field Size | 2.0 | | |
| Scattered scrub | 0.5 | 36 | 0.18 |
| Scattered scrub | 0.2 | 13 | 0.03 |
| Total deducted | | | 0.21 |

The eligible area for this field would be 2.0ha - 0.21ha = 1.79ha.

In this example the LPIS map is showing the MEA to be 1.82ha but your assessment is that only 1.79 ha of the field is eligible. You will need to complete your field data sheet as follows:

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Field Number | Total Field Area (Ha) | Land Type | Field Classification | Maximum Eligible Area (Ha) | Eligible Usage Code | Area to establish and activate entitlements for Basic Payment and Greening |
| 1/012/025/15B | 2.00 | SDA | PG | 1.82 | FR1 | 1.82 |
| | | | | | | 1.79 |

Example 3

Scattered ineligible vegetation uniformly spread throughout a field.

Your field is 2 ha but there are several small clumps/bushes uniformly spread throughout the field. A deduction has been made in the maximum eligible area of the field but you must check this.



Scrub cover assessed at 20% of field size therefore 13% ineligible = 0.26 ha



Using scorecard 2 above, you have worked out the areas of scattered scrub account for around 20% of the field size and so you need to make a deduction of 13%.

| | Ha | % Ineligible | Total area to be deducted |
|-----------------------|-----|--------------|---------------------------|
| Field Size | 2.0 | | |
| Scattered scrub | 2.0 | 13 | 0.26 |
| Total deducted | | | 0.26 |

The eligible area for this field would be 2.0ha - 0.26ha = 1.74ha

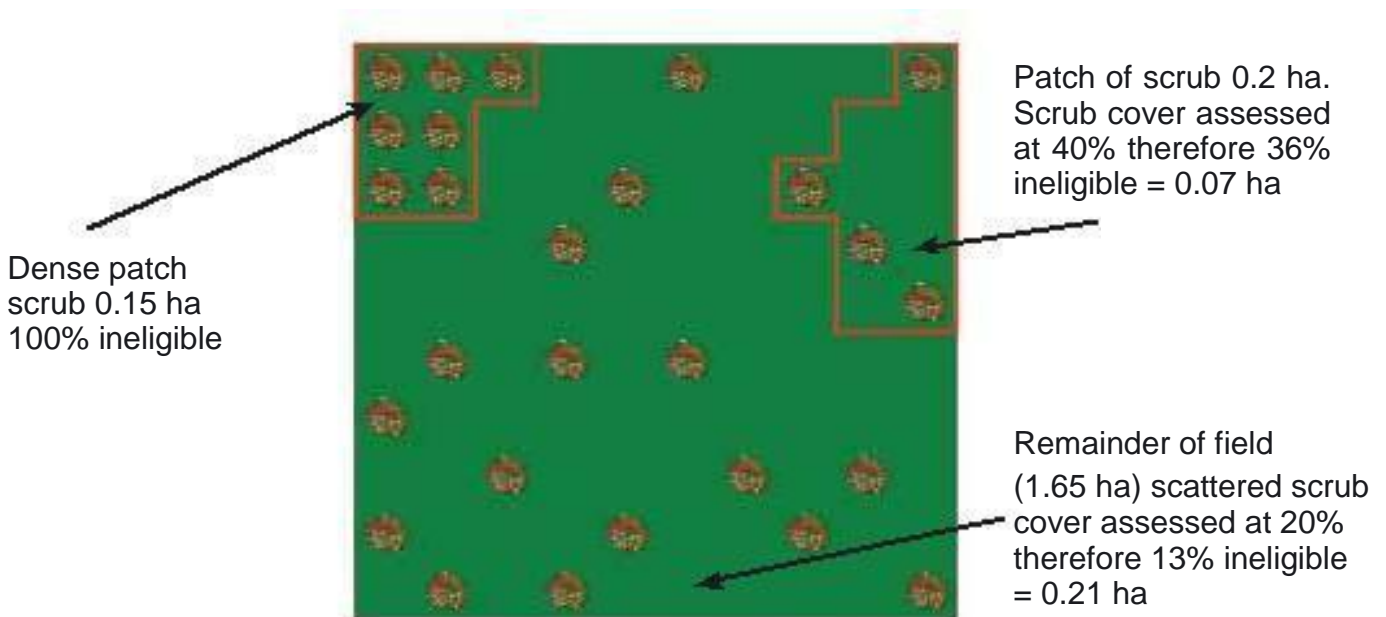
In this example the LPIS map is showing the MEA to be 1.84 ha but your assessment is that only 1.74 ha of the field is eligible. You will need to complete your field data sheet as follows.

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Field Number | Total Field Area (Ha) | Land Type | Field Classification | Maximum Eligible Area (Ha) | Eligible Usage Code | Area to establish and activate entitlements for Basic Payment and Greening |
| 1/012/025/15B | 2.00 | SDA | PG | 1.84 | FR1 | 1.84 |
| | | | | | | 1.74 |

Example 4

Complex situation which includes areas of dense and scattered ineligible vegetation

Your field is 2 ha but there is dense and scattered scrub in the field. A deduction has been made in the maximum eligible area of the field but you must check this.



Step 1

Calculate area of dense scrub (top left corner) - 0.15 ha and is all ineligible.

Step 2

Apply the scorecard to the area of scattered scrub which has the highest density (top right corner). This is an area of 0.2 ha and using scorecard 3 you assess a scrub density of 40%. Therefore, you need to make a deduction of 36%, which is 0.07 ha (0.2 ha x 36%).

Step 3

Apply the scorecard to the remainder of the field which contains scattered scrub. This is an area of 1.65 ha and you assess using scorecard 2 a scrub density of 20%. Therefore, you need to make a deduction of 13%, which is 0.21 ha (1.65 ha x 13%).

The changes from Steps 1-3 are summarised below:

| | Ha | % Ineligible | Total area to be deducted |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| Field Size | 2.0 | | |
| Step 1 Dense scrub | 0.15 | 100 | 0.15 |
| Step 2 Scattered scrub | 0.20 | 36 | 0.07 |
| Step 3 Scattered scrub | 1.65 | 13 | 0.21 |
| Total deducted | | | 0.43 |

The eligible area of this field would be 2.0 ha - 0.43 ha = 1.57 ha

In this example the LPIS map is showing the MEA table to be 1.85 ha but your assessment is that only 1.57 ha of the fields eligible. You will need to complete your field data sheet as follows.

| A | B | C | D | E | F | G |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Field Number | Total Field Area (Ha) | Land Type | Field Classification | Maximum Eligible Area (Ha) | Eligible Usage Code | Area to establish and activate entitlements for Basic Payment and Greening |
| 1/012/025/15B | 2.00 | SDA | PG | 1.85 | FR1 | 1.85 |
| | | | | | | 1.57 |

Removal of scrub

Scrub must not be removed between 1 March and 31 August - the bird nesting season.

Undesignated land is land not designated by DOE Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) as a Natura 2000 site, Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), or Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI).

Under Cross Compliance GAEC 6 'Maintenance of soil organic matter level through appropriate practices' if you wish to remove scrub larger than 2 ha to intensify agricultural activity on previously uncultivated land or a semi-natural area you should consult with DARD to determine if you require consent under the DARD Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 or the Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 Failure to do so may lead to penalties being applied or prosecution.

For further information on the EIA (Agriculture) Regulations 2007 or to apply for consent go on line at www.dardni.gov.uk/eia or contact

Countryside Management Unit
Lindesay Hall, Loughry Campus
Cookstown
County Tyrone
BT80 9AA

Telephone: (028) 8675 7507

Email: eia@dardni.gov.uk

Under Cross Compliance SMR2 '*Conservation of Wild Birds*' and SMR3 '*Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna*' apply to land designated by DOE Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) as a Natura 2000 site, Special Protection Area (SPA), Special

Area of Conservation (SAC), or Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI). Removal of scrub on designated sites is only permitted with written consent from the NIEA. For further information contact NIEA on 028 9056 9516. Removal of scrub on designated sites, for example, Natura

2000 site, SPA, SAC or ASSI is only permitted with written consent from the NIEA. For further information contact NIEA on 028 9056 9516.

Scrub may be eligible for agri-environment schemes and if you have an agreement you should check carefully before considering removing scrub.

Bare ground (after scrub removal) will remain ineligible until grass cover has been established. You should note that for land to be claimed for Basic Payment Scheme (BPS and YFP), it must be in eligible use for the entire calendar year.

Even where scrub has been removed, DARD may consider whether your land was eligible in previous years, back to 2013 by using aerial photography.

Cross compliance breaches identified during a control visit will be attributed to the current claimant unless acceptable evidence is available to the contrary.

Woodland/Trees

As a general rule woodland is ineligible for BPS, ANC or OFS, but may be eligible for Agri-environment schemes.

The following are not eligible for BPS, ANC or OFS:

- Christmas trees.
- Woodland which is not grazed.

- Woodland with more than 50 trees per hectare.
- Woodland planted under the terms of the Woodland Grant Scheme and Farm Woodland Premium Scheme or the Agri-environment Scheme option (provision of native trees/ ungrazed grass margins planted with trees) will not constitute **grazed woodland** as the tree density is more than 50 trees per hectare. **But see exceptions below where land in these schemes may be eligible.**



Ungrazed woodland is not eligible.

Exceptions

Woodland can be considered eligible in the following cases:

- Land that was eligible and on which SFP was paid in respect of 2008 scheme year and is subsequently (after 31 December 2008) converted to forestry under an EU scheme **remains eligible for the duration of the forestry scheme.**
- Land that was eligible and on which SFP was paid in respect of 2008 scheme year and is subsequently (after 31 December 2008), planted with trees under an EU Agri-environment scheme, **remains eligible for the duration of the EU Agri-environment scheme.**
- Land in an EU Forestry Scheme or an EU Agri-environment scheme on which SFP was paid in 2008 in respect of set-aside entitlements **remains eligible for the duration of the relevant scheme.**

The land referred to in the 3 points above will become ineligible once the relevant scheme ends.

Agro-forestry

Agro-forestry occurs where agriculture and tree cultivation are carried out on the same land unit. Where land is managed for agro-forestry the tree density is usually in excess of 50 trees/ha but the planting has taken place in such a way that the area of the field is utilized for agricultural activity in the initial years of tree establishment, these areas are eligible in the initial years of tree establishment, provided agricultural activity remains predominant and is not significantly affected by the presence of trees.

Grazed woodland

Grazed woodland is only eligible if the tree density does not exceed 50 trees per hectare and agricultural activities can be carried out on the grazed woodland in a similar way compared to land without trees.

If trees are present throughout the field, the tree density is applied at field level. In these cases if the tree density is greater than 50 trees per hectare the entire field will be ineligible.

If trees are present in part of the field, the tree density is applied to the part of the field containing trees. If the tree density is greater than 50 trees per hectare for the part of the field containing trees and this is not a single tree, line of trees or small clump of trees (see below), then that part of the field will be ineligible. The remainder of the field may be eligible providing it complies with all the eligibility rules.

If there is no grazing available under the trees or woodland is not currently being grazed/used for agricultural activity or the tree density exceeds 50 trees per hectare, **then it is ineligible even if it had previously been used to support claims in the past.**

Single tree, line of trees or small clumps of trees

If there is a single tree, a line of trees or small clump of trees with grazing available underneath right up to the trunk, you only need to make a deduction if there is an area of bare ground or mulch under the trees and consequently no grazing is available on these areas.

Scattered stones, scree and rock

Any areas of rock, within your field are ineligible. This scorecard will help you calculate the ineligible area under scattered stones, scree or rock. The scorecard is shown below. You will note that the percentage reductions being applied for scattered rock are different from those being applied for scattered scrub. This is to reflect that scrub tends to grow in clumps with no eligible land within the clump whereas rock tends to be scattered with grass growing between the stones. Therefore, even at higher densities of rock some eligible land is still available compared to scrub.

| % Density of scattered stones, scree or rock | % Reduction applied |
|---|----------------------------|
| 10 % or less | 5% |
| More than 10% but not more than 30% | 20% |
| More than 30% but not more than 50% | 40% |
| More than 50% but not more than 70% | 60% |
| More than 70% | 100% |

Lanes and transport routes

Constructed animal walkways are not eligible. Concrete or tarmac lanes or lanes with a hardcore base, even if greened over are **completely ineligible**. Areas of fields predominantly used as transport routes are also ineligible. These are often characterised by the presence of

bare soil or deep tractor ruts on a **permanent basis**. The area deducted must be measured from the outside of one tractor rut to the outside of the other. **The area between each rut, even if grazed, is not eligible.**

If lanes or transport routes are present at field boundaries you must deduct the area of the lane/transport route and the area between the lane/transport route and the field boundary line. This will include areas occupied by hedges or sheughs if present on the field boundary

This hardcore lane has grassed over. It is not eligible



This hardcore lane is not eligible. In this case make a deduction for the area between the ruts as well as the ruts themselves.



Section 5 Marginal land

Bogland and Areas Covered with Heather

It is often very difficult for DARD to determine from aerial photography whether bogland and areas covered with heather are eligible. Consequently these areas may not be removed from the Maximum Eligible Area shown on your map. **This does not necessarily mean that these areas are eligible for EU direct payments.**

As with any field, it is your responsibility to ensure that you only claim on eligible land and deduct all ineligible areas irrespective of what is indicated on your map.

In recent years a 100% penalty has been applied to a significant number of claims due to the inclusion of bogland and areas covered with heather which, following an OTSC, have turned out to be ineligible.

Placing small numbers of animals on large areas of bogland or heather is unlikely to make these areas eligible. In relation to land which is in an agri-environment agreement and subject to a low maximum stocking density and other grazing restrictions, you are advised to maintain a stocking density close to the maximum allowed level during most of the permitted grazing period and ensure that the entire area is grazed in order for it to be eligible. Areas on which there is no grazing activity may still be eligible if other agricultural activity such as mowing or flailing of the vegetation is being carried out. Similarly, the presence of animals on these areas for a short period is unlikely to make them eligible. Land being claimed must be eligible for the entire calendar year, so action undertaken after an inspection has found the land to be ineligible can only make the land eligible for the next calendar year.

Heather

The European Commission has advised that heather can be considered eligible on a case-by-case basis, providing it is capable of sustaining agricultural activity, for example, grazing livestock, and is maintained in good agricultural and environmental condition.

On this basis, heather is considered eligible if it is:

- accessible to grazing livestock, and
- has significant forage value, and
- is used for agricultural purposes, that is, grazed by livestock and/or management of heather such as flailing or controlled burning has been carried out.

If evidence of agricultural activity is only present on part of a field, then the remainder of the field will be ineligible.

Heather may still be eligible for Agri-environment schemes if it is actively managed according to your Agri-environment scheme requirements.



Heather below 50cm grazed by livestock is eligible.

Ineligible heather

Heather is ineligible if it is:

- inaccessible for grazing animals,
- or over mature, that is more than 50 cm tall



This is land which has effectively been abandoned and is not in agricultural use

Ineligible heather

Mosaic of ineligible and eligible heather

Even in well managed areas of heather which are grazed, coverage of mature heather of around 10% could be expected. Therefore, a maximum 20% of mature heather (more than 50 cm tall) is allowable in an area of a field where heather is the predominant species (see example 1). **If the amount of mature heather exceeds 20%, then the total area of mature heather becomes ineligible** (see example 2). The presence of some mature heather has biodiversity benefits in providing nesting sites and cover for ground nesting birds.

You will need to assess and decide on the areas of heather that are eligible and ineligible.

Guidance on burning and flailing of heather

Controlled burning and flailing is encouraged as a management tool for regeneration of mature heather and, along with grazing, can assist in making the field eligible. Burning of heather or hill pasture is controlled by law and must not be carried out between 15 April and 31 August to protect ground nesting birds. This requirement is also contained within Cross Compliance GAEC 5 '*Minimum land management reflecting site specific conditions to limit erosion*'.

It is recommended that burning or flailing of heather takes place on approximately a 20 year rotation - that is 5% a year. We recognise that burning, in particular, might not be possible each year due to weather constraints. **Therefore a 20% maximum burn/flail per year for a heath on a field is acceptable, with the burned/flailed area remaining eligible (see example 3). Heath is defined as mixed vegetation with heather being the dominant species in the field.**

If more than 20% of the heath on a field is burned and/or flailed in one management season, then the entire area of burned and/or flailed heath is ineligible (see example 4).

Consent is required from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency NIEA before burning/flailing heath on designated sites, for example, Natura 2000 site, SPA, SAC or ASSI. Burning is not permitted on blanket bog. Blanket bog occurs on deep peat deposits over 0.5 metres deep. The average depth is 2- 3 metres and it is normally found on areas over 200 metres above sea level.

Areas which have been burned or flailed on heaths consisting entirely of mature heather or where there is no significant agricultural activity are ineligible. In these cases the entire area of the heath is ineligible (see example 6).

Blanket Bog in an Agri-environment Scheme

Blanket Bog in an Agri-environment scheme is restricted to a maximum stocking density of 0.075LU/ha and may only be grazed during the period 1 March - 31 October.

If you maintain a stocking density close to 0.075LU/ha during most of the permitted grazing period and the entire area is grazed, then it will be eligible for BPS apart from areas covered with ineligible vegetation (e.g. scrub) or other ineligible features. Areas on which there is no grazing activity may still be eligible if other agricultural activity such as mowing or flailing of the vegetation is being carried out.

You should be aware that mowing or flailing may not be appropriate management of some sites and in some cases might not be permitted.

Calculating the eligible area of heather mosaics

Example 1

You have an area of heath of 1 ha.

0.9 ha of the heath is below 50 cm so that area is eligible.

The remaining area of 0.1 ha is mature heather. As the area of mature heather does not exceed 20% of the heath, you can claim this area as eligible.

Total eligible area of the heath is 1 ha.

Example 2

You have an area of heath of 1 ha, with 0.75 ha under 50 cm so that area is eligible.

The remaining 0.25 ha of mature heather is ineligible as it exceeds 20% of the area of the heath.

Total eligible area of the heath is 0.75 ha.

Example 3

You have an area of heath of 1 ha with 0.85 ha under 50 cm so that area is eligible. The remaining area of the heath of 0.15 ha has been burned or flailed. As this is less than 20% of the heath, you can claim the whole heath as eligible. Total eligible area of the heath is 1 ha.

Example 4

You have an area of heath of 1 ha with 0.75 ha under 50 cm so that area is eligible. The remaining area of the heath of 0.25 ha has been burned or flailed. As this exceeds 20% of the heath, this area is ineligible.

Total eligible area of the heath is 0.75 ha.

Example 5

You have an area of heath of 1 ha, with 0.70 ha under 50 cm so that area is eligible.

You have burned or flailed 0.15 ha and the remaining area of the heath of 0.15 ha is mature heather. As the area which is burned or flailed is less than 20% of the heath, and the area of mature heather is also less than 20% of the heath, you can claim the whole heath as eligible.

Total eligible area of the heath is 1 ha.

Example 6

You have an area of heath of 1 ha.

You have burned or flailed 0.20 ha and the remaining area of the heath of 0.80 ha is mature heather. As the remainder of the heath consists entirely of mature heather the entire area of the heath is ineligible.

Bogs, swamps, reed-beds and fens

Bogs, swamps, reed-beds and fens are only eligible where they are enclosed by a physically recognisable boundary, where they are accessible, where there is forage available and they are grazed.

If this is not the case the area is ineligible

These areas may still be eligible for Agri-environment schemes if they are actively managed according to your Agri-environment scheme requirements.



A reed-bed which is ineligible.

Unclear bog

Where 'unclear bog' is printed in the Field Status column of the Field Information Table which accompanies your map this means that based on our current information, we believe the field is lowland bog and that it does not have a physically recognisable boundary. The MEA for the field is therefore fixed to zero because we consider the field to be ineligible for BPS and (where appropriate) ANC and therefore should not be claimed. If you are confident that any of the area is eligible and the field is enclosed by a recognised field boundary, you should notify us by completing a LPIS Correction form.

Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Areas of Special Scientific Interest

Land that no longer meets the usual eligibility requirements for the Basic Payment Scheme because of the implementation of EU legislation on the conservation of wild birds (the Wild Birds Directive), natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive), or, the Water Framework Directive may be used for the Basic Payment Scheme provided it met the

SFP eligibility requirements and formed part of the area determined as eligible for payment in 2008.

Much of this land will be within a Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI). You will have been formally notified by the NIEA if your land is in one of these areas and you will already be aware of the environmental obligations which exist on your land.

Section 6 Temporary ineligible features

Activities associated with normal agricultural practice

The following activities are associated with normal agricultural practice and some activities may result in land being ineligible. Ground which is temporarily bare associated with these activities will remain eligible as set out below.

- a. Cleaning sheughs and maintained watercourses: areas covered by spoil, soil or clay which is lightly spread adjacent to a sheugh or watercourse are eligible. Piles of spoil, soil or clay present are ineligible.
- b. Hedge cutting: land covered with debris from hedge cutting is eligible, if disposed of within 6 months of the cutting date. Piles of bushes present on a permanent basis are ineligible.
- c. Field drainage.
- d. Farmyard manure and poultry litter stored for spreading in that field (subject to the conditions of the Nitrates Action Programme 2015-2018) are eligible. Concrete areas or areas used as general storage for farmyard manure are permanently ineligible.
- e. Ploughing and reseeded/cropping.
- f. Poached ground around gateways and feeding areas provided it is due solely to the presence of animals and which will naturally regenerate with grass. These are normally small areas measuring 0.01 ha or 0.02 ha. Note: Areas where the bare soil is caused by the presence of trees are not eligible.
- g. Deeply rutted tracks or tracks that are part of a transport network are not eligible. However, temporary ruts do not affect eligibility.



Temporary ruts such as these are eligible.

Land temporarily out of agricultural use

Land may be temporarily out of agricultural use because:

- It is being used to store silage bales, machinery or stones, but see further information below.
- There is bare ground or mulch under trees with no grazing available.
- There are deeply rutted tracks in fields.
- This land is not eligible for BPS and other schemes.

Storage of silage bales, machinery or stones

Where an area of a field is used to store bales, machinery or stones which are associated with that field only and stored on a temporary basis (for example, you have an area of 0.05 ha where bales are stored in the corner of the field from which they have been harvested) then no deductions in the area of the field are needed. The total area of the field can be considered eligible for BPS.

However, if the part of a field is used for the storage on a regular basis, for example bales or machinery year after year or stone that is not used, or if it is clear that the number of bales stored in the field exceeds that produced from the field, then this would **not be considered a temporary basis** and a deduction must be made for all schemes for the area used for storage.

Similarly, if **a permanent** section of a field has been fenced off for the main purpose of storage, then this would **not be considered a temporary basis**. This area must be clearly identified on the farm map and is ineligible for all schemes.

Section 7 Agri-environment schemes and compatibility for claiming BPS

Not all land eligible under an Agri-environment scheme is eligible for BPS. The following table explains which Agri-environment classification codes are compatible for claiming BPS.

Compatibility Key

1. Eligible for claiming BPS providing it forms part of a land parcel of 0.1 ha or more and meets all other eligibility criteria described in this booklet. Area reductions should be made for any ineligible features, such as land in non-agricultural use, dense patches of scrub, scattered scrub, wide boundaries etc.
2. Eligible for claiming BPS providing it is accessible for livestock, there is forage available and it is grazed. It should meet all other eligibility criteria described in this booklet. Area reductions should be made for any ineligible features, such as land in non-agricultural use, dense patches of scrub, scattered scrub, wide boundaries etc.
3. Only eligible for claiming BPS if the land was claimed and for which SFP was paid in the 2008 scheme year and is established under an Agri- environment agreement after 31 December 2008. It must form part of a parcel of 0.1 ha or more. Area reductions should be made for any ineligible features, such as land in non-agricultural use, dense patches of scrub, scattered scrub, wide boundaries etc
4. Ineligible for BPS.
5. Eligibility will be dependent on satisfying all eligibility criteria in this booklet. Area reductions should be made for any ineligible features, such as land in non-agricultural use, dense patches of scrub, scattered scrub, wide boundaries etc

| Land classification | Compatibility for claiming BPS & YFS |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Improved land | 1 |
| Semi-improved/Unimproved/Semi-natural grassland | 1 |
| Species rich grassland | 1 |
| Lowland wet grassland | 1 |
| Breeding wader sites | 1 |
| Lapwing breeding sites | 1 |
| Fen | 2 |
| Swamp | 2 |
| Reed-bed | 2 |
| Heather moorland (See Notes 1 and 2 below this table) | 1 |
| Rough moorland grazing | 1 |
| Intact lowland raised bog | 2 |
| Cut-over lowland raised bog | 2 |
| Ungrazed woodland | 4 |
| Lightly grazed woodland | 2 |
| Scrub (See Note 3 below this table) | 2 |
| Parkland and lowland wood pasture | 2 |
| Grass margins planted with native trees | 3 |
| Ungrazed grass margins | 1 |
| Historic monument | 2 |
| Not eligible | 5 |
| Not claimed (ineligible feature) | 4 |

Notes:

1. Western Gorse (*Ulex gallii*) is a smaller, more compact shrub, with smaller spines when compared to European or common gorse / whin (*Ulex europaeus*). In contrast to whin, which mainly flowers in the spring, western gorse flowers from late summer to autumn. The shrub is mainly found in the Mournes, Slieve Croob and Slieve Gullion areas on dry and wet heath.
2. Some areas classified as heather moorland contain patches of Western Gorse. Western Gorse is eligible for Agri-environment scheme payments as long as the area is actively managed in accordance with your Agri-environment scheme management requirements but you should treat it as scrub for BPS eligibility and make appropriate reductions to your claim. Western gorse may be important in designated sites. You should not remove it without prior consultation.
3. Areas classified as scrub on your Agri-environment scheme agreement may have become so dense that no grazing is possible within that area. These dense areas of scrub should be removed from your Agri-environment scheme claim. When completing your BPS claim you must deduct these areas of dense scrub as they are ineligible.

Section 8 Non agricultural activities on eligible land

To be eligible for BPS, land has to be used primarily for an agricultural activity. If agricultural and non-agricultural activities are taking place on the same land, the land won't be eligible if the intensity, nature, duration and timing of the non-agricultural activity significantly interferes with agricultural activity.

Further information on the impact of non agricultural activities on land eligibility is at Annex C.

Section 9 Common land

The boundaries of common land have been recently assessed and in some cases where there was evidence of boundary features, commons have been split.

The eligibility requirements for common land are the same as for any non-common land field on which you claim. An assessment has been made on ineligible features from a recent ortho and if you use common land you will have been notified of the maximum eligible area for the share you use. This included an assessment of the scattered rock. This exercise has enabled DARD to provide an updated maximum eligible area for each common. The share of this maximum eligible area has been allocated in the same proportion as previously.

Shareholders were notified of this from January 2014. However it is still your responsibility to make sure that all eligibility rules are met.

Common land is only eligible for Agri-environment scheme payment if all shareholders have an Agri-environment scheme agreement.

Section 10 Other issues

Split fields

If more than one producer attempts to activate BPS entitlements on different parts of the same field the claims will not be accepted, and may lead to penalties being applied. If more than one producer is farming the same field the field will need to be physically split

For example, field 1 is 3.50 ha and has crop code FR1. 2.50 ha are claimed by Producer A and 1.00 ha by Producer B. The producers need to establish an acceptable boundary feature and complete a LPIS Correction Form to report the change. Field 1 will become 1A = 2.50 ha and 1B = 1.00 ha.

Unverified fields

Fields are classed as unverified for two main reasons:

- (i) To highlight to the farm business that they should pay particular attention to the boundary as it cannot be seen clearly on the aerial photograph;
- (ii) To inform DARD staff that there is an uncertainty about this boundary which we aim to verify in the future.

The unverified status has no bearing on payments and so if you are content that the boundary is correct, you need take no further action and should claim for this field as normal. Processing of your claim will not be held up due to the field's unverified status. There is no limit to the number of consecutive years that a claim can be made on an unverified field.

Turf production

Grass turf is eligible.

Turf (peat) produced for fuel is not eligible.

Land under polytunnels

Any crops grown under polytunnels are eligible for BPS, provided that the ground underneath them is kept in GAEC and is not hardcore or has not been concreted. If the ground is hardcore or concreted, a deduction would have to be made for the area under the polytunnel.

Land used for free range poultry

Any land used for free range poultry production under land use code FR1 is eligible for BPS if it is classified as agricultural land, for example, hen runs. As with all agricultural land, it should be maintained in GAEC.

Where the bird houses are a permanent fixture on a concrete area in a field, a deduction would have to be made for the concrete area.

Temporary areas of bare soil which are caused solely by the presence of poultry, and which will naturally regenerate with grass within a short period, are eligible.

Land grazed by horses

The grazing of horses is considered to be an agricultural activity for the purposes of the Basic Payment Scheme. Land which is used mainly for grazing horses but which you occasionally use for non-agricultural purposes for example, an annual gymkhana is eligible.

However, areas of land used by horses for other activities, such as a ménage, and land used for non-agricultural purposes, such as racecourses, gallops or as a show jumping arena are not eligible. This includes the land in the centre of the racecourse.

Coastal cliff faces

Coastal cliff faces where the slope is of a gradient which makes them dangerous for humans to walk on are ineligible for BPS irrespective of whether animals roam these areas. Other coastal areas which may be safely walked on by humans may be eligible provided they meet all the eligibility requirements outlined in this booklet.

Annex A

Eligible land uses for BPS

Eligible land use for the purpose of activating entitlements under the Basic Payment Scheme includes the following:

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| Forage |
| Grass (grass for grazing, hay and silage, rough grazing, grazed heather, sainfoin, clover, lucerne and forage vetches) |
| Cereals and Oilseeds |
| Spring Barley Includes Feed barley, Malting barley, Two row barley, Six row barley |
| Winter Barley Includes Feed barley, Malting barley, Two row barley, Six row barley |
| Spring Wheat Biscuit wheat, Common or Bread wheat, Durum wheat, Einkorn, Feed wheat, Red wheat, Spelt |
| Winter Wheat Biscuit wheat, Common or Bread wheat, Durum wheat, Einkorn, Feed wheat, Red wheat, Spelt |
| Spring Oats Oats, Quaking oats, Porridge oats, Feed oats, Naked oats |
| Winter Oats Oats, Quaking oats, Porridge oats, Feed oats, Naked oats |
| Maize including Forage Maize Maize, Corn, Sweetcorn |
| Rapeseed Industrial rape (no separate spring and winter varieties), Spring Oilseed rape, Swede (no separate spring and winter varieties) |
| Winter Oilseed rape Winter Oilseed rape |
| Spring Triticale |
| Winter Triticale |
| Linseed Spring Linseed, Flax (no separate spring and winter varieties) |
| Winter Linseed Winter Linseed |

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| Spring Rye Rye |
| Winter Rye Rye |
| Wild Bird Cover |
| Beet Includes Beetroot, Chard, Field Beet, Fodder Beet, Mangolds, Redbeet, Sugar Beet |
| Horticulture - Vegetables |
| Potato Early potato, Maincrop potato, Seed potato |
| Turnip Bok choy (no separate spring and winter varieties), Chinese cabbage (Pak choy) (no separate spring and winter varieties), Turnip (no separate spring and winter varieties), Spring Turnip rape |
| Winter Turnip rape Winter Turnip rape |
| Cabbage Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, Cabbages, Calabrese, Cauliflower, Chinese kale, Kale, Kohlrabi, Red cabbage, Savoy cabbage, White cabbage |
| Carrots |
| Parsnips |
| Onions Onions, Shallots, Garlic, Leeks, Chives, Scallions, Spring onions |
| Asparagus (permanent crop, not an eligible crop for the purposes of crop diversification.) |
| Aubergine Aubergine, Eggplant |
| Butternut Squash Butternut squash, Cheese pumpkin |
| Celeriac Includes Celeriac, Celery |
| Chicory Includes Chicory, Endive, Radiccio, Italian Chicory |
| Cucumber |
| Herbs |
| Horseradish (permanent crop, not an eligible crop for the purposes of crop diversification.) |
| Lettuce Lettuce, Romaine lettuce, Cos lettuce, Iceberg lettuce, Butterhead lettuce |
| Parsley |
| Spinach |

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| Radish |
| Squash Pumpkins, Squashes, Marrows, Zucchini, Courgettes |
| Horticulture - Fruit |
| Strawberry |
| Tomato |
| Rhubarb (permanent crop, not an eligible crop for the purposes of crop diversification.) |
| Raspberries, Mulberries, Blackberries, Loganberries, Currants, Cranberries, Bilberries (permanent crops, not eligible crops for the purposes of crop diversification.) |
| Nitrogen Fixing Crops |
| Spring Peas Feed pea, Mange tout, Marrow fat pea, Snap pea, Snow pea, Vining pea |
| Spring Field Beans Includes Broad beans, Field beans, Tic beans |
| Winter Field Beans Includes Broad beans, Field beans, Tic beans |
| Spring Sweet Lupins |
| Winter Sweet Lupins |
| Fallow Land |
| Fallow land for the purposes of EFA and crop diversification |
| Fallow land for the purpose of crop diversification - Grass |
| Fallow land for the purpose of crop diversification - Non-Grass |
| Energy Crops |
| Short rotation coppice Alder, Birch, Hazel, Ash, Lime, Sweet Chestnut, Sycamore, Willow and Poplar (permanent crop, not an eligible crop for the purposes of crop diversification.) Maximum harvest cycle is 5 years |
| Hemp (grown as an energy crop.) |
| Miscanthus, Reed Canary Grass (permanent crops, not eligible crops for the purposes of crop diversification.) |
| Other |
| Flowers |
| Lawn Turf |
| Non-commercial grazed orchards, grazed woodlands or areas in agroforestry. |
| Ornamentals and Nurseries Areas of young woody plants. (Permanent crops, not eligible crops for the purposes of crop diversification.) |
| Commercial Orchards (commercial orchards used to grow top fruit for example, apples and pears). (Permanent crop, not an eligible crop for the purposes of crop diversification.) |
| Land that was eligible claimed and on which SFP was paid in respect of 2008 scheme year and is subsequently (after 31 December 2008) converted to forestry under an EU scheme remains eligible for the duration of the forestry scheme. |

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| Land that was eligible, claimed and on which SFP was paid in respect of 2008 scheme year and is subsequently (after 31 December 2008) planted with trees under an EU agri-environment scheme, remains eligible for the duration of the EU agri-environment scheme. |
| Land in an EU Forestry Scheme on which SFP was paid in 2008 in respect of set-aside entitlements remains eligible for the duration of the forestry scheme. |
| Land in an EU agri-environment Scheme on which SFP was paid in 2008 in respect of set-aside entitlements remains eligible for the duration of the EU agri-environment scheme. |
| Land that was eligible, claimed and on which SFP was paid in respect of 2008 scheme year and is subsequently (after 31 December 2008) no longer eligible as a result of the implementation of the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora Directive (Habitats Directive). |
| Land that was eligible, claimed and on which SFP was paid in respect of 2008 scheme year and is subsequently (after 31 December 2008) no longer eligible as a result of the implementation of the Water Framework Directive. |
| Land that was eligible, claimed and on which SFP was paid in respect of 2008 scheme year and is subsequently (after 31 December 2008) no longer eligible as a result of the implementation of the Wild Birds Directive. |
| Seed mixture - mixed crop |

Hemp

It is a criminal offence to grow hemp in the United Kingdom for any purpose without a licence.

Areas used for the production of hemp shall only be eligible for BPS if the varieties used have a tetrahydrocannabinol content not exceeding 0.2 %.

We may penalise you and recover any money you have been paid if you do not meet the conditions of growing hemp.

Seed labels

For hemp, grown on land used to claim BPS certified seed of one of the eligible varieties must be used. The original official seed labels, confirming the variety, must be supplied to with your Single Application form. These will be receipted by DARD and returned to you. When sowing takes place after 15 May, these labels must be submitted no later than 30 June. It is recommended that you send your seed labels by recorded delivery when returning your Single Application form.

Eligible varieties

A list of varieties of hemp that may be grown under BPS is available on request from Area-based Schemes Payment Branch in Orchard House.

Contact details:

**Area-based Schemes Payment Branch
Orchard House,
40 Foyle Street,
Derry/Londonderry,
BT48 6AT**

**Tel: 0300 200 7848
Email: areabasedschemes@dardni.gov.uk**

Sampling and testing

Under EC rules, the United Kingdom must sample and test 20% of all applications which include hemp, 20% of the total area of hemp and all varieties of hemp grown. This is to make sure that the tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content of the crop is below the level prescribed by EC legislation. Producers must therefore maintain, for each variety sown, three distinct parts of each field claimed, each part comprising at least 4,000 plants, until at least 10 days after flowering in case sampling is necessary. Growers must not harvest these areas until sampling has been completed or a written notification stating that sampling is not necessary has been received from Area-based Schemes payment Branch.

In Northern Ireland, an application for a hemp licence should be made on the appropriate form and forwarded to:

**Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety
Medicines Regulatory Group
Room D4.29
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SQ**

Telephone: 028 9052 3274

An enhanced Criminal Record Check will be required and applicants are reminded that any application for these should be made well in advance of the proposed planting date.

In considering each application, the authenticity of the applicant and the purpose for growing

the hemp, together with the proposed locations of the growing sites, will be taken into account by the Head of Medicines Regulatory Group (MRG).

Licence application forms and further advice on the application process can be found on the MRG website or by contacting the Head of the Medicines Regulatory Group (028 9052 3274)

Annex B

Illustrated examples of percentage ground cover (Ineligible Vegetation score card)

Score Card 1

5% Cover

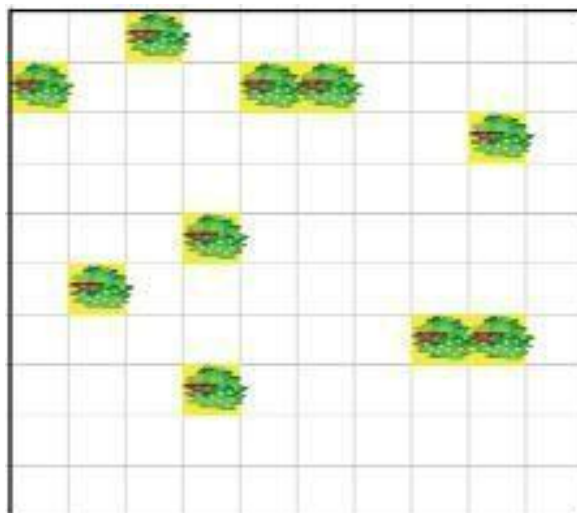


Small isolated clumps of ineligible vegetation which have a very minor impact on grazing.

2.5% deduction

Score Card 2

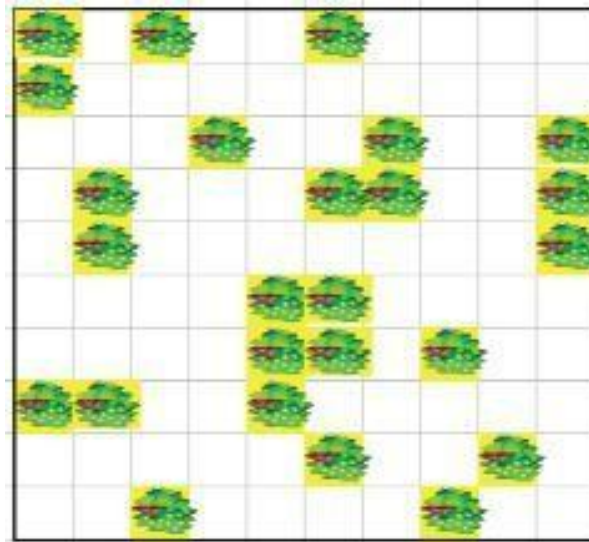
10% Cover



Significant number of scattered bushes may form small clumps. Some grazing beneath and between.

13% deduction

25% Cover

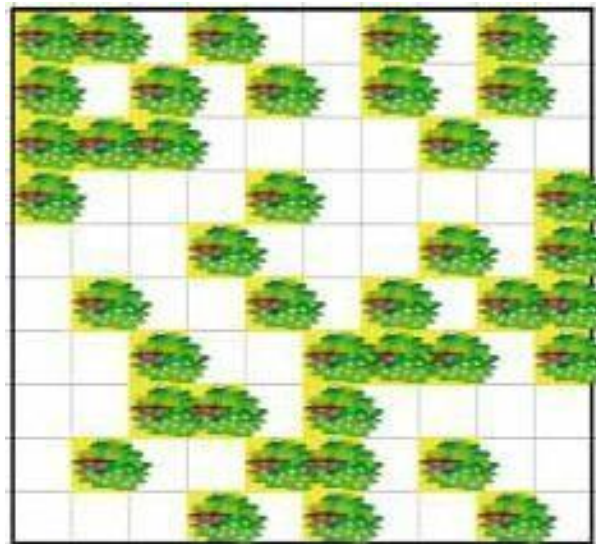


Score Card 3

Some clumps of dense bushes with limited grazing beneath.

36% deduction

40% Cover

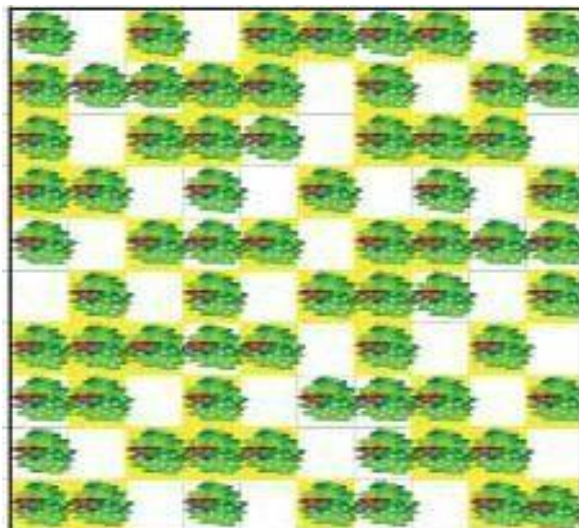


Score Card 4

Dense clumps with restricted grazing accessible between clumps.

36% deduction

70% Cover



Score Card 5

50% + very dense clumps access likely to be limited to defined paths. Clumps often greater than 0.01 ha.

100% ineligible

Annex C

Category A. Permitted activities

The following non-agricultural activities do not significantly interfere with agricultural activity. They won't stop a farmer getting paid for the land, as long as it is eligible for BPS

- Walking*;
- Bird-watching;
- Nature or farm visits by schools or other educational institutions;
- Horse or bicycle riding along bridleways* or on tracks, margins or other permissive routes
- Fishing;
- Hedge-laying competitions, local ploughing competitions or other demonstrations of farming that do not affect the land being in GAEC. This excludes events where trade stands are used, which fall under category B;
- Shooting (game);
- Deer stalking;
- Drag hunting; and
- Paragliding and hang-gliding.

* ***Paths or bridleways that are metalled or surfaced would, in any event, be considered ineligible land.***

Category B. 28 day limit

These non-agricultural activities are allowed - but not for more than more than 28 days (consecutively or not) in the calendar year:

- Clay shooting ;
- Car boot sales;
- Car parking (whether it is for any of the activities listed or not);
- Country fairs and shows;
- Farm auctions and shows;
- Horse riding activities using apparatus or fixtures, such as show-jumping, or an in-field cross-country course;
- Ballooning;
- Festivals and events;
- Scout or guide camps or similar;
- Filming for television or other productions;
- Caravan sites (if you do have a caravan site that is used for more than 28 days, exclude this area from your application. This need not affect a whole field)
- Motor sports;
- Grass airstrips;
- Rearing game in pens;
- Demonstrations of farming (such as hedge-laying competitions or local ploughing competitions) that include trade stands.

Activities in the following category are not permitted

Category C.

Activities in the following category are generally not permitted as the principal purpose of the land is for recreational or other non-agricultural activities,

- golf courses;
- any, other permanent sports facilities

- race courses/gallops;
- airstrips/airports;
- solar panels;
- zoological conservation (land on which animals, not typically used in Northern Ireland for farming purposes, are kept primarily for study, conservation or display to the public).

The examples given are not exhaustive but where the principal purpose of the land is for recreational or other non-agricultural activities it is generally not eligible for BPS. However such areas may be considered eligible if you can show that they are used for agricultural activity on a significant and consistent basis throughout the year and that the agricultural activity is not significantly hindered by the non agricultural activity.

If you rear game, this is also seen as a non-agricultural activity. The area taken up by the pens for rearing game is not eligible for BPS. However, if the pens are present on this area for 28 days or less in a calendar year, the area will be eligible for BPS.

Restrictions on activities - how they work

The restrictions for Categories B and C apply throughout the calendar year. You will need to make sure that any land that is in agricultural use meets the cross compliance rules for the whole calendar year.

You must not claim for any ineligible features on the land.

Where there are 28 day limits, these apply to the number of actual days that the activity takes place. You cannot spread the 24 hours of each 'day' over several days. You must also count days when you have reserved the land or are preparing for the activity, not just the days of the activity itself.

If you go over the 28 day limit, we will count the area of where the activity has taken place as being ineligible. In other words, we will not count your whole holding as being ineligible, just the affected area. If you go over the 28 day limit due to circumstances that are completely beyond your control, please let us know and we will consider your case.

There may be other limits on what you can do with the land, for example, planning restrictions.

Annex D Contact Details

DARD Grants and Funding - Tel: 0300 200 7848
E-mail: areabasedschemes@dardni.gov.uk

Countryside Management Delivery Branch
Lindesay Hall
Loughry Campus
Dungannon Road
COOKSTOWN
BT80 9AA

Tel: 0300 200 7842
E-mail: cmbenquiries@dardni.gov.uk

College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)
Greenmount Campus
45 Tirgracey Road
Muckamore
ANTRIM
BT41 4PS

Tel: 0300 200 7841

Forest Service
Grants and Regulations Branch
1st Floor
Inishkeen House
Killyhevlin
ENNISKILLEN
BT74 7EJ

Tel: 028 66 343019
E-mail: grants.forestservice@dardni.gov.uk

Other sources of advice

Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU)
475 Antrim Road
BELFAST
BT15 3DA

Tel: (028) 9037 0222

E-mail: info@ufuhq.com

NI Agricultural Producers' Association (NIAPA)
15 Molesworth Street
COOKSTOWN
BT80 8NX

Tel: (028) 8676 5700

Northern Ireland Agricultural
Consultants Association (NIACA)
35 Main Street
Dromore
Co. Tyrone
BT78 3AE

Tel: (028) 8289 8179

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