



Basic Payment Facts

England
2015

**STRUTT
& PARKER**

Basic Payment Facts 2015 - England

This briefing is a summary only of the relevant details as at the date of production. For full information please refer to the relevant RPA guidance handbooks or online at www.gov.uk/cap-reform.

1. CAP Information System (CAPIS)

- The new Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) brings with it a new application process. The Government has, under its 'Digital by Default' agenda, taken the opportunity to move the whole process online for the first time, and DEFRA have called the new system 'CAPIS'.
- Every farmer has to register on the system in order to be able to claim any of the CAP schemes. Once registered, a farmer can authorise an agent to act on his/her behalf. Significant efforts have been made by the RPA to engage with the estimated 12,000 farmers who have so far had no 'online presence' to find a way for them to register and complete their 2015 BPS claim online.
- As well as completing their claim online, farmers (or their agents) will have to use CAPIS to update business details, view and amend Rural Land Register maps, and request field and entitlement transfers.

2. Basic Payment Entitlements

a. Establishing entitlements

- On 1st January 2015 all SPS entitlements held by farmers in England became BPS entitlements. Each farmer will need to activate their allocation of BPS entitlements by submitting their claim by 15th May 2015. That farmer will then be formally awarded his new BPS entitlements based on the number of entitlements rolled over, but subject to a maximum equivalent to the area of eligible land declared in 2015. Thus, if a farmer holds more entitlements than the eligible area which he/she declares in 2015, the surplus entitlements will be extinguished.
- BPS entitlements can only be held by Active

Farmers (see section 3 below for the definition of Active Farmer).

- The rules regarding activation of BPS entitlements will be stricter than under the SPS regime:
 - At least once every two years you must activate ALL your entitlements in a single year.
 - It won't be possible to 'rotate' entitlements, so anyone with surplus entitlements will soon lose them under the new scheme.
- There is now only one type of entitlement in England – Normal entitlements.
- The three existing English regions remain as lowland, SDA (Severely Disadvantaged Area), and SDA moorland, but under the BPS the moorland payment will increase to around €70/ha, whereas SDA and lowland rates will merge at around €244/ha (please note these are estimated figures).
- A farmer may claim the annual payments only in respect of the land located in the region to which the entitlements relate.
- The exchange rate used to convert euros to sterling for the 2015 BPS will be the average of the European Central Bank rates set over the month of September 2015.

b. Flexibility

- What was called 'Modulation' under SPS will be known as 'Flexibility' under BPS. This is the mechanism which enables transfers of funds from Pillar 1 to Pillar 2.
- Member States are permitted to transfer up to 15% of the Pillar 1 budget, and in 2014 DEFRA decided in England to transfer 12%. The rate is likely to rise to 15% in 2018. This compares with 9% National Modulation under the previous SPS regime, which was in addition to 10% EU Modulation.
- Unlike Modulation, Flexibility is transferred before the Basic Payment rate is calculated to individual farmers and so it does not appear as a separate deduction on the Claim Statement.

c. Financial discipline

- This mechanism, implemented in the event that there are insufficient funds in the budget, was first

used in 2013, reducing all payments by 2.45%. It is applied on all payments over €5,000. However, in 2014, farmers received a financial discipline rebate of 3.1% on payments over €2,000, but at the same time saw a 1.3% financial discipline deduction for the current year. Whilst on large claims it can add up to a substantial figure, it remains a feature outside of farmers' control.

d. National reserve

- There will be a National reserve to provide BPS entitlements for those who do not have them at the start of the new scheme. Up to 3% of BPS funds will be available for this. Eligible applicants will be young farmers or new farmers. They will need to have at least 5 hectares of eligible land at their disposal on 15th May, and must be "in control" of their business. The application will be done using CAPIS and will need to be submitted (with supporting evidence) by 15th May. Entitlements will be issued based on the number of eligible hectares the farmer declares.

e. Transferring entitlements

- Transfers of BPS entitlements should be possible from March onwards via CAPIS; transfers will be instantaneous (whereas under the SPS a 6 week transfer period was involved). Transferees will need to have confirmed in advance (again on CAPIS) that they are Active Farmers for the transfer to go ahead.

3. Claiming Basic Payment

The claim deadline for the Basic Payment will be 15th May each year (or the last working day prior to 15th May if the 15th falls on a weekend).

a. Active Farmers

- The scheme is open to Active Farmers only. These are defined as any farmer except:-
 - A farmer whose agricultural areas are mainly areas "naturally kept in a state suitable for grazing or cultivation" and who do not carry out on those areas the minimum "agricultural activity" defined by Member States. DEFRA has confirmed that no land in this category exists in England, so only the following test will apply.
 - A farmer who operates an activity which is

included on the “negative list”, which covers “airports, railway services, waterworks, real estate services, permanent sport and recreational grounds”, unless the direct payment received does not exceed €5,000.

The definition of “real estate services” applies to “property developers, real estate agencies and natural/legal persons managing real estate on a fee or contract basis”.

- To ‘operate’ means to make decisions about the non-agricultural activities of the business (even if they don’t take place on land owned or occupied by the business).
- Renting out the following will not count as operating a real estate service:-
 - accommodation facilities on a farm
 - apartments or homes that are in a farmer’s private property for housing purposes
 - part of buildings or surfaces on the holding
 - agricultural land to third parties
- However, farmers who operate any of these five non-agricultural activities may still qualify as an Active Farmer if they meet one of three “re-admission criteria”:
 - that the annual amount of direct payments claimed (including greening and any young farmer payment) represents at least 5% of the total receipts obtained from non-agricultural activities in the most recent fiscal year for which evidence is available; or
 - that his/her agricultural activities are not insignificant. In this context, agricultural activity will be considered significant where receipts from agricultural activities represent at least 40% of their total receipts in the most recent financial year. The test applies only to receipts from agricultural activities on their holding – thus income from agricultural contracting for third parties cannot be included. Income is to be assessed gross of VAT; or
 - the farmer has at least 36ha of eligible land.
- Where re-admission applies under the first or second of these criteria, the farmer will need to send a “certification form” signed by an independent solicitor or accountant to the RPA to show how they meet the criteria.

b. Eligible land

- Land claimed must be eligible for the scheme; this includes any land used for an agricultural activity defined as arable land, permanent grassland and permanent crops.

c. Minimum claim area

- The minimum claim area will be 5ha (up from 1ha under SPS). Anyone with less land – or entitlements – will not be eligible to claim. The minimum parcel size is 0.10ha.

d. Land at your disposal

- Land used to activate entitlements must be at the claimant's disposal on 15th May of the scheme year.
- As under SPS, it will be possible to permit a third party to graze livestock on land which the landowner is claiming to have at their disposal, and we understand that a well written cropping licence will also be satisfactory in some circumstances on arable land. Written agreements are vital in order to display the rights and obligations of the parties.

e. Dual use

- Dual use applies where one farmer is claiming BPS and another farmer or land manager is claiming environmental stewardship or woodland grant scheme payments on the same parcel(s) of land. Dual use will continue to be permitted for all existing Environmental Stewardship and Woodland Grant Schemes. Both parties must meet the scheme rules for the schemes they are under, and evidence for all dual use situations must be kept by both parties. We do not expect dual use to be permitted for new Countryside Stewardship Scheme agreements.

f. New farmer

- A “new farmer” - also known as a “new entrant” - can apply for entitlements from the National Reserve. To qualify as a new farmer in 2015, the farmer must be an Active Farmer and must be at least 18 years old. They must have started their farming activity in 2013 or later, and must not have carried out (or been in control of carrying out) any agricultural activity in the five years

before that. They must provide evidence to support an application for entitlements from the National Reserve.

g. Young Farmer Payment

- A “Young Farmer” is someone who is at least 18 years old but not more than 40 years old in the year of their first BPS application (i.e. they cannot become 41 years old within that calendar year), who took control of the holding within the five years before their first BPS application. Their Basic Payment will be topped up by an additional 25% for the first five years after they started farming or took control of the business. This top-up will apply on up to 90ha only.

4. Greening

- The Greening payment is incorporated within the Basic Payment and is made in return for the provision of certain agricultural practices beneficial for the climate and the environment. The measures involved are in addition to the Cross Compliance obligations (see section 5). Member States will use 30% of their National Envelope for this purpose.
- Penalties for non-compliance will be proportionate to the extent to which Greening has been complied with, and will equate initially to up to 100% of this Greening element (30% of the total payment), rising to 120% (36% of the total) in 2017 and 125% (37.5% of the total payment) in 2018.
- The Greening measures involve three obligations – Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs), Crop Diversification (CD), and Permanent Pasture, which will apply to all farms unless they qualify for one of the exemptions.

a. Exemptions to EFA and CD

- The eligible agricultural area included on a BPS claim is less than 10 ha; or
- Land which is registered for organic production or in conversion for organic production; or
- More than 75% of the arable land is in temporary grassland or fallow or (in the case of EFA) is used for cultivation of leguminous crops, and the remaining arable area does not exceed 30 ha; or

- More than 75% of the eligible agricultural area is permanent or temporary grassland, and the remaining arable area does not exceed 30 ha.
- For CD only: more than 50% of the arable area was not declared by the claimant on their claim in the previous year, AND all of the area concerned is in a different crop to the previous year. (This relates primarily to specialist cropping arrangements).
- A further dispensation exists in cases where the main crop is either fallow or temporary grass and the remaining arable area exceeds 30 hectares – see guidance book for details.

b. Ecological Focus Area (EFA)

Where the arable area of a holding covers more than 15ha, at least 5% (rising to 7% in 2018) of the arable area of the holding must be maintained as Ecological Focus Area. Care should be taken when calculating the arable area of a holding as it is calculated by the RPA as the total area of arable parcels, less ineligible features and so will often be larger than just the cropped area.

There are five qualifying options which will count as EFAs:

- Fallow land
- Buffer strips
- Catch and cover crops
- Nitrogen fixing crops
- Hedges

These options must be located on the arable land area, with the exception of hedges, which must be adjacent to the arable land.

EFA conversion and weighting factors					
Feature	Unit	Conversion factor	Weighting factor	EFA value (m ²)	Comments
Hedges	/m	5	2	10	Up to 10m wide
Fallow land	/m ²	-	1	1	
Buffer strips	/m	6	1.5	9	>1m
Catch/cover crops	/m ²	-	0.3	0.3	
Nitrogen fixing crops	/m ²	-	0.7	0.7	

i. Fallow land

Fallow land is land which has no crop production or grazing on it, but which is nevertheless maintained in a state suitable for grazing or cultivation.

- Such land will have to remain in fallow throughout the period 1st January to 30th June in order to comply for EFA (and throughout the period 1st May to 30th June inclusive in order to comply for CD).
- Minimum width is 2 metres and minimum area is 0.01ha.
- One hectare of fallow land provides one hectare of EFA.
- No crops other than wild-bird seed mixes or nectar sources (which in both cases must be an unharvestable mix of at least two crops that support wildlife and pollinators) can be planted on such land during the fallow period; such mixtures cannot be harvested or grazed (either during or after the fallow period).
- Alternatively, temporary grass can count towards EFA fallow land. There is no restriction on how many years such land can then continue as fallow – i.e. it can continue to count as fallow even if it has been fallow for 5 years or more.
- Grass can only be sown during the fallow period if it is being sown for reasons other than agricultural production – e.g. under an agri-environmental scheme.
- Farmers can use herbicides and cultivations to control weeds such as blackgrass or ragwort during the fallow period; however, they must follow relevant cross compliance guidance.
- Land cannot be declared as fallow if straw bales, silage, muck or farm machinery is stored on it.
- Once the fallow period has finished (30th June) agricultural production can resume i.e. grass cover can be grazed/conserved; however wild bird seed mixes cannot be grazed or harvested.

The foregoing all applies to fallow land counted towards Crop Diversification and/or EFA.

ii. Buffer strips

Buffer strips are different to field margins, and relate

to land (a) next to a watercourse, or (b) parallel with and on a slope leading to a watercourse.

- The second of these is called an “in-field buffer strip”; it must have eligible arable land on both sides, and must be placed where it can significantly influence run-off.
- It is permitted to have both a buffer strip immediately alongside the watercourse and also an in-field buffer strip. However, if there is a hedge alongside the watercourse which is carrying out the function of a buffer strip, this can be used for EFA as a hedge but cannot also count as a buffer strip.
- Minimum width is 1 metre from top of bank (as is also required for Cross Compliance).
- Such strips will count as 9 m² per metre length regardless of actual width.
- No production can take place on the buffer strip – i.e. no cultivations, fertilising or spraying operations can occur - although grazing or cutting is allowed.
- If there is fallow land alongside a buffer strip, these areas must be “visually distinguishable” from each other by an inspector on the ground or from an aerial photograph.

iii. Catch and cover crops

These must be a sown mix of at least two different cover types – one a cereal, the other a non-cereal – which establishes and grows quickly, achieves ground cover, has differing rooting depths and will utilise available nutrients. However, as an alternative, grass can be used as either catch or cover crop as long as it was undersown in the previous crop and it is sufficiently established.

- Permitted crops in a sown mix are rye, barley, oats, phacelia, vetch, mustard and Lucerne ONLY.
- Stubble turnips and kale are not included as these are usually grazed.
- Cover crops must be planted by 1st October and retained until at least 15th January following.
- Catch crops must be planted by 31st August and be retained until at least 1st October.
- One hectare of catch or cover crop provides

0.30 hectares of EFA.

- These crops will count towards the EFA obligation for the year in which grown (i.e. to count for 2015 the crops would need to be planted in autumn 2015).
- There are no restrictions on the management of these crops outside the retention periods so grazing can take place.

iv. Nitrogen fixing crops

Such crops include legumes grown as arable crops such as beans or peas, and also pasture legumes (e.g. clover, lucerne & sanfoin) if grown in their own right and not as a mixture including non-legumes.

- One hectare of nitrogen fixing crop provides 0.70 hectares of EFA.
- There are no restrictions on pesticide applications.
- The crop must be in the ground during the inspection period (1st May – 30th June).
- Evidence required in the event of crop failure is yet to be decided.

v. Hedges

As per the table above, a 1,000 metre length of hedge will be deemed to qualify as equivalent to 10,000 sq m – or 1.0ha – of land area. To qualify:-

- A hedge must be a continuous length of at least 20m; this can include gaps (including gateways) so long as each individual gap is not more than 20m. There is no limit as to how many gaps there can be. There is no minimum or maximum width or height for a hedge. (Thus a newly planted hedge will qualify).
- A hedge can have a continuous length of less than 20m where it meets another hedge at each end (at an intersection or junction).
- The hedge must be located on or next to eligible arable land which is at the farmer's disposal. If the only thing separating the hedge from the arable land is a feature eligible for BPS (e.g. a ditch of less than 2m wide) the hedge can count as an EFA feature. If the hedge is separated from the arable land by an ineligible feature (e.g. a stone track or a ditch more than 2m wide) it cannot. (However, if the other side of the hedge

immediately adjoins the claimant's arable land, the hedge can be counted).

If the farmer has arable land on both sides of the hedge at his disposal he can claim on the whole hedge (i.e. 10 sq m per metre run). If both sides of the hedge are at his disposal but there is arable land on one side and non-arable crop/land on the other side he can nevertheless still claim the full rate (of 10 sq.m); but if the farmer is responsible for the arable side only he can only claim on one half of the hedge (ie 5 sq m per metre run).

Where a hedge adjoins a field in which other EFA features also exist and immediately adjoin, the hedge contribution must be reduced by 2.5m² per m of hedge.

DEFRA initially announced that farmers claiming hedges towards EFA would experience a delay in receipt of their Basic Payment, but have since stated that they are planning an approach that would mean farmers choosing to use hedges as part of their EFA will not be at a disadvantage in the timing of their payments.

c. Crop Diversification (CD)

- A farmer with arable land must:
 - cultivate at least two crops if the arable land area exceeds 10 hectares but is less than 30 hectares, or
 - cultivate at least three crops if the arable land area exceeds 30 hectares.
- The main crop must not cover more than 75% of the area, and the two main crops together must not exceed 95% of the area. Winter and spring planted crops of the same species will qualify as different crops; temporary grassland/forage and fallow land will qualify as arable crops. However beware that certain brassica crops (e.g. cabbage and cauliflower) are treated as the same crop.
- These two or three crops must be in place for the "inspection period", namely 1st May to 30th June. If a crop has been harvested prior to 30th June, the existence of a stubble or crop residue can provide evidence of the crop concerned. Some farmers will opt to grow late sown crops or crops with a short cropping period: the type of evidence farmers will need to provide in this situation is still under discussion. The event of

crop failure is also under discussion.

- For both CD and EFA purposes, temporary grass counts as an arable crop; land with outdoor pigs is classified as temporary grassland (unless so used for more than five years). Thus “arable land” includes land cultivated for crop production (including combinable crops, roots, maize, vegetables, cut flowers, bulbs and soft fruit), fallow land and temporary grassland – but excludes permanent grassland and permanent crops.

d. Permanent grassland

- Permanent grassland is land which has been used to grow grasses or other herbaceous forage (that has not been included in the crop rotation) for five years or more. It can be self-seeded or sown. It will automatically be recorded as permanent grassland on the sixth SPS/BPS application on which it is recorded as grass/herbaceous forage. Herbaceous forage does not include forage maize, kale or fodder root crops, all of which are arable crops for this purpose. The area of land under permanent grassland (previously referred to as permanent pasture) must not deviate by more than 5% from the area declared in 2012 – as adjusted to include additional areas as recorded in 2015. (This calculation will exclude land lost to afforestation, other than Christmas trees, short rotation coppice or trees for energy production). DEFRA has decided to regulate this at national level – as opposed to regional or individual farm level which will render this requirement relatively unlikely to be infringed. If it is, farmers who have ploughed up permanent grassland will be required to re-establish it. You should note that this obligation is in addition to the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (EIA Regs), which already limit the ability to plough up or improve permanent pasture. Farmers with permanent grassland in areas covered by the Wild Birds and/or Habitats Directive (Natura 2000) must not plough such land.

e. Greening and environmental schemes: ‘Double funding’

- There is potential for the new EFA obligations

to overlap with existing Entry Level and Higher Level Stewardship Scheme obligations. Where this occurs, there can be no “double funding”. However DEFRA had already undertaken not to penalise farmers opting to enter into stewardship schemes before the October 2011 Reform announcement was made. Consequently, farmers with land in an HLS scheme, or an HLS scheme underpinned by ELS, or with an ELS scheme which commenced before 1st January 2012 will be permitted to continue those schemes (with full payment) and also to count relevant qualifying features towards their EFA obligation.

- Farmers with an ELS agreement (incl. OELS) starting on/after 1st January 2012 that contained any of the double funded arable options will see a reduction in the value of their ELS agreement unless they opted in autumn 2014 to amend their agreement or to exit the scheme.

5. Cross Compliance

- Farmers have become familiar with Cross Compliance since 2005, and these rules – which were the main condition over and above basic eligibility of claiming SPS – are continued into the BPS.
- They are a set of minimum requirements covering the environment, food safety and animal welfare, and payment of the BPS will be conditional on meeting the rules.
- Farmers are required to keep their land in “Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition” (GAEC), and comply with the “Statutory Management Requirements” (SMRs). Most rules have been carried over from SPS but there are some changes, the main ones for 2015 being:
 - 1) The removal of the requirement to keep a Soil Protection Review booklet (formerly GAEC 1). This has been replaced by a set of ‘Soil Protection Standards’ (GAEC 4, 5 and 6).
 - 2) The removal of the requirement to control injurious and invasive weeds (formerly GAEC 11), due to changes in the ‘EC framework’ and as there is deemed to be sufficient incentive for farmers to control the weeds in any case, and the Weeds Act 1959 remains in place in respect of injurious weeds.

- 3) The removal of the GAEC relating to Agricultural Land not in agricultural production (formerly GAEC 12), due to changes in 'EC framework'. This will simplify management of such land for farmers.
- 4) The extension of the no-cutting period for hedgerows to the end of August (formerly GAEC 15), in order to provide greater protection for farmland birds. DEFRA has confirmed that it is likely to grant derogations to farmers who would find this a problem, e.g. to fit in with early OSR drilling.
- 5) The removal of SMR 3 sewage sludge and SMRs 13,14,15 relating to various animal diseases.

For full details please refer to DEFRA's 2015 Guide to Cross Compliance in England.

6. Rural development

a. Environmental Stewardship Scheme

- Environmental Stewardship (ES) closed to new applications in 2013 (except in limited circumstances where a follow-on agreement was invited in 2014 on expiry of a CSS or ESA agreement).
- Existing ES agreements will continue until their expiry date with one major change being introduced in 2015: agreement holders will be required to complete an annual claim form, with a deadline for submission of 15th May. The expectation is that the claim form will be similar to that required under the previous Countryside Stewardship regime and so is not expected to be complex or onerous to complete. Natural England will issue a claim form to each agreement holder in Spring 2015.
- In addition, for those agreements overseen or managed by an agent, a new agent authorisation form will need to be completed and submitted along with the annual claim form. The inference being that all previous agent authorisations will be rendered invalid at some point in spring 2015.
- Anyone with an existing ES agreement but no BPS claim will have to register on CAPIS before 15th May 2015, this is in order to confirm to the RPA that their land is correctly registered.

b. Countryside Stewardship Scheme

- The new Rural Development Programme started on 1st January 2015 with three main objectives for England:
 - Managing the environment
 - Increasing the productivity and competitiveness of farming and forestry businesses
 - Promoting rural economic growth
- Environmental Stewardship, English Woodland Grant Scheme and Catchment Sensitive Farming will be replaced by 'Countryside Stewardship'. Countryside Stewardship will contribute around £900 million to rural businesses. The scheme will be more target specific than previous schemes, the application process will be rigorous and applicants will have to justify why they should be eligible, e.g. how their proposal will benefit the wider environment. Each application will be scored using priorities highlighted in the national target framework.
- Countryside Stewardship will have 2 tiers:
 - Higher Tier similar to Higher Level Stewardship
 - Mid Tier to replace Entry Level Stewardship
- In addition, there will be a lower tier of one-off capital grants for hedgerow and boundary restoration and maintenance of up to £5,000 per business. Capital grants will also be available for woodland creation, woodland management plans, feasibility studies, and for water quality improvement projects.
- The application window is due to open in July 2015. Successful applications will convert into an agreement starting on 1st January 2016. Most agreements will be 5 years, except for the small scale capital grant agreements. At the time of writing we are waiting to receive more detail on the targeting and scoring of applications.

Dates for 2015 Basic Payment Scheme

January

- 1st Start of Basic Payment scheme year.
- 1st End of closed period for applying high N organic manure to grassland and tillage land with shallow or sandy soils (but quantity restrictions for application of high N manures still apply) (SMR 1).
- 1st Start of period for calculating the annual livestock manure limit. Risk map must be completed if you spread organic manure on your holding. (GAEC 1 & SMR 1).
- 1st Fallow land to be in place from this date (EFA).
- 16th End of closed period for spreading manufactured nitrogen fertilisers on grassland and tillage land. (SMR 1).

February

- 1st End of closed period for applying high N organic manure to grassland and tillage land on all soil types (but quantity restrictions for application of high N manures still apply) (SMR 1).
- 28th End of quantity restrictions for applications of high N organic manures (SMR 1).

March

- 1st From this date, you must not cut hedgerows or trees (although coppicing and hedge laying can continue until 30th April (GAEC 7A and 7C), or cast up traditional hedgebanks (GAEC 7A).

April

- 1st The Environment Agency will make abstraction return forms available to those with winter, or all year round, abstraction licences. These need to be returned within 28 days. (GAEC 2).
- 1st You must not burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium on land other than in upland areas, from this date. (GAEC 6).
- 16th You must not burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium in upland areas from this date. (GAEC 6).
- 30th You must have recorded the number of 'specified' livestock kept on the farm during

the previous calendar year and calculated the amount of N they produced. (SMR 1).

May

- 1st You must not carry out hedge laying or coppicing from this date (GAEC 7A).
- 1st Nitrogen fixing crops to be in place from this date (EFA).
- 1st Start of cropping and fallow period for Crop Diversification rules.
- 15th Final date for the RPA to complete entitlement transfers effective for the 2015 claim. Sales and leases of entitlements are expected to take 24 hours when notified online, but transfers by inheritance or sublease will take longer.
- 15th Closing date for BPS applications (without incurring penalties).
- 31st Final date for making certain amendments to your 2015 BPS application without incurring penalties.

June

- 9th Final date for submitting, or amending your 2015 BPS application (penalties will be incurred).
- 30th Single Payment window closes - all payments should have been received for the previous (2014) claim year.
- 30th Fallow land and nitrogen fixing crops may be removed after this date (EFA).
- 30th End of cropping and fallow period for Crop Diversification rules.

July

- 1st Application window opens for new Higher and Mid Tier Countryside Stewardship agreements.

August

- 1st Start of closed period for applying high N organic manure to tillage land on shallow or sandy soils except where crops will be planted before 15th September. (SMR 1).
- 1st Farmers who have been granted a derogation under GAEC 7A will be able to cut hedges from this date.
- 31st Catch crops to be established by this date (EFA).

September

- 1st You can cut hedgerows and trees from this date (GAEC 7A and 7C), and cast up traditional hedgebanks (GAEC 7A).
- 1st Start of closed period for:
- applying manufactured nitrogen fertiliser to tillage land (SMR 1), and
 - spreading high N organic manure on grassland with shallow and sandy soils (SMR 1).
- 15th Start of closed period for applying manufactured nitrogen fertiliser to grassland (SMR 1).
- 1st- 30th The exchange rate used to convert Euros to Sterling for the 2015 BPS will be the average of the European Central Bank rates set over the month of September 2015.

October

- 1st You may burn heather, rough grass, bracken, gorse or vaccinium on land in upland areas from this date (GAEC 6).
- 1st Cover crops to be established by this date (EFA).
- 1st Catch crops may be removed from this date (EFA).
- 1st Start of closed period for spreading high N organic manure to tillage land on soils which are not shallow or sandy (SMR 1).
- 15th Start of closed period for spreading high N organic manure to grassland on soils which are not shallow or sandy (SMR 1).
- 31st The Environment Agency will make abstraction return forms available to those with summer abstraction licences. These need to be returned within 28 days. (GAEC 2).

November

- 1st You may burn heather, rough grass, gorse or vaccinium on land other than in upland areas from this date. (GAEC 6).

December

- 1st You need to carry out your annual inventory of sheep. (SMR 8).
- 1st Basic Payment window opens (95% of Single payments under the 2014 scheme were paid in the first week of December 14).
- 31st End of Basic Payment Scheme year.

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