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AHW11: Cultivated areas for arable plants (updated for SFI26)

What you must do to get paid for this SFI26 action and advice on how to do it.

From: **Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs)** and **Rural Payments Agency (/government/organisations/rural-payments-agency)**

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Grant type: **Sustainable Farming Incentive (/find-funding-for-land-or-farms?farming_grant_type=sustainable-farming-incentive)**

Land type: **Arable (/find-funding-for-land-or-farms?land_types=arable)**

Areas of interest: **Integrated pest management (/find-funding-for-land-or-farms?areas_of_interest=integrated-pest-management)**, **Pollinators (/find-funding-for-land-or-farms?areas_of_interest=pollinators-and-wildlife)** and **Wildlife (/find-funding-for-land-or-farms?areas_of_interest=wildlife)**

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This is a Sustainable Farming Incentive 2026 (SFI26) action. Read the SFI26 scheme information (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-2026-sfi26) to understand what you're required to do under an SFI26 agreement and how to apply.

Select 'See all updates' at the start of this page to find out how this action has changed for SFI26 compared with SFI24.

For SFI24 actions, read the SFI24 agreement holder's information (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/agreement-holders-information-for-sfi24-and-re-opened-sfi24).

Duration

3 years

How much you'll be paid

£660 per hectare (ha) per year

Action's aim

This action's aim is that there are fallow cultivated margins or plots with:

- a fine surface suitable for wild arable plants to establish from the soil seed bank when they're cultivated in the spring or autumn
- natural vegetative cover throughout the growing season until the end of the summer

The purpose of this is to:

- allow scarce and declining wild arable plants to increase their populations over time
- provide areas of less densely vegetated ground for insects, such as bumblebees, solitary bees and hoverflies
- provide summer foraging habitats for farmland birds, such as grey partridge and turtle dove

Where you can do this action

You can do this action on agricultural land located below the moorland line that's:

- an eligible land type (as defined in section 5.1.1 'Eligible land types' (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-2026-sfi26/sfi26-scheme-rules-and-guidance#check-your-land-is-eligible-for-sfi-actions))
- registered with an eligible land cover on your digital maps

- declared with a land use code (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/land-use-codes-rural-payments/land-use-codes) which is compatible with the eligible land cover

Eligible land

Eligible land type	Eligible land cover	Compatible land use code
Arable land used to grow crops	Arable land	Land use codes for arable crops or leguminous and nitrogen-fixing crops
Temporary grassland	Arable land	TG01
Arable land lying fallow	Arable land	FA01

25% limited area action

This is a ‘limited area’ action. The total eligible area you enter into any combination of one or more of the ‘limited area’ actions must not be more than 25% of the total agricultural area of your farm. Read section 4.5 ‘Limited area SFI actions’ (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-2026-sfi26/sfi26-scheme-rules-and-guidance#about-sfi-actions) in the SFI26 scheme information for details (including a list of the ‘limited area’ actions).

Eligibility of protected land

Sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs): Eligible – you must:

- give notice to Natural England (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/request-permission-for-works-or-an-activity-on-an-sssi) to get SSSI consent before the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) offer you an SFI26 agreement

- have received SSSI consent from Natural England before you do this action (read section 10.1 'SSSI consent' (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-2026-sfi26/sfi26-scheme-rules-and-guidance#get-any-regulatory-consents-before-you-do-your-sfi-actions) in the SFI26 scheme information for more details)

Historic and archaeological features: Eligible – you must get an SFI HEFER before you do this action (read section 5.3 'Land with historic or archaeological features' (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-2026-sfi26/sfi26-scheme-rules-and-guidance#check-your-land-is-eligible-for-sfi-actions) in the SFI26 scheme information to find out how to do this).

Available area you can enter into this action

Total or part of the available area in a land parcel. It's your responsibility to check that the area you enter is eligible for this action.

You must do this action on the area entered into your SFI26 agreement. If something happens which means you cannot complete this action on some or all of the area, you must tell the RPA in writing as soon as possible. Read section 12.2 'What to do if you cannot comply with your agreement' (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-2026-sfi26/sfi26-scheme-rules-and-guidance#complying-with-your-sfi26-agreement) in the SFI26 scheme information to find out how to do this.

Rotational or static action

This action is rotational or static. This means you can either:

- move its location for the second and third years of this action's duration
- do it at the same location each year of this action's duration

What to do

You must create a fallow margin or plot by cultivating it in the spring or autumn in a way that can reasonably be expected to achieve this action's aim.

You must manage the fallow cultivated margin or plot in a way that can reasonably be expected to achieve this action's aim.

You must not do the following on the fallow cultivated margin or plot:

- disturb it before the end of the summer months (usually around the end of August)
- use it as regular access tracks for vehicles
- apply any fertilisers, manures or lime
- apply pesticides, except for herbicides to weed wipe or spot treat to control injurious weeds (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/identification-of-injurious-weeds), invasive non-native species (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prevent-the-spread-of-harmful-invasive-and-non-native-plants#types-of-invasive-non-native-plants), nettles or bracken

You can use an existing cultivated fallow margin or plot to get paid for this action if it:

- meets this action's requirements
- is not already being paid for under another environmental land management scheme action or option, such as CS option AB11 (cultivated areas for arable plants)

When to do it

You must do this action each year of its 3-year duration.

If this action's start date means it's too late for you to create the fallow margin or plot, you must create it within 12 months of its start date.

In the final year of this action's duration, you must do the action until the end of the summer months or this action's end date, whichever is earlier.

How to do it

It's up to you how you do this action, as long as you:

- follow this action's requirements – these are identified by a 'must'
- do the action in a way that could reasonably be expected to achieve this action's aim

You may find it helpful to read the 'advice to help you do this action', but it's not part of this action's requirements.

Evidence to keep

You must keep evidence to show what you've done to complete this action, such as:

- field operations at a land parcel level and associated invoices
- photographs or other documentation

If it's not clear that you've done this action in a way that could reasonably be expected to achieve its aim, we may ask for this evidence.

You must supply the evidence if we ask for it.

Other actions or options you can do on the same area as this action

You can do the following actions or options on the same area in a land parcel as this action.

Scheme	Action or option codes
SFI 2026 actions	AGF1, AGF2, AHW6, CSAM2, OFC3, OFC4, OFM4, OFM5, PRF1, PRF2, SOH1
SFI 2024 actions	AGF1, AGF2, AHW6, CIPM1, CNUM1, CSAM1, CSAM2, OFC3, OFC4, OFM4, OFM5, PRF1, PRF2, SOH1
SFI 2023 actions	IPM1, NUM1, SAM1, SAM2
CSHT actions from 2025	CAB2, CAGF1, CAGF2, CAGF3, CAGF4, CHS3, CHS9, CSP13, CSP14, CSP15, CSP20, CSP21, CSP9, CWS1, CWS3
CS options	AB2, AB9, HS3, HS9, OR3, OR4, OT3, OT4, SW5, SW6
ES options	No ES revenue options

If an action or option cannot be located on the same area, you may be able to do it on a different area in the same land parcel. Read section 5.6 'Land that's already in other funding schemes or grants' (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-2026-sfi26/sfi26-scheme-rules-and-guidance#check-your-land-is-eligible-for-sfi-actions) in the SFI26 scheme information for more details.

You can do the following actions or options on the eligible boundaries of a land parcel entered into this action:

- SFI 2026 actions: CHRW2, BND1, BND2 and WBD2
- SFI 2024 actions: CHRW1, CHRW2, CHRW3, BND1, BND2 and WBD2
- SFI 2023 actions: HRW1, HRW2, HRW3
- CSHT actions: CHRW4
- CS options: BE3 (management of hedgerows)

Advice to help you do this action

The following advice may help you to do this action, but it's not part of this action's requirements.

Choosing the right location

When you establish the fallow cultivated margin or plot, by law you cannot cultivate or apply fertilisers or pesticides to land within 2 metres (m) of the centre of a hedgerow. Read the guidance on Hedgerow management rules; buffer strips (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hedgerow-management-rules-buffer-strips#buffer-strip-rules) to understand how these rules apply to you.

It's usually best to locate cultivated areas for arable plants along south-facing headlands. This will help to:

- allow more desirable arable plants to germinate, flower and set seed
- provide better foraging for insects, such as wild pollinators

Wild arable plants are more likely to establish on cultivated areas which are:

- around the edges of fields
- next to old farm tracks
- adjacent to boundary features, such as hedgerows

Using a cultivated margin or plot that's up to around 6 metres (m) wide will usually work well for this action.

You could also consider using fields with a long history of cultivation, with old grass margins that were previously arable.

Some of the more common species of arable plants are good 'indicator' species. They indicate the potential of an area to hold rich arable flora in the soil seed bank.

Controlling weeds on your margins or plots

To help control and prevent a build-up of undesirable weeds, you can:

- rotate the cultivated margins or plots around your farm
- vary cultivation timing and depth – this can also provide suitable conditions for germinating arable plants in the spring and autumn

To prevent seeding of undesirable weeds (such as wild oats and creeping thistle), you can top at a height of around 30 centimetres (cm). It's best to do this during the growing season, as many of the desirable arable plant species are shorter than this.

To control weeds such as black-grass, brome, couch, common ragwort and thistles, you can:

- use targeted application equipment (such as a knapsack, hand-lance or weed wiper) to apply herbicide by weed wiping or spot treating herbicide during the spring and summer
- cultivate the land before you establish the cultivated area in the spring or autumn
- carry out a broadacre application of non-selective herbicide before you establish the cultivated area in the spring or autumn

If grass weeds become a problem, you can create a stale autumn seedbed and cultivate it in mid-March to help control them. It's advisable to not do this more frequently that once every 3 years. This is particularly relevant on heavy clay sites. Ploughing can also be useful for controlling grass weeds.

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