Policy context for Soil in Environmental Land Management (ELM)



25 Year Environment Plan

Sustainably managed soils by 2030.

Agriculture Act 2020: The Secretary of State may give financial assistance for or in connection with protecting or improving the quality of soil.

(Environment Act 2021)

Environmental Land Management (ELM)

Sits within the Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024

Tier I: Sustainable Farming
Incentive (SFI)
Improving soil health

Going ahead with payment update expected in the new year

Tier II: Local Nature Recovery

Improving soil health across farms at local scale

Not fully developed; current focus on Countryside Stewardship

Tier III: Landscape Recovery

Improving soil health at landscape scale through long-term projects

Indirect benefits from species and water quality projects

Arable and horticultural soils

Introductory (£22/hectare)

Intermediate (£40/hectare)

Improved Grassland

Introductory (£28/ hectare)

Intermediate (£58/ hectare)

Moorland

Introductory (£10.30/ hectare)

Advanced Expected 2024

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-full-guidance/sustainable-farming-incentive-full-guidance

Sustainable Farming Incentive – actions and payments



Arable and horticultural soils

Introductory (£22/hectare)

- Complete a soil assessment and produce a soil management plan
- Test soil organic matter
- Add organic matter to all land in the standard at least once during the 3-year SFI standards agreement
- Have green cover on at least 70% of land in the standard over winter

Intermediate (£40/hectare)

- First 3 introductory measures +
- Have green cover on at least 50% of land in this level of the standard over winter and multi-species cover crops on an additional 20% of the land

Improved Grassland

Introductory (£28/hectare)

- Complete a soil assessment and produce a soil management plan
- Test soil organic matter
- Minimise bare ground by having no more than 5% of the total area of land entered into the standard left bare over winter

Intermediate (£58/hectare)

- All Introductory measures
- Establish and maintain herbal leys on at least 15% of land in this level of the standard
- Advanced standard expected 2023

Moorland

Introductory (£10.30/hectare)

- Identify and record the soil and vegetation types and condition, and presence of historic and archaeological features
- Assess the public goods the moorland is already providing
- Identify opportunities to maintain or enhance the public goods provided by the moorland

Example guidance on the actions

Produce soil management plan

- soil type, structure and composition
- risks and problems that need to be addressed
- how you currently manage the area
- proposed management actions to improve soil health

Test and add organic matter

- take soil samples and analyse, which will usually be done by a commercial laboratory
- apply organic manure
- use green manures, catch crops or cover crops
- chop or leave, or incorporate, straw
- introduce grass or herbal leys into an arable rotation
- include legume species or legume rich mixes in rotations

Details of soil actions found via

- AHDB characteristics of different soils
- Natural England's Technical Information Note about soil texture
- · Environment Agency's 'think soils'
- SRUC Visual Evaluation of Soil Structure (VESS)