

 Riverbank House, Bideford, Devon EX39 2QG
 farming@northdevonplus.co.uk
 01237 428 834



Pre-application SFI 2026 Preparation Checklist

What you can do before scheme information is released

- Register or verify your business and land on Rural Payments Service
- Verify contact details on Rural Payment Service
- Update digital-map land details (field parcels, areas, land covers, use codes)
- Ensure you (or your agent) has the correct permissions on your Rural Payments Service to “submit” for “Environmental Land Based Scheme (Applications)”

Before You Apply

- Familiarise yourself with scheme rules and guidance (review SFI handbook and GOV.UK guidance) – ensure you understand what you are signing up for.

Land & Parcel Checks

- Confirm eligible land cover and use codes for selected actions
- Measure boundary features accurately using mapping tool (record both sides or half as required)

Eligibility & Actions Selection

- Answer eligibility questions correctly
- Review and choose suitable actions – discuss with Farm Support Services or your agent if you require advice!
- Plan commitment durations (3 or 5 years – action dependent)

Application Timeline & Declarations

- When SFI launch date is known – schedule time to complete your application (or to meet with an agent to complete on your behalf).
- Allow plenty of undisturbed time to complete, and double check the information submitted.
- Prepare for annual and rotational declarations (typically submitted during last two months of the annual agreement)

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Financial & Stacking Strategy

- Understand payment rates for each action (typically listed as pounds per hectare, pounds per 100m or pounds per unit)
- Explore stacking options with other schemes (Countryside Stewardship, Landscape Recovery), and different supplementary SFI actions that can be utilised to boost 'base payments'.

Additional Preparation

- Maintain good record-keeping systems (e.g. field records, invoices, photos)
- Engage advisory support where required (Natural England, Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer, Farm Support Services)
- Plan your finances - consider upfront costs (e.g. establishing seed mix) and cash flow (SFI has typically been paid quarterly in arrears, with first payment received at the start of month 4 after agreement commences).

Final Pre-Submission Review

- All digital map changes approved
- Parcel data, areas, and use codes accurate
- Selected actions match eligible land areas
- Permissions and contact information up to date
- Plan aligned with financial and compliance goals

Disclaimer

The advice given is of a general nature and is provided for general guidance and assistance. It is not intended to advise or instruct you on the specific requirements of your particular business. Accordingly, we will not accept liability for loss or damage suffered by or another party as a result of reliance being placed on the information supplied. For the purposes of this disclaimer, the word 'liability' included (but is not limited to) liability in tort (including negligence), liability in contract, liability for breach of statutory duty and liability for consequential loss.