UTASS BRIEFING - 15th September 2026

SFI 2026 – Window 2: What You Need to Know

The second application window for the **Sustainable Farming Incentive 2026 (SFI26)** is expected to open on **22 September 2026**.

Unlike Window 1, **Window 2 will be open to all eligible farmers and land managers in England**, including those with existing environmental agreements.

The Key Points

- **Funding is limited.** Window 2 has a £180m budget, plus any funding left from Window 1. There is **no fixed closing date** – it will depend on how quickly the budget is taken up.
- **One SFI26 agreement per farm business (SBI)**, with a maximum value of **£100,000 per year**.
- **Already in SFI, Countryside Stewardship or Environmental Stewardship?** You may still be able to apply but check the rules around overlapping land and actions.
- **Check your RPA maps now.** Make sure land parcels, areas and land cover are correct before starting an application.
- **Be ready to apply.** With limited funding and no fixed closing date, it makes sense to have your options considered before Window 2 opens.

Is your existing agreement ending soon?

A useful change for Window 2 is **Start an Application Early (SAE)**.
This means some farmers will be able to start an SFI26 application **before their existing agreement ends**, rather than having to wait.
This applies to eligible agreements ending by **28 February 2027**, including:

- **SFI23** agreements ending between 30 September 2026 and 28 February 2027
- **Countryside Stewardship Mid Tier** agreements ending 31 December 2026
- **Legacy CS Higher Tier** agreements ending 31 December 2026
- **Environmental Stewardship HLS** agreements ending by 28 February 2027

Your new SFI26 agreement will not start until the relevant existing agreement has finished.

A note for those with legacy Countryside Stewardship agreements

If your SFI26 application involves a legacy Countryside Stewardship agreement, Natural England (NE) may need to be involved, particularly where SSSI land is included. In some cases, this could prevent or delay an SFI26 application from progressing.

NE should have contacted affected agreement holders, but this does not always happen. If you think this may apply to you, speak to NE as soon as possible to understand your options before submitting an SFI26 application.

It is also worth discussing whether Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier (CSHT) may be a better option, as payment rates for some actions are significantly higher.

PLEASE TURNOVER

What should you do now?

Check your RPA details and maps, review when any existing agreements finish and start thinking about which SFI26 actions will genuinely work for your farm.

Don’t choose actions on payment rate alone. Think about how they fit with your **rotation, livestock, cropping and day-to-day management**, as well as the scheme requirements.

If you have an agreement ending soon, check whether the **Start an Application Early** arrangements apply to you.

For help or advice on anything in this briefing, or other queries, please contact the UTASS Farm Support Team on 01833 641010 or info@utass.org