



The Basic Payment Scheme in Northern Ireland – An Introduction

Introduction

The Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) is the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Northern Ireland (DARDNI) replacement for the Single Payment Scheme (SPS). It will be the main source of direct farm support payments in Northern Ireland together with the Greening Payment and the Young Farmer's Scheme. We are setting out the main points here.

Headlines

- It will be open to active farmers (definition below) and will be similar to the Single Farm Payment Scheme
- You must have at least 3 Hectares of eligible land together with at least 3 entitlements.
- Entitlements will be confiscated if not used for 2 consecutive years.
- You must comply with the Greening requirements.
- It is capped at a maximum of €150 000 in any one year

Eligibility

To be eligible for BPS DARD requires you to be an active farmer. You will be required to provide evidence for this in the form of farm accounts, invoices and receipts, bank statements, contract rearing agreements, etc. This active farmer test means BPS payments on land in conacre agreements will typically be available to the tenant and not the landlord.

Scrub is not eligible and there is a maximum density of 50 trees per hectare for claims.

Regional Payments

A single region support system is to be used.

Entitlements

- To claim BPS you must have 'entitlements'.
- Permanent grassland including grazed heather is fully eligible with no reductions.
- DARD will establish a national reserve created from a reduction in funds for the BPS.
- This reserve will be available for new entrants and young farmers.



Obligations

Cross-compliance – All farmers claiming BPS must comply with the cross-compliance codes of good practice. These are under two sections; Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) and the codes of Good Agricultural and Environment Condition (GAEC). More detail [here](#).

Greening – this is the main change from the Single Payment Scheme. Farmers will have to comply with new Greening measures to qualify for 30% of the BPS payment.

- Greening rules are concerned with retaining permanent grassland, crop diversification and Ecological Focus areas (EFA's)
- EFA's will include fallow land, agro-forestry, short rotation coppice, afforested land, nitrogen fixing crops and landscape features such as hedges ditches and stone walls.
- Organically certified land automatically qualifies for the greening payment.

Extras

Young farmers - (No more than 40 years old in the year of application), can apply for a top-up payment of approximately 25% on up to 90 hectares of eligible land. You must have at least a Level 2 qualification in Agriculture.

For more details visit the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development web site www.dardni.gov.uk

Contact

Tim Bevan. Soil Association. TBevan@soilassociation.org 0117 914 2417

Tommy Copestake