

Dame Angela Eagle DBE MP  
Minister of State (Minister for Food Security and Rural Affairs)

27 January 2026

Dear Minister,

### **Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) 2026**

In January 2026, the Secretary of State confirmed that a new SFI offer would be launched to applicants this summer, following its closure in March 2025. The SFI scheme is an essential part of the ELM suite of schemes, capable of driving widespread uptake of on-farm actions that deliver positive results for our natural environment, including reduced pesticides use. However, prior to its closure, SFI was not meeting its considerable potential and significant improvements in scheme design are needed to deliver the Government's binding nature targets.

The need to reduce pesticide use on farmland has been recognised in multiple policy fora, most recently the UK Pesticides National Action Plan (NAP) 2025, which commits to targets to reduce use and associated harms. The NAP also highlights the critical role Integrated Pest Management (IPM), supported via the SFI scheme, must play in delivering these targets. The commitment to reduce the harms from pesticide overuse, and emphasise IPM as a delivery tool, was also echoed in the Government's revised EIP targets, published in December 2025.

As the detail of the SFI26 offer is being considered and finalised, we wish to highlight the following policy recommendations.

#### **1. SFI 'packages' of actions that work synergistically to secure pesticide use reductions.**

Good Integrated Pest Management (IPM) requires a whole-farm approach to land management, recognising the interdependencies between areas of habitat and areas managed for agricultural production. Many pest problems, and associated pesticide treatments, can be avoided through sensitive habitat creation and management that increases the abundance and diversity of beneficial insects that carry out natural pest control.

One of the main flaws of SFI to date has been the full free choice of which actions to apply for and adopt. This has meant that the optimum combination of habitat and land management actions are rarely undertaken for any given outcome. The new SFI26 offer is an opportunity

to correct this flaw, creating packages of actions such as tussocky grass buffers, flower rich margins and beetle banks.

## **2. Whole-farm management planning**

In addition to offering coherent packages of actions to support pesticide reduction, a wider requirement to develop a whole-farm management plan would be highly beneficial in SFI and would mirror similar efforts by the Welsh and Scottish Governments to drive whole-farm approaches to habitat creation, management, production and input choices.

This would also have the added benefit of removing the current piecemeal and siloed approach to management planning in SFI which considers a range of issues separately, such as soil, hedgerows, livestock stocking and grazing regimes, and IPM.

## **3. Continued investment in organic land management**

The revised SFI must continue support for conversion to organic and ongoing organic land management, as a third-party verified, holistic system that generates multiple environmental benefits, without synthetic pesticide use.

By supporting whole farm planning and ensuring optimal combination of actions for specific policy outcomes, the revised SFI offer could finally meet its potential to drive widespread, positive change in agricultural land management, for the benefit of nature, farm business viability and resilience, and the public purse.

Yours sincerely,

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