

FARMING AND PROPERTY BULLETIN – OCTOBER 2016

BPS Update

2016 Exchange Rate

The Euro exchange rate applicable to BPS 2016 payments was set on the 30th September 2016. It is the average of the European Central Bank exchange rates set during September 2016 and is €1 = £0.85228.

This is positive news compared with BPS 2015 which saw an exchange rate of €1 = £0.73129.

Financial Discipline Reimbursements

The RPA has announced details of a Financial Discipline refund relating back to the 2014 year. All claimants with a 2015 claim worth more than €2,000 will be reimbursed 1.3% of their 2015 payment value. The first of these were issued in September and you will receive a remittance advice statement stating 'FDM Reimbursement'.

Financial Discipline is applied where it looks as though the CAP budget will be exceeded in a year, to fund a 'Crisis Reserve'. As it was applied in 2014 and the majority not used these refunds are now being made.

2015 RPA Payment Correction Process

Where incorrect payments have been made for the 2015 year and flagged to the RPA by email or letter they have been referred to 'payment reconciliation'. The RPA are currently carrying out correction work on around 14,000 claims. Their aim is to have made the large majority of these payments by the end of the EU financial year on the 15th October 2016.

If you receive a correction payment a letter should be sent to you confirming the RPA has completed the work. A revised claim statement should also be received which should be checked carefully against your 2015 BP5 form. Similarly if the RPA do not believe there is additional work to be carried out on a claim they should write to confirm this. In either case if you notice a further problem with your payment please email the RPA on the following email address: ruralpayments@rpa.gsi.gov.uk.

Pesticide Equipment Inspections

By the 26th November all pesticide equipment over five years old which remains in use must have passed an inspection by the National Sprayer Testing Scheme (NSTS) within the last five years. This rule does not apply to knapsack or handheld sprayers.

An approved list of NSTS inspectors can be found on their website.

From the 26th November 2016 equipment must pass an inspection every five years. This is reducing to every three years from the 26th November 2020.

Equipment that has a 'low scale of use' such as granular applicators and boom sprayers less than 3m wide must pass inspection at least every six years.

Rural Development Funding Post Brexit

Following the treasury statement in August the Chancellor has now confirmed the following regarding Rural Development Payments:

- Guaranteed funding for Rural Development (CAP Pillar 2) Agreements signed after the Autumn Statement. This secures guaranteed funding until the point Brexit takes effect. (Current predictions point towards 2019).
- Where such agreements run beyond the UK's exit from the EU, the required ongoing funding will be met by the government.
- Agreements/projects will need to offer "good value for money" and show "they are in line with domestic strategic priorities".

To summarise the above means funding will be guaranteed for Countryside Stewardship Agreements with a start date of 1st January 2017. We await further information as to funding for future scheme years.

NVZ Reminder

The Nitrate Pollution Prevention Regulations establish closed periods for the application of organic manures containing high levels of Nitrogen (where total nitrogen content in a form easily used by plants exceeds 30%). These manures include slurry, poultry manure, anaerobic digestate and liquid digested sludge and pose a risk to water pollution if spread at certain times of the year.

If your land is within an NVZ you must not spread these manures between:

1. Shallow or sandy soils:
 - Grassland 1st September – 31st December.
 - Arable 1st August – 31st December.
2. All other soils:
 - Grassland 15th October – 31st January.
 - 1st October – 31st January.

The only exemptions to these rules are:

1. If a crop is sown on sandy or shallow tillage land on or before 15th September you may apply organic manure between 1st August and 15th September.
2. If you are an organic farmer or are formally converting to organic applications to a maximum rate of 150kg N/ha will be permitted during the closed period to:
 - Winter oilseed rape and grass between the start of the closed period and the end of October. No more than 40kg N/ha can be spread on grassland at any one time.
 - Asparagus, brassicas, overwintered salad onions and bulb onions can have applications made between the start of the closed period and the end of February. A maximum of 50kg N/ha can be spread on brassicas every four weeks until harvest (the total 150kg N/ha still applies).
 - Other crops on the basis of written advice from a FACTS qualified advisor.

Key Dates to Remember:

- **1st October 2016** – all cover crops for Ecological Focus Areas must be established by this date and retained until at least the 15th January 2017.
- **1st October 2016** – Ecological Focus Area catch crops must be retained until at least this date.
- **26th November 2016** – Pesticide equipment in use must be covered by a certificate issued by the National Sprayer Testing Scheme under the Pesticides National Action Plan.