

SOIL NUTRIENT HEALTH SCHEME

Frequently Asked Questions

JOINING THE SCHEME

1. How do I join the Scheme?

There are a number of options available.

A. Farmers can register for the SNHS via DAERA online services (using their Government Gateway accounts) in a similar way to entering their single application form at the following link:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/services/daera-online-services>

B. Book an appointment in their local DAERA office where trained Customer Service Branch staff will complete the application for them.

C. Authorise your agent to apply on your behalf. An authorization form allowing the agent to complete the SNHS registration can be downloaded here:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/online-agent-authorisation-forms>.

2. Who is eligible for the Scheme?

Farm businesses with a Category 1 Farm Business Identification Number are eligible for the Scheme.

3. I didn't submit a Single Application Form (SAF) in 2022 but have submitted one in 2023. How can I apply?

As the Online registration uses data from the previous year SAF application, you will need to contact the AFBI helpdesk (028 90 255 212 or email SNHS@afbini.gov.uk) with your Business ID and field details.

4. What land within your farm business is eligible for the Scheme?

All land declared on your Single Application Form (SAF), whether owned, taken in conacre or common land.

It is very important that you compare your SNHS registered fields with your most recent SAF application to add or remove any fields which do not match with the current SAF application fields.

5. When do I join the SNHS?

You will only be able to join the SNHS when it is made available in your area. Therefore, it is very important that you apply to the SNHS as soon as it is made available to you.

For farmers with lands in Zone 2, this means they have to join during the registration period which opens in June 2023. The registration period for Zone 2 will run from 26 June 2023 to 31 August 2023.

For farmers with lands in Zone 3 they will have to join during the registration period that will open in 2024, & finally Zone 4 in 2025. Farmers in Zones 3 and 4 will be notified of the specific registration dates when the SNHS is made available in their area.

6. Are there any implications if I choose not to join the SNHS when it is offered to me?

If you choose not to join the SNHS, you may not be eligible for future Farm Sustainability Payment, Farming with Nature or Beef Sustainability Package schemes which may be important income streams for farms. These schemes will have a conditionality attached that you participate in the SNHS to qualify for them.

7. I have already had soil samples taken on my lands. Can I use these to meet the criteria for joining future farm support schemes like the Farm Sustainability Payment?

No. Only soil samples taken through the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme will meet the eligibility criteria for future farm support schemes like the Farm Sustainability Payment, Farming with Nature and Beef Sustainability Package.

8. How will I know if my registration has been successfully received?

Once you have submitted your registration online you will receive a unique application ID number. You should keep that number safe and quote it should you have any queries relating to your registration.

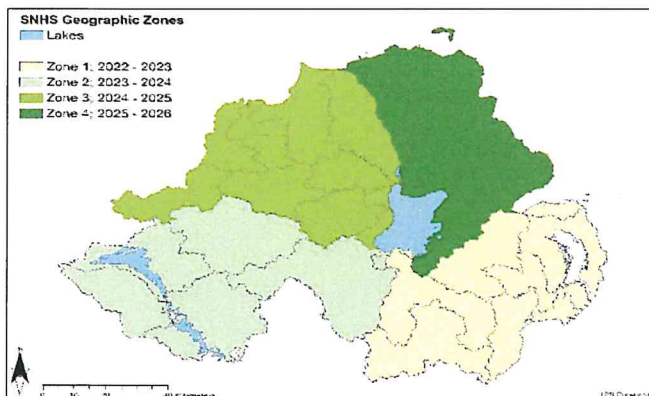
SCHEME BACKGROUND

9. When will the SNHS be available in my area?

- The SNHS is rolling out across NI in stages using a zonal approach, over four years.
- Northern Ireland is divided into four geographic zones with the intention to sample all the farms within a zone in the same year.
- The scheme will be available to farmers with lands in Zone 2 in 2023, Zone 3 in 2024 and then Zone 4 in 2025. AFBI will be in touch with farm businesses directly in each year to notify them how to register via the online system.

10. What are the Zones and why is this approach being used?

Northern Ireland is split into 4 zones, due to the scale of the Scheme. See attached map. The order of the zonal approach has been chosen to coincide with associated scientific research.



11. What information will I receive through the SNHS?

- The SNHS will provide you with accurate, field level information, on soil pH, phosphorus (P), potassium (K), magnesium (Mg), sulphur (S), calcium (Ca) and Loss on Ignition (organic matter) levels. You will also be provided with estimates of the carbon stored in the soils, trees and hedgerows on your farm.
- The information you receive will include hard copy, field level soil analysis reports from NRM (soil analysis contractor), as well as access to digital versions of the analysis reports and corresponding nutrient, runoff risk and carbon farm maps, via your DAERA online services account (Hard copies of the maps can be made available if you don't have access to DAERA online services).

- A full LiDAR survey of NI will be carried out as part of the SNHS and data from this survey will be used to assist in the production of above ground biomass (trees, hedgerows, woody scrub) carbon and runoff risk maps for your farm.
- LiDAR stands for Light Detection and Ranging and it is a remote sensing method that uses light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure distances between the source (in this case an aircraft) and the ground surface and objects on the surface (houses, trees etc).

12. How will the SNHS benefit me?

- The information provided by the Scheme will help you more accurately target the application of nutrients to meet crop need, thereby helping improve efficiency, reduce nutrient waste and increase farm profitability.
- It will also provide you with cutting edge, LiDAR based maps, showing runoff risk areas and 3D imaging of the trees and hedgerows on your farm. In addition, you will receive farm specific estimates of the carbon stored in your soils, trees and hedgerows.

13. Will participation in the SNHS help me to comply with the Nutrient Action Programme (NAP) Regulations?

Yes, the soil analysis provided under the SNHS can be used to prepare a fertilisation plan, which is required under the NAP Regulations if applying chemical phosphate fertiliser to grassland, or high phosphorus manure or anaerobic digestate to any land. The soil analysis results provided under the SNHS can also be used by derogated farms to fulfil NAP Derogation requirements.

SCHEME PROCESS

14. Who will collect the soil samples on my farm?

Your soil samples will be collected free-of-charge by RPS who are the soil sample collection contractor working under the direction of AFBI.

15. Who will be carrying out the soil analysis?

Analysis of soil samples will be carried out by NRM / Cawoods who are the soil analysis contractor working under the direction of AFBI.

16. How long after my samples are taken will I get my soil analysis results?

You will receive your soil sample results normally within 4 to 6 weeks after your soil samples have been collected. Due to logistics and some farms being split over different locations you may receive analysis results at different times. However, when all fields are analysed they will all be available for viewing on line.

17. Will all my fields be soil sampled?

Yes, where practically possible, all the fields 0.1 ha or above on your farm will be sampled free-of charge. This will provide you with a reliable baseline of soil nutrients and carbon estimates for all fields you farm.

18. I have already sampled some of my fields, will you test these again?

Yes we will sample all fields that you farm.

19. What time of year will my soil samples be collected?

Soil samples will primarily be collected during the period running from **November through to February**. Where fields are identified as requiring early sampling (eg winter crops), or not yet having received nutrients or receiving no nutrients, sampling may take place outside of this period.

20. What bio-security measures will be in place to protect my farm during soil sample collection?

Sampling contractors and AFBI staff will be required to adhere to a Bio-Security Protocol during soil sample collection on your farm, including Cleansing & Disinfection of personnel and equipment.

21. How will my soil analysis data be used?

The soil analysis results collected will be used for AFBI research and provided to CAFRE (DAERA) during farmer nutrient management planning training to create a unique nutrient management plan for each farm. It may also be used for administration of new support schemes.

22. Will my individual farm data collected through the SNHS be used for enforcement or regulation purposes against me?

No. Your individual farm data collected through the SNHS **will not** be used by DAERA for enforcement of regulations, data will be protected under the SNHS Privacy notice <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/soil-nutrient-health-scheme-privacy-notice> and GDPR regulations.

SCHEME TRAINING

23. Will I receive training?

Yes. CAFRE Nutrient Management Plan training is available at:

<https://www.cafre.ac.uk/snhs-training>

Assistance with accessing and viewing the online training is available at local DAERA Direct offices. Group training is also available for those who require additional help understanding and creating a Nutrient Management Plan.

24. What will the training involve?

Training is designed to increase your level of understanding and knowledge of the principles of nutrient management, the role of carbon in soil and help you to interpret the soil analysis reports, nutrient and run-off risk maps provided by the SNHS. The training will also provide the skills you require to prepare a Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) which you may need for entry to future DAERA schemes.

If you have any further questions not covered in the FAQ contact the AFBI SNHS Admin team on 02890 255212.