STATUTORY RULES OF NORTHERN IRELAND

2025 No. 162

AGRICULTURE

The Farming for Sustainability Innovation Payments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025

Made - - - -	*2nd October 2025*
Coming into operation	*23rd October 2025*

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs(**a**) with the approval of the Department of Finance(**b**) makes these Regulations in exercise of the powers conferred by section 5(2B) of the Agriculture Act (Northern Ireland) 1949(**c**).

Citation and commencement

1. These Regulations may be cited as the Farming for Sustainability Innovation Payments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 and shall come into operation on 23rd October 2025.

Interpretation

2. In these Regulations–

"applicant" means a farm business which has applied for a payment under these Regulations;

"approved" means approved by the Department;

"the Department" means the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs;

"farm business" means a farm business that holds a Category 1 or 2 farm business identification number registered with the Department;

"hosting event" means an event having the prior approval of the Department, hosted by a farm business for the purpose of facilitating learning;

"hosting payment" is a payment under regulation 3 to a farm business for the provision of facilities and support to facilitate learning;

"innovation farm visit" means a visit to a farm business or other associated venue by a group of members or employees of farm businesses which has been organised and has the prior approval of the Department;

"innovation visit outside Northern Ireland" means a visit to a farm business or other associated venue situated outside Northern Ireland which has been organised and has had prior approval;

(**a**) The Ministry of Agriculture for Northern Ireland became the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland, see the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 c.36 section 40 and Schedule 5 paragraph 8(1); Renamed as the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Departments (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 S.I. 1999/283 (N.I. 1) Article 3(4) and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs by the Departments Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 c.5 (N.I.) section 1(2)

(**b**) The "Ministry of Finance" is now the "Department of Finance"; see regulation 1(4) of the Departments Act (NI) 2016 c.5 (N.I.)

(**c**) 1949 c.2 (N.I.)

"meeting" means an event for the purpose of facilitating learning which can be held either at a farm business or at an pre-approved venue;

"member of the farm business" means a member of a multi-member farm business must be registered with the Department on the list of members of that farm business.

Innovation farm visit hosting payment

3. Subject to regulation 4, the Department shall pay to an applicant a hosting payment of £786 for each hosting event.

Innovation farm visit hosting payments; Hosting requirements

4. A farm business which is responsible for delivering a hosting event must in relation to receiving a hosting payment–

(a) prepare the farm for an approved meeting ensuring that sufficient biosecurity measures and health and safety requirements are met; or

(b) if their farm is not suitable due to biosecurity or health and safety reasons, the farm business must prepare an approved alternative venue, with approved supporting farm performance information, ensuring that sufficient biosecurity measures and health and safety requirements are met; and

(c) collate and present approved farm performance information at a meeting.

5. A person responsible for delivering a hosting event on behalf of a farm business must be–

(a) a member of the farm business; or

(b) an employee of the farm business who–

(i) is at least 18 years of age; and

(ii) employed for at least 16 hours per week by the farm business.

Innovation visit outside Northern Ireland; eligibility criteria

6. A participant in an innovation visit outside Northern Ireland must be–

(a) a member of the farm business; or

(b) an employee of the farm business who–

(i) is at least 18 years of age; and

(ii) employed for at least 16 hours per week by the farm business.

Withholding and recovery of payment

7.—(1) This regulation applies where an application for payment has been approved by the Department and it becomes aware that the applicant–

(a) is not eligible to receive the payment; or

(b) has failed to provide farm performance information in accordance with regulation 4(b) or (c).

(2) Subject to paragraph (3), the Department may–

(a) revoke the approval of the application for payment; and

(b) where the payment has not been made withhold the payment for any part of it; or

(c) where payment has already been made, recover from the applicant an amount equal to the whole or any part of the payment–

(i) as a civil debt; or

(ii) by way of offsetting against any sum otherwise payable to the applicant by the Department.

(3) Before exercising the power under paragraph (2), the Department must by a withdrawal or recovery notice, as is appropriate–

(a) give the applicant a written explanation of the reasons for the proposed action;

(b) afford the applicant the opportunity to make written representations within a reasonable time specified by the Department; and

(c) consider representations made by or on behalf of the applicant within a reasonable time period.

Review of decision

8.—(1) Where the Department rejects an application under these Regulations, in whole or in part, an applicant may apply to the Department for a review of the decision.

(2) An applicant must apply to the Department in writing for a review no later than one month beginning with the date of the notification of the decision to be reviewed and specify–

(a) the name and address of the applicant;

(b) the decision of the Department in respect of which the applicant seeks a review and the date of that decision; and

(c) full particulars of the grounds upon which the review of the decision is sought.

(3) Where an applicant seeks a review under this regulation the Department must review the decision specified.

(4) In reviewing a decision the Department may–

(a) consider any document or other evidence produced by the applicant (whether or not that document or evidence was available at the time of the decision);

(b) invite the applicant to provide such information relevant to the review as it considers appropriate; and

(c) give the applicant or its representative an opportunity to make representations orally or in writing.

(5) Following a review of the decision the Department may–

(a) confirm the decision; or

(b) substitute it for a new decision.

(6) As soon as reasonably practicable after reviewing the decision, the Department must notify the applicant in writing of its decision under paragraph (5) and the reasons for it.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on 2nd October 2025



Richard Johnston
A senior officer of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

The Department of Finance approves the foregoing Regulations

Sealed with the Official Seal of the Department of Finance on 2nd October 2025

L.S.

Patrick Neeson
A senior officer of the Department of Finance

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Regulations)

The Regulations establish the requirements for hosting payments for innovation farm visits and eligibility criteria of innovation visits outside Northern Ireland provided by the Department.

The Scheme–

specifies the amount for payments which may be made and the eligibility criteria to receive payments to farm businesses hosting innovation farm visits (regulations 3 to 5);

specifies the eligibility requirements for applicants applying to the Department to participate an innovation visit outside Northern Ireland (regulation 6);

provides for the Department to withhold or recover payment in specified circumstances (regulation 7); and

provides for the review of a decision to reject an application (regulation 8).

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£6.40

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/id/nisr/2025/162

ISBN 978-0-33-802528-9

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