

Farm Business Improvement Scheme-Capital (FBIS-C)

Tier 1 Tranche 3

Frequently Asked Questions

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October 2020

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1. Key Requirements for Tranche 3 of Tier 1

1.1 What are the requirements for Tier 1 applicants?

Applications to the Scheme must meet all of the following requirements:

- Possession of a valid DAERA Category 1 Farm Business ID number by the Tier 1 closing date which is 4pm on 4 December 2020;
- Completion of 'Making It Safer' Risk Assessment certificate on or after 30 September 2020;
- Completion of a proportionate business plan: for Tier 1, this will be part of the application form;
- Completion of an Indication of Support Letter (bank letter) on or after 30 September 2020.

Further information on the requirements is available in the Tranche 3, Tier 1 Explanatory Booklet: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/fbis-capital-scheme-tier-1-explanatory-booklet

1.2. What is the date by which an applicant must have received a DAERA Category 1 Farm Business ID number in order to be eligible to apply to the Scheme?

In order to submit a completed application to the Scheme, an applicant for Tier 1 must possess a DAERA Category 1 Farm Business ID number by the Tier 1 closing date which is 4pm on 4 December 2020.

1.3 Why is Tier 1 Tranche 3 an online application process?

This is in line with DAERA's Digital Transformation Programme which seeks to deliver better services to customers by using digital services as the primary channel for service delivery. This also helps to run the scheme efficiently from the farmers' perspective as well as minimise DAERA's delivery administration costs.

2. Selection Criteria

2.1 Why is DAERA awarding extra points for age of farmer?

Additional marks are available to young farmers to encourage generational renewal and maximise the benefits of long term investment. For Tier 1, extra points are available for **applicants** aged 40 years or under on 31 October 2020. Note the **applicant** must be one of the persons named under the DAERA Farm Business ID number.

2.2 Why is DAERA awarding extra points for Educational Attainment?

To help ensure investment in the next generation of farmers and those committed to developing themselves and their farm practices, the FBIS-C will favour both young farmers and qualified farmers at the selection stage. There is also a well-established link between Educational Attainment and improved performance at farm level.

2.3 Why is DAERA awarding extra points for applicants who have previously not been successful in Tier 1 or Tier 2?

This is to help ensure that as wide a range of farm businesses as possible can benefit from the scheme. This includes new Tier 1 applicants along with those who have applied previously under Tier 1 or Tier 2 but have been unsuccessful (i.e. those who were never issued a Letter of Offer).

2.4 Why have the marks for banding of eligible items changed?

An additional band has been created, in order to prioritise equipment which will assist in ammonia reduction / mitigation. Items in this new band 1 will receive 46 marks. The marks for bands 2-4 remain as previously, 40 marks for band 2, 34 marks for band 3 and 28 marks for band 4.

2.5 What is the date by which an applicant, who is 40 years old or under, must be named as a member of a farm business to receive extra Selection Criteria points under Tier 1?

An applicant for Tier 1 must have been registered with DAERA as a member of the farm business by the Tier 1 closing date which is 4pm on 4 December 2020

2.6 What is the date by which an applicant must have a Level II qualification or above in agriculture or horticulture?

An applicant must provide proof of Educational Attainment at Letter of Offer stage. This means that an applicant, who is currently studying for a Level II qualification, must have been achieved the qualification prior to accepting a Letter of Offer.

2.7 Which qualifications are eligible for additional points for the Educational Attainment Selection Criterion?

A list of eligible Level II qualifications in agriculture and horticulture is available at: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/fbis-capital-scheme-educational-attainment-level-ii-eligible-qualifications

These qualifications contain the required farm business management content. Other types of qualification which may be held by potential applicants will be assessed to consider the farm business management content of the individual modules upon which the qualification is based and their eligibility to attract additional points.

This list also provides details of qualifications in agriculture which will **NOT** be considered as an appropriate qualification under the Educational Attainment Selection Criterion.

Applicants can check their eligibility for the Educational Attainment Selection Criterion for the Scheme by submitting details of their qualification and modules studied via email to: Industry.TrainingAdmin@daera-ni.gov.uk or by calling the Helpline on 028 9442 6880 or by writing to:

CAFRE
Industry Training Administration
Manor House
45 Tirgracy Road,
Muckamore,
ANTRIM,
County Antrim, BT41 4PS

2.8 Will marks be awarded to an application for *Age of Farmer* and/or *Educational Attainment* if a DAERA registered member from that farm business is not the applicant?

No. Marks for *Age of Farmer* and/or *Educational Attainment* will only be awarded where **the applicant**, as detailed in the FBIS–C Tier 1, Tranche 3 application form, is a DAERA registered member of the farm business and is under 40 years of age or less on 31 October 2020 and/or has an appropriate agricultural or horticultural qualification (Level II or equivalent).

3. General Rules

3.1 Is there a maximum amount of funding that an applicant can apply for in Tier 1 over the Scheme's lifetime?

Yes. The maximum grant for an applicant under Tier 1 is £12,000 (based on £30,000 project costs). However, for tranche 3 and any subsequent tranches, this has been re-set. This means that if you have previously been successful under Tier 1 you can apply again for additional items, up to the overall grant limit of £12,000 for Tier 1, in tranche 3. However, if you exceed the £12,000 grant limit, your application will be ineligible.

3.2 If my project cost is over £30,000, can I submit the application, but only receive the maximum allowable grant of £12,000?

No. Applications cannot exceed the total project cost of £30,000 and maximum allowable grant of £12,000. Please note, the online application will not permit you to exceed the maximum limits.

3.3 If I have applied to Tier 1 Tranche 1 and/or 2 and have been unsuccessful, can I apply to Tier 1 Tranche 3?

Yes.

3.4 If I have applied to Tier 1, Tranche 1 or 2 and have been successful, can I apply to Tier 1, Tranche 3?

If you have previously been successful under Tier 1 you can now apply again for additional items, up to the overall grant limit of £12,000 for Tier 1, in tranche 3.

3.5 Can I apply to Tier 1, Tranche 3 if I am still waiting to find out if I have been successful in my Tier 2, Tranche 1 application?

Yes, you can apply to Tier 1, Tranche 3 whilst awaiting a decision on your Tranche 1, Tier 2 application.

3.6 If I have been unsuccessful in my Tier 2, Tranche 1 application, can I apply to Tier 1, Tranche 3?

Yes, you may apply to Tier 1, Tranche 3.

3.7 Can a successful Tier 2 applicant under Tranche 1 apply again to Tier 1 or Tier 2 in a subsequent tranche?

Currently, successful Tier 2, Tranche 1 applicants can apply to subsequent tranches of Tier 1 and/or Tier 2 provided they don't exceed the applicable grant limit.

3.8 Can a successful Tier 2 applicant, who has not reached the maximum grant available ceiling of £250,000 funding, apply for Tier 1, Tranche 3?

Yes provided the Tier 1 application does not exceed £12,000 and the combined grant from Tier 1 and Tier 2 does not exceed £250,000 over the lifetime of the RDP 2014-2020.

3.9 I am a successful Tier 2, Tranche 1 applicant and received funding of £120,000. Can I apply for Tier 1, Tranche 3?

Yes, provided the Tier 1 application does not exceed the maximum allowable £12,000 grant aid.

3.10 I am a successful Tier 2, Tranche 1 applicant and received funding of £240,000. Can I apply for Tier 1, Tranche 3?

Yes, provided your Tier 1 application, does not exceed £10,000 grant aid as this will bring you to the total maximum grant available of £250,000 for Tier 1 and Tier 2 over the lifetime of the RDP 2014-2020. If this limit is exceeded, your application will be deemed ineligible.

3.11 Will eligible applicants who were unsuccessful in Tier 1 previous tranches receive priority/extra marks in Tranche 3?

Yes, unsuccessful applicants from Tranche 1 or 2 will be awarded extra marks in Tranche 3 (5 marks available). This will also apply to first time applicants.

3.12 How does DAERA decide which applications are successful?

Applications must achieve a minimum threshold score of 40 points to be eligible. Applications will then be ranked by total Selection Criteria score. It is a competitive process and if the Scheme is oversubscribed, it may not be possible to fund all projects that meet the minimum threshold score of 40 points. In such a scenario, Letters of Offer will be issued to the higher ranking eligible applications, commencing with those that achieve a score of 100 marks and working progressively down the ranking order, according to the available budget.

3.13 If I apply to Tier 1, Tranche 3, will that prevent me applying to any future Tranche 2 of Tier 2?

If you apply to Tier 1, Tranche 3 and are offered and accept a Letter of Offer, you will still be able to apply to any future Tranche 2 of Tier 2.

3.14 Do I need to be in a Business Development Group (BDG) to apply?

No. You do not need to be in a BDG to apply for capital funding under this Scheme.

3.15 Will applications from young farmers be encouraged?

Yes, in order to encourage generational renewal within the farming industry and maximise the benefits of long term investment, extra selection points will be available for young farmers.

For Tier 1, extra points are available for **applicants** aged 40 years or under on 31 October 2020. Note the **applicant** must be one of the persons named under the DAERA Farm Business ID number.

3.16 Will Educational Attainment be encouraged?

Yes, for Tier 1, proof of Educational Attainment will be required at Letter of Offer acceptance stage for applicants seeking extra points under this Selection Criterion. This criterion applies to all ages of applicants and not just those under 40 years of age. The education received must be at Level II or above in agriculture or horticulture.

3.17 Can I buy something now and claim for it when the Scheme opens?

No. Retrospective payments are not allowed and no purchases must be made until a Letter of Offer is received from the Department.

3.18 Can a successful Tier 1 applicant erect a fence with farm labour and claim grant on these costs?

Grant aid cannot be paid against the cost of labour by members of the farm business. A successful applicant under FBIS-C could bring in casual labour to erect the fence and claim grant on those costs. In this case additional checks will be undertaken to ensure proper construction of the fence and to reduce the risk of potential fraudulent claims.

3.19 What conditions must be met for the use of items associated with working with slurry?

A successful applicant, who has selected items that involve working with slurry, will be asked to confirm by accepting a Letter of Offer that he/she has read and understood the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) guidance on working safely with slurry.

This guidance can be viewed at:

www.hseni.gov.uk/articles/slurry-working-safely-slurry

3.20 Can I amend my application once it has been submitted?

No amendments can be made after an application has been submitted, unless you withdraw the initial application and submit a new application before the closing date. If you wish to withdraw an application contact Countryside Services Limited on 028 8778 9770.

4. Eligible & Ineligible Investments

4.1 Is there a list of items that will be eligible under Tier 1?

For Tier 1, there is a pre-selected list of items which are eligible for grant funding. The items have been reference priced so that farmers know the maximum amount of grant allowable on each item. Farmers will not need to obtain quotes to submit with their application.

This list can be found on the DAERA website at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/fbis-capital-scheme-tier-1-eligible-items

Construction investments and items of equipment which are not on the pre-selected list are not eligible for grant support under Tier 1.

4.2 Can an applicant choose to purchase a piece of equipment with a higher specification than that on Tier 1 list?

Yes, an applicant may choose to purchase a piece of equipment with a higher specification than the equipment pre-selected on the Tier 1 list. However, the maximum grant support will be limited to 40% of the reference price for those pre-selected items – the applicant may self-fund the difference.

4.3 If I have applied for a number of items, for example a slurry tanker and a Lower Emission Slurry Spreading Equipment (LESSE) item and my total project cost is £30,000, but my invoice is over £30,000, am I still eligible for funding?

Yes. However, the grant payable for that item will not be exceeded. Refer to Explanatory booklet, page 33.

4.4 Will all agricultural equipment be funded?

No. Tier 1 is focused on improving the sustainability of farms. The items on the Tier 1 list have been selected because they have scored highly against the Key Themes (resource efficiency, environmental improvement etc.). Items such as tractors, trailers, quads, farm handlers, forklifts, 4x4s, ATVs, RTVs etc. have not been included on the Tier 1 list and will not be funded as they also have non-agricultural uses and they do not score highly against the Scheme's Key Themes.

4.5 Will renewable energy projects be funded e.g. solar panels or a wind turbine?

No. Renewable energy projects are excluded from support under the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP) 2014-2020.

4.6 Will second hand equipment be funded?

No. Second hand equipment is ineligible under the EU-approved NIRDP. The focus of the FBIS-C is on future-proofed, modern investment. Experience has also highlighted that there is a risk of fraud and the potential for second hand items to have previously been grant aided.

4.7 If I apply to purchase a slurry tanker, do I also need to apply for a LESSE item?

Yes, within the overall £30,000 limit for all items. **If you apply for only a slurry tanker your application will be deemed ineligible.**

4.8 If I apply to purchase a LESSE item, to be used on an existing slurry tanker, must I submit an engineer's certificate with my claim to confirm it is fitted correctly to my tanker?

Yes. You will need to submit a certificate from a currently registered chartered engineer with your claim.

4.9 If I apply to purchase a cover for an above ground slurry store, do I need to submit a chartered engineer's certificate with my claim to confirm the store is able to support the cover?

Yes. You will need to submit a certificate from a currently registered chartered engineer with your claim.

4.10 If I apply to purchase a cover for an existing above ground slurry store, do I also have to apply for strengthening rings?

Where the engineer or the company who supplied the above ground store state that the strengthening ring is required to support the new cover. A currently registered chartered engineer's certificate will also be required and submitted with your claim.

4.11 If I have an above ground slurry store, which I have not yet notified NIEA for approval, can I apply for a cover?

Yes, provided NIEA have been notified before you make a claim. For further information contact the Agricultural Regulations team on 028 9262 3205 or email agricultural.regulation@daera-ni.gov.uk

5. Health and Safety

5.1 What is the 'Making it Safer' Risk Assessment?

All applicants to the Scheme **must complete a new 'Making it Safer'** Risk Assessment where the applicant will be required to answer questions relating to their own farm on Slurry, Animals, Falls and Equipment (SAFE). This is an online tool available at: www.farmsafenet.org/Safer and a certificate will be issued on completion. This must be completed on or after 30 September 2020.

Applicants will need to save this digital certificate (to a computer rather than a mobile device) as it **must** be uploaded as part of the application process. The DAERA Farm Business ID number entered onto the certificate will be checked against the Farm Business ID number on the FBIS-C Scheme application form. Please ensure that your name and Farm Business ID number are entered onto the 'Making It Safer' certificate.

5.2 Do I need to produce a new 'Making it Safer' Risk Assessment for this third Tranche of Tier 1?

A new online 'Making it Safer' Risk Assessment must be completed as it is good practice to constantly review farm safety. Farmers are required to complete their new risk assessment on or after 30 September 2020, with the date of completion recorded on the certificate.

5.3 How can I save the 'Making It Safer' Risk Assessment certificate from a computer in a library or DAERA Direct Office?

There are a couple of options for the applicant:

Option 1

The applicant can print a copy of the certificate from a computer in a library or DAERA Direct Office. The applicant or another person (for example an agent)

could scan the certificate at a later time and upload to the application form at:
www.eugrantfundingni.org

Option 2

The applicant could download to a computer in a library or DAERA Direct Office and then upload directly at the library to the application form at:
www.eugrantfundingni.org

5.4 If my 'Making it Safer' Risk Assessment shows risks on my farm, will it affect my application, or will I receive an inspection?

No. The Risk Assessment is to help you to manage your farm in such a way that it is safer for you, your family and your employees. The content of your 'Making it Safer' Risk Assessment will not affect your application and you will not receive an inspection in respect of any danger you may have identified in it.

6. Indication of Support Letter (bank letter)

6.1 Do I have to use the Indication of Support Letter template provided on the DAERA website?

A new Indication of Support Letter will be required at application stage and must be completed on or after 30 September 2020. All applicants must provide a template letter that has been completed by their bank or lending institution before they make an application for grant support. This letter, referred to as an Indication of Support Letter, is designed to encourage applicants to carefully consider the needs and circumstances of their farm business before proceeding with a project, and will confirm that the applicant can access funds to complete their project.

Applicants do not actually have to borrow the funds from a bank or lending institution. However, should you decide to proceed with an application, the letter will provide reassurance to the applicant, the financial institution and DAERA that the applicant will be able to access the funds necessary to finance and complete the proposed investment, including VAT, until the applicant receives payment of 40% grant assistance at the end of the project.

The Indication of Support Letter (bank letter) template to be used by the applicant, if they bank with one of the financial institutions listed below, can be found at:
www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/daera-fbis-capital-indication-support

- Bank of Ireland
- Barclays
- Credit Union
- Danske Bank
- First Trust
- HSBC
- Ulster Bank

However, banks and lending institutions may use an alternative letter format, provided equivalent information is contained within the letter. If the financial

institution the applicant banks with, wishes to provide a letter that is not in the above format, then it must include the following information as a minimum:

1. Name, address of client and six digit DAERA Category 1 Farm Business ID number (to be used by DAERA to cross reference the application).
2. Confirmation that the client has managed their account effectively and/or complied with the terms and conditions of the account.
3. Future funding requirements of the client have been discussed in relation to purchase of items under FBIS-C.
4. Confirmation, that at present, the client has access to sufficient funds, or could have access to sufficient funds, to purchase equipment (including VAT) under the Scheme – prior to a grant being paid by DAERA (should the client be successful in obtaining a Letter of Offer of funding).

If the applicant is provided with a letter from the financial institution with the information, as set out in points 1 to 4, this will suffice and it can be attached to the application for FBIS-C in the usual way.

7. Business Plan

7.1 Will business plans be required to apply for Tier 1, Tranche 3?

Yes. For Tier 1 the business plan will be a straightforward part of the application form.

8. Finance

8.1 What is the amount of funding available for Tier 1, Tranche 3?

It is envisaged that the third Tranche of Tier 1 will have a budget of £7.5 million, subject to budget availability.

8.2 What is the minimum project spend for Tier 1, Tranche 3?

The minimum spend for Tier 1 of Tranche 3 is £5,000. The Department consulted extensively with stakeholders, including the NIRD 2014-2020 Monitoring Committee, in developing the NIRD. The resulting EU-approved NIRD provides that grant support can be provided under Tier 1 of the FBIS-CI for projects costing from £5,000 to £30,000 (eligible costs).

8.3 Will money be ring fenced for any sector?

There are no plans to ring fence funds for any purpose or sector.

8.4 Who will the payments be made to?

DAERA will make all payments to the Head of Farm Business (HoB). If the applicant is not the HoB and the application progresses to the next stage, DAERA will require the HoB to countersign the acceptance of Letter of Offer.

8.5 Why do EU regulations still apply if we have left Europe?

The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020. The European Commission has advised that commitments and spend can be made under Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 up until December 2023 and receive EU funding until 31 December 2023 or until EU funds are exhausted (whichever is earlier).

This means that projects funded under the NI Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 will continue to receive funding for the lifetime of the project. **However**, should such receipts be suspended or terminated, DAERA may suspend or terminate this grant scheme.

This also means that EU regulations still apply. You should continue to deliver your project under the terms of your existing Letter of Offer and continue to submit claims in the usual way. This includes agreements issued after 31 December 2020, subject to individual scheme application windows and deadlines.

9. Help for Applicants

9.1 Where can applicants obtain help to answer their queries on the Scheme?

You should **look first at the Tier 1, Tranche 3 Explanatory Booklet**.

For further Tier 1 queries, Countryside Services Limited (CSL) operate a telephone Helpline service on 028 8778 9770 and a dedicated email at: tier1@countrysideservices.com is also available.

9.2 What help will be available for farmers to submit applications at local libraries or DAERA Direct Offices?

The following assistance will be provided for applicants who do not possess a personal computer:

- Applicants can access the application form at: www.eugrantfundingni.org on a computer at libraries, which are located across Northern Ireland. It should be noted that applicants will need to be members of the library to use their services and to become a member they will need to bring proof of their address. Guidance on joining a library can be found at: www.librariesni.org.uk/Pages/HowDoI/How-do-I-become-a-Member.aspx
- Each DAERA Direct office has a standalone computer which can be used by applicants who do not have a personal computer. Front-line staff will be available to help applicants log on but they will not be able to assist with the completion of the online application. Please note that an appointment must be made for use of a PC at a DAERA Direct Office.

Farm Business Improvement Scheme - Capital (FBIS-C) Tier 1 (Tranche 3)

FAQs

Please read this Booklet carefully before completing the application form.

Copies of this document can be made available, on request, in alternative formats e.g.

- Paper copy
- Large Print
- Braille
- Other Languages

Tier 1 of the FBIS-C is administered by Countryside Services Ltd on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). If you require assistance please contact Countryside Services Ltd at:

Countryside Services Ltd
Farm Business Improvement Scheme – Capital, Tier 1
97 Moy Road
Dungannon
Co. Tyrone
BT71 7DX

Telephone Number: 028 8778 9770

E-mail: tier1@countrysideservices.com

Website: www.countrysideservices.com

