Stephen Morgan MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
Baroness Hayman of Ullock
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

12 August 2026

Dear Ministers,

Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)

Congratulations on your reappointment as Defra Ministers, we are delighted you will be continuing in your roles.

We are writing to you both about delivering on the government's welcome commitment to reduce pesticide use and the ELM suite of schemes available to farmers across England. These schemes represent vital public investment in a farming translation that works with, not against, nature and natural processes, and the achievement of the Government's own binding environmental targets, including on pesticides.

The need to reduce pesticide use on farmland has been recognised in multiple policy fora, including 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) must play in delivering these targets. The commitment to reduce the harms from pesticide overuse, and the importance of IPM as a delivery tool, was also echoed in the Government's revised EIP targets, published in December 2025 as well as the 2026 Farming Roadmap, which emphasises the need to reduce farming's reliance on pesticides.

As you get up to speed with your new Ministerial briefs, we wish to highlight the following policy recommendations in the context of pesticide reductions and the Farming & Countryside Programme.

1. SFI 'bundles' 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 and free choice of which actions to apply for and adopt, and which the previously available CIPM1 action ('Assess IPM and produce a plan') did little to address. This has meant that the optimum combination of habitat and land management actions are rarely undertaken for any given outcome. The SFI27 offer is an opportunity to correct this flaw, creating packages of actions such as tussocky grass buffers, flower rich margins and beetle banks. It is positive that Defra are currently developing a Wildlife bundle for SFI27. We encourage Defra to develop a IPM bundle in parallel.

2. Whole-farm management planning

In addition to offering a coherent bundle of actions to support pesticide reduction, a wider requirement to develop a whole-farm management plan would be highly beneficial in SFI. This 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 represent a tangible step forward, and uplift in ambition, following the removal of a range of management plan actions from the scheme as part of the SFI26 relaunch. This requirement could be developed as a precondition for access into the scheme, rather than as a separate, paid for action.

3. Continued investment in organic land management

We would welcome a swift recommitment to an Organic Action Plan, positively trailed by the previous Secretary of State, which could be transformative for pesticide free food production across England. Against this backdrop, the 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 SFI could 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.

We look forward to receiving a reply.

Yours sincerely,

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Jonathan Worthy-Pauling, PAN UK
Steve Clarkson, Organic Farmers & Growers CIC
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Ellen Bradley, Co-Director, UK Youth for Nature
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Brendan Costelloe, Director of Policy & Strategy, Soil Association
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