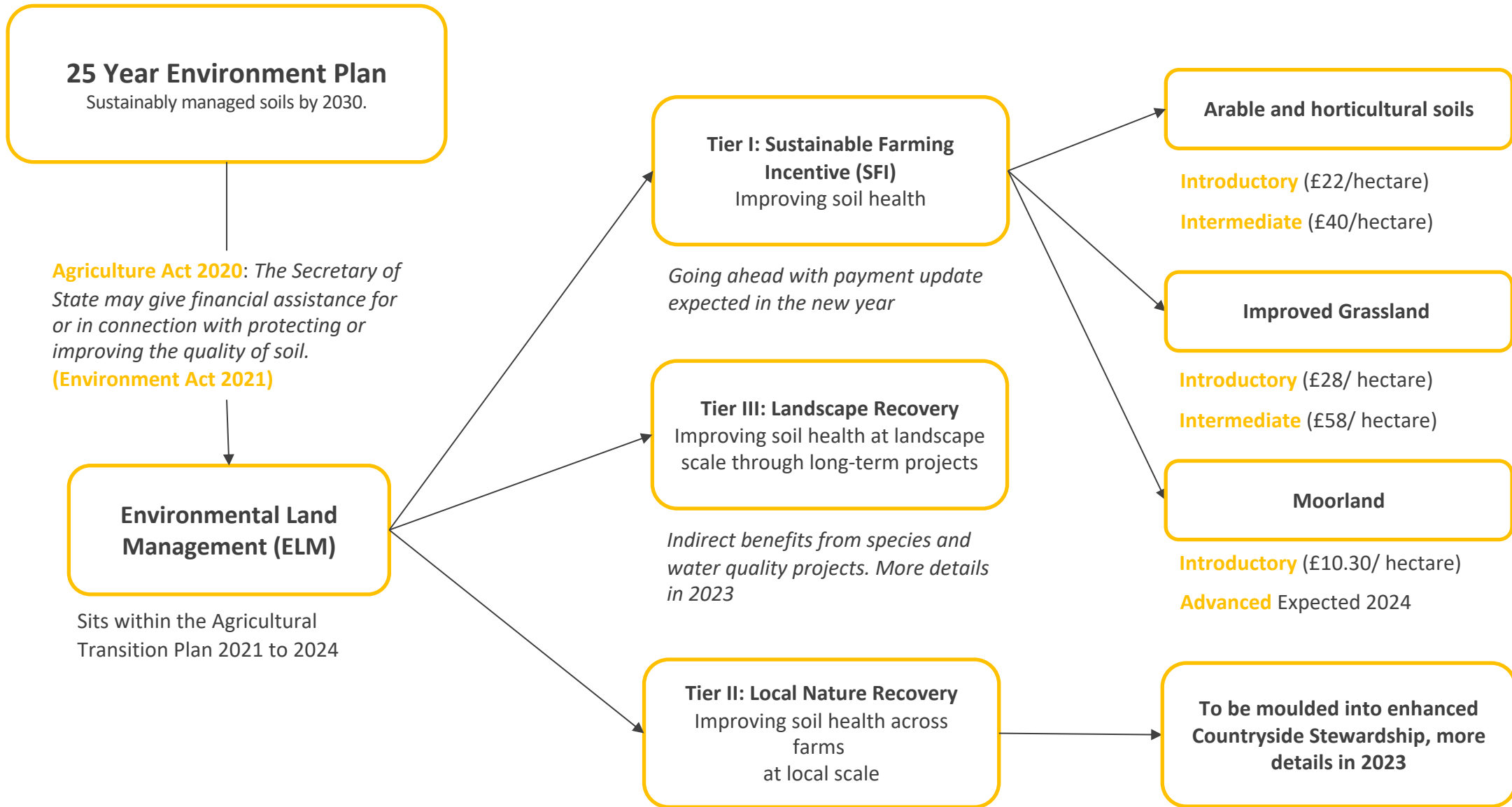


SUSTAINABLE
SOILS
ALLIANCE

Policy Backdrop to ELM
November 2022

Policy context for Soil in Environmental Land Management (ELM)



Sustainable Farming Incentive – actions and payments

Arable and horticultural soils

Introductory (£22/hectare)

- Complete a soil assessment and produce a soil management plan
- Test soil organic matter
- Add organic matter to all land in the standard at least once during the 3-year SFI standards agreement
- Have green cover on at least 70% of land in the standard over winter

Intermediate (£40/hectare)

- First 3 introductory measures +
- Have green cover on at least 50% of land in this level of the standard over winter and multi-species cover crops on an additional 20% of the land

Improved Grassland

Introductory (£28/hectare)

- Complete a soil assessment and produce a soil management plan
- Test soil organic matter
- Minimise bare ground by having no more than 5% of the total area of land entered into the standard left bare over winter

Intermediate (£58/hectare)

- All Introductory measures
- Establish and maintain herbal leys on at least 15% of land in this level of the standard

Moorland

Introductory (£10.30/hectare)

- Identify and record the soil and vegetation types and condition, and presence of historic and archaeological features
- Assess the public goods the moorland is already providing
- Identify opportunities to maintain or enhance the public goods provided by the moorland

Example guidance on the actions

Produce soil management plan

- soil type, structure and composition
- risks and problems that need to be addressed
- how you currently manage the area
- proposed management actions to improve soil health

Test and add organic matter

- take soil samples and analyse, which will usually be done by a commercial laboratory
- apply organic manure
- use green manures, catch crops or cover crops
- chop or leave, or incorporate, straw
- introduce grass or herbal leys into an arable rotation
- include legume species or legume rich mixes in rotations

Details of soil actions found via

- AHDB characteristics of different soils
- Natural England's Technical Information Note about soil texture
- Environment Agency's 'think soils'
- SRUC Visual Evaluation of Soil Structure (VESS)

Principal soil health monitoring initiatives in England

National Soil Monitoring (NCEA)

(Defra)

Provider:

Natural England
Subcontracted to FERA/
UKCEH

Purpose:

To provide data for baselines and track changes in soil health nationally

Considers:

Topsoil

Data collected by:

Specialist scientists

Applications:

Monitoring, reporting, target setting, modelling

Soil Health Indicator

(Defra)

JNCC
Subcontracted to Cranfield

Developing a mechanism to measure soil health. Multiple indicators may be required

Topsoil and subsoil

Works with data from the other initiatives

Reporting, target setting

Soil Structure Monitoring

(Defra)

Environment Agency, UKCEH, SSA

Provide data on and benchmarking for soil structure across all soil types and land uses

Topsoil and subsoil

Farmers / land managers

Farmer / land manager assessment, national monitoring and target setting, evidencing SFI

Soil Health Scorecard

(Industry)

AHDB
Subcontracted to NIAB, ADAS, SRUC

Provide consistency in how mineral soils under lowland agricultural management are measured and benchmarked at field scale

Topsoil

Farmers / land managers

Farmer / industry target setting, monitoring soil health response, supporting soil health discussions, identify management options, evidencing SFI