Strategic Planning and Corporate Services Group
Strategic Support Directorate

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FROM: **DAERA DALO**

DATE: **04 NOVEMBER 2026**

TO: **DR. JANICE THOMPSON**
AERA COMMITTEE CLERK

The Farming for The Generations Scheme and Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2027

Summary: The Department proposes to make the *Farming for the Generations Scheme and Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2027*. These Regulations establish the legislative framework for the Farming for the Generations Scheme, the Generational Renewal element of the Sustainable Agriculture Programme, providing support for farm succession planning, business restructuring, skills development, and the progression of young farmers into leadership and management roles. The Regulations also revoke regulation 4(2) of the Farming with Nature Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026, removing amendments relating to Farm Sustainability Standards that were subsequently determined not to be required and restoring the affected legislation to its previous form.

Business Area: College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE).

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Issue: To inform the Committee of the Department's intention to make The Farming for the Generations Scheme and Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2027 and to seek the Committee's consideration of the scheme.

Restrictions: None.

Action Required: The Committee is invited to note the contents of this SL1 and consider the proposed Statutory Rule.

Officials Attending: To be confirmed.

Background

The purpose of the Regulations is to establish the Farming for the Generations Scheme as a long-term support measure to encourage farm succession planning, generational renewal and business development within Northern Ireland agriculture.

The Farming for the Generations Scheme forms the principal delivery mechanism for the Generational Renewal workstream of the Sustainable Agriculture Programme (SAP). The Scheme is intended to address the ageing demographic profile within the agricultural sector, encourage earlier succession planning, improve business resilience and sustainability, and support younger farmers to assume greater management responsibility within farm businesses.

The Regulations provide the legislative framework for:

- Succession Business Consultation Grants;
- Succession Business Restructuring Grants;
- Young Farmers' Pathway Study Grants; and
- Young Farmer Milestone Payments.

Young Farmer Milestone Payments provide up to £25,000 over a four-year pathway and comprise a:

- £5,000 Intention Payment;
- £5,000 Business Development Milestone Payment;
- £5,000 Knowledge Transfer Milestone Payment; and
- £10,000 Integration Payment.

The staged payment structure is designed to encourage early engagement in succession planning, support skills development and knowledge transfer, and facilitate the gradual integration of successors into farm management and decision-making before full succession takes place.

The Regulations also include a transitional arrangement in the first scheme year for certain applicants at the upper age limit who are enrolled on an approved qualification and are required to obtain that qualification by a specified date.

The Regulations establish the conditions governing participation in the Scheme, including eligibility criteria, training and progression requirements, and administration and payment

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arrangements. They also provide for review procedures, compliance controls, and the withholding or recovery of payments where an applicant is found to be ineligible or has knowingly or recklessly provided false or misleading information.

The Scheme has been developed following operation of the Farming for the Generations Pilot Scheme and builds upon policy commitments arising from the Sustainable Agriculture Programme.

In developing the Scheme, the Department considered a range of options, including maintaining existing arrangements following the pilot phase, introducing limited support measures, or establishing a comprehensive scheme through legislation. The Department concluded that a legislative framework would provide the most effective mechanism for delivering targeted support, ensuring consistency, accountability and long-term certainty for participants.

Risks identified during policy development included limited uptake, delays in succession planning, insufficient engagement from younger farmers and the complex personal, financial and legal issues associated with farm succession. These risks have been mitigated through the provision of professional support, mentoring, business planning assistance, skills development opportunities and milestone payments linked to progression through the Scheme.

Failure to implement the Regulations would prevent the Department from establishing the Farming for the Generations Scheme, resulting in the loss of a key policy intervention designed to support generational renewal, business continuity and long-term sustainability within the agricultural sector.

The Regulations also include provisions designed to prevent duplicate support being paid in respect of the same successor where funding has previously been received under related schemes or pilot arrangements, including the Young Farmers Scheme and certain supports available through the Farming for the Generations Pilot Scheme.

The Regulations also make an amendment relating to Farm Sustainability Standards by revoking regulation 4(2) of the Farming with Nature Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026. That provision inserted amendments relating to Farm Sustainability Standards which, on further review, were determined not to be required. The revocation restores the legislation to its previous form by removing these amendments.

Previous Engagement with the Committee

The Committee has previously been briefed on the Sustainable Agriculture Programme and the development of the Generational Renewal workstream. Most recently, the Committee received a briefing on the Farming for the Generations Scheme on 2 July 2026.

The policy has also been developed through ongoing engagement with industry stakeholders through the Agricultural Policy Stakeholder Group and the Farming for the Generations Co-Design Group.

Financial Implications

The whole life cost of the scheme is approximately £49.9 million, comprising £48.454 million resource expenditure and £1.468 million capital expenditure.

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The business case was approved by the Department of Finance on 7 October 2026.

The majority of expenditure relates to direct support payments, grants, training and development measures delivered through the Scheme and payable to Farm Businesses. Additional costs relate to administration, staffing, ICT development and external delivery arrangements.

The necessary funding is expected to be met from Sustainable Agriculture Programme budgets, which is funded from the Executive Earmarked allocation for Agriculture, Agri-Environment and Rural Development, and existing departmental resources.

The Department does not anticipate significant impacts on other departmental budgets.

Consultation

The Regulations were consulted upon as part of the Future Agricultural Policy Framework consultation undertaken between December 2021 and February 2022. (Future Agricultural Policy Decisions for Northern Ireland | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs). The consultation proposed the development of a Generational Renewal Programme designed to support succession planning, knowledge transfer, skills development and the successful transfer of management responsibility within farming businesses.

The consultation demonstrated strong support for the policy direction. Ninety per cent of respondents agreed that there was a need to encourage longer-term planning for farm businesses. Eighty-three per cent supported the inclusion of education and skills development measures and eighty-five per cent supported the use of incentives to encourage participation and progression within a Generational Renewal Programme.

Respondents highlighted a number of issues including farm succession planning, knowledge and skills development, support for younger farmers, the role of women in agriculture, land mobility, longer-term leasing arrangements and the need for access to professional advice and support. While these issues informed the wider Generational Renewal policy discussion, the Farming for the Generations Scheme focuses specifically on succession planning, business restructuring and successor development.

Following consideration of consultation responses, the Department confirmed its decision to develop a Generational Renewal Programme based upon a three-phase approach comprising succession planning, development of successors and continuing support for participating generations. The policy was subsequently refined through stakeholder engagement with the Agricultural Policy Stakeholder Group, the Farming for the Generations Co-Design Group, representative organisations and participants involved in the Farming for the Generations Pilot Scheme.

The development of the Farming for the Generations Scheme has been informed through ongoing engagement with the Agricultural Policy Stakeholder Group (APSG). The APSG considered the development of the Scheme and associated policy proposals at meetings held between November 2025 and June 2026.

The Department also established a dedicated Farming for the Generations Co-Design Group, comprising industry representatives and key stakeholders, to support detailed Scheme development. The Co-Design Group met regularly between June 2025 and June 2026.

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Feedback from stakeholders informed the detailed design of the Scheme, including eligibility criteria, training and progression requirements, administration and payment arrangements, review procedures, and compliance controls.

Compliance with Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

The Department has considered the requirements of Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The proposals have been examined as part of the policy development process, including equality screening and associated impact assessment exercises. No issues have been identified that would indicate incompatibility with Convention Rights.

The Department is satisfied that the Regulations are compatible with Convention Rights and has identified no adverse implications in respect of Article 2(1) of the Windsor Framework.

A copy of the SL1 will be provided to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in accordance with normal procedures.

Consideration by the Executive

The proposed Regulations have not been considered by the Executive. The Regulations give effect to policy that has previously been approved as part of the Sustainable Agriculture Programme. The Statutory Rule does not require referral to the Executive as it does not engage any of the criteria in paragraph 2.4 of the Ministerial Code requiring a matter to be brought to the attention of the Executive Committee.

Equality Impact

The Department completed an Equality and Disability Duties Screening exercise in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The screening exercise concluded that the proposal should be screened out and that a full Equality Impact Assessment was not required.

The assessment concluded that no significant adverse impacts were identified across the Section 75 categories. While aspects of the Scheme are aimed at younger farmers, the overall policy objective is to support succession planning and business continuity across generations. The Department will continue to monitor participation and uptake as part of ongoing scheme evaluation and monitoring arrangements.

Regulatory Impact

A Regulatory Impact Screening Assessment was undertaken. The screening exercise concluded that a full Regulatory Impact Assessment was not required. The Scheme is voluntary in nature and provides grant support and development opportunities to participating farm businesses.

The Regulations do not impose significant additional regulatory or compliance costs on businesses, charities, social economy enterprises or voluntary organisations.

Rural Needs Impact

A Rural Needs Impact Assessment was completed. The assessment concluded that the Scheme is likely to have a positive impact on rural areas by supporting farm business continuity,

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succession planning, leadership development and long-term sustainability within rural communities.

The Scheme has been specifically developed to address identified challenges associated with an ageing farming population and barriers to generational renewal, while improving resilience, productivity and sustainability within farm businesses.

Data Protection Impact

A Data Protection Impact Assessment Screening Exercise was completed. The screening concluded that a full Data Protection Impact Assessment was not required.

The Scheme will involve the collection and processing of limited personal information required for administration, eligibility assessment, payment processing and monitoring arrangements. Appropriate governance, security and information management controls will apply in accordance with departmental policies and legislation.

Child Rights Impact

The Department considered the need for a Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA).

The Farming for the Generations Scheme is designed to support succession planning, farm business development and generational renewal within agricultural businesses. Participation in the Scheme is restricted to individuals aged 18 years and over.

As the Regulations do not create rights, obligations or entitlements for children and young people under the age of 18, and are not expected to have a direct impact on children or their rights, the Department concluded that a Child Rights Impact Assessment was not required.

Position in Great Britain (if appropriate).

Agricultural support policy is a devolved matter and each administration has developed its own approaches to support farm businesses following the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union.

While comparable measures to encourage generational renewal exist elsewhere in the United Kingdom and Ireland, there are no directly equivalent schemes. The Farming for the Generations Scheme has been designed specifically to address the structure, demographics and succession challenges facing Northern Ireland agriculture.

Any other information

The Farming for the Generations Scheme builds upon the lessons learned through the successful operation of the Farming for the Generations Pilot Scheme and forms a key component of the Department's wider Sustainable Agriculture Programme.

The maximum support potentially available to a participating farm business over the lifetime of the Scheme is £40,860, comprising up to £1,360 in Succession Business Consultation Grants, up to £6,500 in Succession Business Restructuring Grants, up to £8,000 in Young Farmers Pathway Study Grants and up to £25,000 in Young Farmer Milestone Payments.

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The Regulations also include a miscellaneous amendment to the Farming with Nature Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026.

Regulation 11 revokes regulation 4(2) of those Regulations and provides that the provisions affected by that amendment are to have effect as if the amendment had not been made.

Proposed timing of consideration of the SL1

The Department proposes that the Committee consider this SL1 on **14 January 2027.**

The SL1 has been submitted in accordance with the Committee's normal scrutiny requirements.

Proposed Operational Date

It is proposed that the Rule will come into operation **in February 2027**.

The draft of the proposed Statutory Rule and Explanatory Memorandum are attached, and you will wish to bring this matter to the attention of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

This SL1 is being copied to the Human Rights Commission, Equality Commission and Assembly & Legislation Section of The Executive Office.

Yours sincerely,

Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer

Enc.

Annex A: **The Farming for the Generations Scheme and Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2027**

Annex B: **Explanatory Memorandum to the Farming for the Generations Scheme and Miscellaneous Amendments Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2027**

Cc: Assembly & Legislation Section (Executive Office)
Human Rights Commission
Equality Commission

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