

Benchmarking Training for Cereal Growers Scheme

(Reference DMA 013/2010)

The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) is the organisation that helps to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of various agriculture and horticulture sectors. Its HGCA division has responsibility for achieving this in relation to cereals grown in the United Kingdom.

What is the Benchmarking Training for Cereal Growers Scheme?

This scheme will help you to benchmark your performance, particularly in relation to the commercial production of cereals. This will be done through a training programme funded by AHDB cereal levy and by Rural Development Agencies and similar authorities. It will supplement activities in UK Rural Development Plans. All cereal growers wholly or mainly employed in commercial cereal growing in the United Kingdom are eligible.

The scheme will enhance your ability to benchmark your financial performance and thus improve your understanding of your cost of production. This will assist you to improve the efficiency of your production of cereals. It may also help you to improve the efficiency of other farming operations.

Training

AHDB, through HGCA, will approve or organise and implement training programmes available to all cereal growers wholly or mainly employed in commercial cereal growing in the United Kingdom. The cost of this training will be subsidised by various authorities. HGCA will make a grant to you which you must use towards the cost of this training.

The amount of money available is limited and will be granted on a first-come, first-serve basis, subject to geographical limitations to ensure the funding is evenly distributed throughout the UK.

If you commit to this scheme using the attached application form and you are eligible under the '*de minimis*' scheme rules (see later), you will be eligible to receive a maximum of £250 from HGCA for your share of the training fees. You may elect to receive this money and pay the trainer yourself or HGCA will pay the trainer directly.

Funding

HGCA will provide a maximum of £250 to any farmer and any holding under this scheme.

The maximum total funding that HGCA intends to provide for this scheme will be £80,000. HGCA reserves the right to increase or reduce the funding available under this scheme.

The Scheme

This scheme will run from 1 January 2011 until 31 March 2012, subject to any extension in HGCA's sole discretion if resources permit.

When HGCA receives your application, it will check that you are eligible for the grant and will confirm the grant and the conditions that will apply.

HGCA will pay the grant to you or the training provider in the discretion of HGCA once it receives evidence that you have attended successfully an approved training course.

Legal Restrictions

EU law restricts the amount of State aid that can be given to agricultural businesses. The aid under this scheme is '*de minimis*'. This means that the amount of aid provided under the scheme is small enough for the EU authorities to be sure that it will not affect the common market, and therefore more stringent State aid rules need not be applied.

Aid will be provided in accordance with the EU agricultural *de minimis* Regulation 1535/2007.¹ This Regulation restricts the total amount of such aid granted to any enterprise to a maximum of €7,500 in any three-years' period and requires HGCA to make certain checks.

This scheme is geographically restricted to the United Kingdom. All cereal growers wholly or mainly employed in commercial cereal growing in the United Kingdom are eligible for support.

The budget is limited and support will be awarded on a geographically-fair, 'first come, first served' basis to eligible applicants who satisfy the scheme conditions.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is satisfied that the aid provided under this scheme will not result in breach of the maximum *de minimis* aid that may be granted by the UK in the agricultural sector.

The Regulation allows you to receive a maximum of €7,500 of agricultural *de minimis* aid in any period of three fiscal years. If you have received any aid of this type, you will have been told in the grant letter that the aid was *de minimis* aid and was provided under either Regulation 1535/2007 or its predecessor, Regulation 1860/2004. No other funding counts towards this maximum. You must let HGCA know if a grant made under this scheme would result in you receiving more than a total of €7,500 of agricultural *de minimis* aid in this fiscal year and the previous two years. False declarations will result in recovery of the aid with interest.

The application form makes this declaration easy for you.

AHDB is required to keep a record of the *de minimis* aid it will provide for ten years after the last payment of aid under this scheme, and it will provide this record to the British or EU regulatory authorities on request.

This document is available at <http://www.hgca.com/growergrantscheme>.

¹ OJ L337, 21 December 2007, p.35

Data Protection Act

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) (as data controller) requires details of the identity of recipients of *de minimis* aid in the agriculture and fisheries sectors, amounts of aid granted and date(s) of aid granted to be kept on a central register. Such data will be kept in order to comply with the provisions of Commission Regulation 1535/2007 on *de minimis* State aid in the agriculture and fisheries sectors and in particular to ensure that ceilings on the amount of aid granted are not breached. To this end, the data may be shared amongst any organizations granting *de minimis* State aid in the agriculture and fisheries sectors and will be passed to organizations responsible for upholding the provisions of Regulation 1535/2007 on request. Defra may also be required to release information, including personal data and commercial information, on request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 or the Freedom of Information Act 2000. However, Defra will not permit any unwarranted breach of confidentiality nor will Defra act in contravention of its obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998. There is a legitimate public interest in knowing how public funds are spent and so details of the amount of aid paid, the identity of the recipient, and other details may be disclosed under the Access to Information legislation mentioned above.

The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board and the agricultural authorities in the devolved administrations also require this information and will deal with it similarly including non-exhaustively transmitting it between themselves and Defra for the purposes indicated above.

HGCA hopes that this scheme will help you to improve your performance and looks forward to receiving your application.

Step 1 – Application

To apply for support, you need to send a completed application form (see Annex) to Steve Barras, AHDB-HGCA, Stoneleigh Park, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 2TL

This form will provide HGCA with the information it needs to make the checks required under the EU Regulation.

We will confirm that funding is still available and assess your eligibility for support. We will then inform you whether you have been successful in your application.

Step 2 – Conditional Grant

If you have been successful, we will inform you in writing and send you a voucher that can be exchanged for the amount of the grant (maximum £250, or 50% of the total cost of training, whichever is less) once you have satisfied the scheme conditions by undertaking the training. Your voucher will expire on 1 March 2013 and the last payments under the scheme will be made, subject to any extension in HGCA's discretion, by 31 May 2013.

Step 3 - Notification

HGCA will notify Defra of the amount of aid granted to you under this scheme and the date of the grant, which will be recorded in the national register of such aid. This will allow Defra to ensure that you do not breach the *de minimis* aid rules, which it must do under the EU Regulation.

You must inform anyone proposing to grant similar *de minimis* aid to you within the next three years that you have received this *de minimis* aid from AHDB, and the date on which it was provided to you.

