**Preliminary Checks – Frequently Asked Questions**

**What are preliminary checks?**

Commissioner Hogan introduced the concept of preliminary checks as part of the simplification agenda in 2016. The initiative allows Member States to introduce pre-checks for online BPS applications and to notify applicants of any non-compliance in the areas of overclaims, dual claims, and overlaps. Farmers are now being offered the opportunity to rectify any such non-compliance by the deadline of 19 June with no penalty applied where the non-compliance is fully rectified by that date.

The purpose of this provision is to enhance the correctness of BPS applications with the aim of lowering reductions and administrative penalties. Full administrative checks are still required before payment issues.

**Who do preliminary checks apply to?**

Preliminary checks can only be applied to online BPS applicants. As the Department continues to progress towards the EU regulatory requirement of 100% online BPS application by 2018, these checks add a further benefit to farmers who apply online and increase the efficiency with which BPS applications can be processed.

**What kind of issues are addressed by preliminary checks?**

Preliminary checks will identify any overclaims, overlaps or dual claims in respect of online BPS applications. Where a preliminary check identifies such an issue applicants are given the opportunity to amend their claim. Applicants may wish to retain their original claim, or to amend their claim in light of the preliminary check.

For example, where a preliminary check highlights a dual claim the response can

* Confirm that the applicant asserts the right to claim the dual claimed parcel, **or**
* Withdraw the relevant parcel without penalty where the land may have been inadvertently claimed.

**What are the timeframes for preliminary checks?**

The first run of preliminary checks will commence in the week beginning 29 May. All responses must be made by **midnight on 19 June**. All notifications and responses **can only be made via the online BPS system**. No late responses can be submitted after 19 June.

**How will farmers be notified of preliminary checks?**

Where a preliminary check identifies a dual claim, overclaim, or overlap, a notification will issue on the BPS online system – i.e. no paper based notification will issue. Farmers and advisors should thus check the correspondence section of their BPS online account. Where a farmer is signed up for text message alerts, a text will issue to advise them that they have a notification on their BPS account.

Where a farmer has applied online through an advisor, the advisor will receive notification via the BPS online account in respect of any of his / her clients where a preliminary check has identified a dual claim, overclaim or overlap. Farmers who have applied through an advisor will also get a text message alert where they are signed up for this service.

**What should I do if I get a notification arising from a preliminary check?**

When a notification / text message alert of a preliminary check is received, you should

* Log into your BPS online account to read the notification. Where a preliminary check has identified a dual claim, overlap, or overclaim there will be a clear indication of this in the centre of the BPS homescreen.
* Farmers who have applied through an advisor should contact their advisor in relation to responding the preliminary check.

**How do I respond to a preliminary check?**

Where preliminary checks have identified an overclaim, overlap or dual claim, this will be clearly signalled on the homescreen of the BPS online application system.

A farmer or advisor can click the “View Preliminary Checks” button to see the detail in each case. It is important to note that

* A preliminary check can only be responded to once.
* In each instance, the farmer / advisor will be given the opportunity to either amend his/her original claim to take account of the preliminary check or to maintain the original claim. There will be instances where it is valid to maintain the original claim – for example, in the instance of a possible overclaim identified, where an area of scrub has been removed and brought back into agricultural use with a resultant increase in eligible area.
* Where a response to a preliminary check is sufficient to fully rectify the issue at hand, no penalty will apply.
* Further administrative checks will still need to be carried out on all applications and thus further issues and reductions/penalties may arise later in the process in respect of any application.

**Will all online applicants get a notification of a preliminary check?**

No. An action is only required of farmers / advisors where a preliminary check has identified a dual claim, overclaim or overlap on an application.

**Further information**

Further information is available on the Department’s website, [www.agriculture.gov.ie](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie). and on [www.agfood.ie](http://www.agfood.ie). A step by step outline is available to guide farmers and advisors through the process of responding.

Any queries can also be addressed via the Department’s dedicated online helpdesk at **0761 064420**