

Growers Training and Support Pilot Scheme

Membership Agreement

1 March 2026 until 31 March 2030

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Definitions

The Department	The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).
CAFRE	College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise.
Delivery Agent	A professional services provider working to CAFRE's specifications.
Applicant	An eligible farm business which has applied to a scheme
GTSS	Growers Training and Support Pilot Scheme.
GTSS participant	A farm business which has applied for the scheme and meets the eligibility criteria
GTSS Pilot Scheme Manager	The person appointed by CAFRE to manage the GTSS Pilot Scheme.
HPS	Horticulture Pilot Scheme
Membership Agreement	The document which sets out the offer for a place to participate in the GTSS Scheme, including details of financial support and other terms and conditions. Once accepted, it becomes a legally binding contract.
Hosting payment	A payment to an eligible farm business for the provision of facilities and support to facilitate learning.
Bursary	Learner support payment to a maximum of £2000 per participant to reimburse costs agreed for the attendance of relevant industry training and development events throughout the life of the pilot scheme. This will be paid to the Category 1 or 2 farm business as recorded on the GTSS Pilot Scheme application.
Business Plan	A business plan is a specific plan for individual farm businesses which sets out future plans and a strategy for achieving them. It will detail the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) which GTSS Pilot Scheme participants have identified as areas for improvement.

Foreword

The Horticulture Pilot Scheme (HPS) is part of DAERA's Sustainable Agriculture Programme. The HPS aims to provide support to growers to develop their businesses and ensure that they have the knowledge and skills required to successfully navigate and comply with current and future challenges.

The GTSS Pilot Scheme is one of the three interventions under the HPS. This pilot scheme aims to support GTSS participants in their efforts to start or develop a commercial horticulture business by providing access to specialist professional training and support services. This support will ensure that they are equipped to sustainably grow their businesses and will foster their competencies to meet the four key outcomes of the Sustainable Agriculture Programme:

- i. Improved environmental sustainability.
- ii. Enhanced productivity
- iii. Stronger resilience
- iv. Effective participation in a functioning supply chain

1. Introduction

- 1.1.** This membership agreement sets out the requirements necessary to participate in the GTSS Pilot Scheme. **By clicking submit on the enrolment form you are confirming you accept the terms and conditions of the membership agreement.**

The offer is subject to strict adherence to all conditions detailed in this membership agreement. Failure to adhere to the membership agreement may result in the GTSS participants being removed from the GTSS Pilot Scheme. Applicants are encouraged to read this membership agreement before submitting the enrolment form.

2. Purpose of the Membership Agreement

- 2.1** The membership agreement is between CAFRE and the applicant. This documents states:
- the conditions which must be met by the applicant to participate in the GTSS pilot scheme, avail of the professional support, and access any financial assistance provided by this pilot scheme;
 - the amount of financial assistance available; and
 - the duration of the membership agreement.
- 2.2** By accepting the membership agreement you are accepting the conditions set out in this document. Failure to adhere to the membership agreement may result in the farm business being removed from GTSS Pilot Scheme.

3. Conditions of the GTSS Pilot Scheme

- 3.1** This membership agreement has been issued to GTSS Pilot Scheme applicants who have been offered a place in the pilot scheme.
- 3.2** This membership agreement is valid from 1st March 2026 until the end of the pilot scheme on the 31 March 2030 and includes an evaluation period of up to two years post-delivery (until March 2032).
- 3.3** GTSS Pilot Scheme participants can withdraw from the pilot scheme at any time. If a GTSS Pilot Scheme participant wishes to withdraw from the pilot scheme, they must notify CAFRE in writing (email: kt.admin@daera-ni.gov.uk).
- 3.4** The GTSS Pilot Scheme participant must attend workshops/training events. They are not permitted to bring any non-GTSS Pilot Scheme participants to workshops/training events. This is to protect the confidentiality of any information being shared by the pilot scheme participants.
- 3.5** All GTSS Pilot Scheme participants will be required to work towards being able to complete a business plan for their business and be willing to share key farm performance information at workshops in agreement with the facilitator, programme manager, and other participants.

The business plan submitted must be of sufficient quality to produce a meaningful analysis of the business' financial performance. This is to meet the criteria for full participation in the GTSS Pilot Scheme.
- 3.6** Each GTSS participant, in conjunction with their Facilitator and Business Development Advisor, will develop a business plan for their business, which must be updated on an annual basis. Within the business plan, key performance indicators (KPI's) will be identified as areas of the business which the GTSS Pilot Scheme participant will aim to develop or improve.
- 3.7** GTSS Pilot Scheme participants must be willing to discuss technical performance at workshops.
- 3.8** Farm performance information shared at group workshops/training events must be treated as strictly confidential by all GTSS Pilot Scheme participants. Data relating to other participants must not be shared outside the GTSS Pilot Scheme workshops/training events, without the prior consent of the relevant participant(s).
- 3.9** Participation in the GTSS Pilot Scheme is free of charge; however, GTSS participants must cover their own costs to attend workshops and other costs not covered by the scheme's funding.

- 3.10** The success of the GTSS Pilot Scheme will depend on the participants willingness to engage and commit to their training and development. GTSS Pilot Scheme participants must arrive punctually, remain at the workshop/training event until it has concluded and participate fully at each event.
- 3.11** Each GTSS Pilot Scheme participant will be encouraged, by the Facilitator and the other professionals delivering the pilot scheme, to contribute to the discussion during the workshops/training events. Participants are expected to respect each other's contribution, the Facilitator and the other professionals delivering the pilot scheme.
- 3.12** CAFRE will continuously evaluate the attendance and performance of GTSS Pilot Scheme participants and the performance of Professional Services Providers engaged in the delivery of the pilot scheme.
- 3.13** The membership agreement may be revised by CAFRE in the event of changes to DAERA requirements. CAFRE will inform participants of any proposed changes with reasonable advance notice.
- 3.14** GTSS Pilot Scheme participants must inform the Pilot Scheme Manager if they have a conflict of interest in relation to CAFRE, any employees, servants, agents, or sub-contractors of CAFRE in connection with the GTSS Pilot Scheme.
- 3.15** GTSS Pilot Scheme participants must adhere with UK competition law.
- 3.16** DAERA may withhold or recover a payment where an application for payment has been approved by the Department, and it becomes aware that the applicant—
- (a) is not eligible to receive the payment; or
 - (b) has failed to meet the requirements/conditions for the hosting payment.
 - (c) have received directly or indirectly any DAERA or UK Government funding for any measures claimed for or supported within this scheme.

4. Schedule of the GTSS Pilot Scheme Activities

- 4.1** Each GTSS participant will have a maximum of five workshops/year in the second and third year of the pilot scheme minimum with each session normally lasting a minimum of two hours. The GTSS participant will be invited to attend the workshops/training events relevant to his/her business. Each participant will have the opportunity to discuss which subjects are to be covered at workshops/training events during the year with their facilitator. Subjects covered will be agreed with the support of the facilitator and the other professionals involved in the delivery of the pilot scheme to ensure maximum benefits can be gained by all participants.
- 4.2** GTSS workshops/training events will be held primarily on the host farms of the pilot scheme participants. The pilot scheme will be allocated a Facilitator who will organise and facilitate the workshops/training events and support individual GTSS participants working towards the implementation of their business plans.
- 4.3** GTSS participants must attend at least two workshops/training events in years two and three to remain in the GTSS. Where participants attend less than two of the workshops/training events offered and/or have not completed financial data for their business to the standard required by CAFRE, participants may be withdrawn from the pilot scheme subject to the scheme's rules.
- 4.4** Where a GTSS participant has hosted a workshop/training event, a hosting payment of £786 is payable to the farm business, subject to meeting the hosting criteria as outlined in 6.1. The participant is expected to have fully participated in the activities organised for the pilot scheme for the previous calendar year prior to the hosting event taking place.
- 4.5** CAFRE retains the right to change the number of workshops/training events without prior notice.

5. Scheme grants

- 5.1** Subject to “The Horticulture Pilot Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025”, the Department shall pay to the farm business participating in the GTSS Pilot Scheme, a hosting payment of **£786** if the conditions as outlined in 6.1 of this document are met. This will be paid to the Category 1 or 2 farm business as recorded on the GTSS Pilot Scheme application.

- 5.2** Subject to “The Horticulture Pilot Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025”, the Department shall pay to the farm business participating in the GTSS Pilot Scheme, a maximum of **£2000** to reimburse costs agreed for the attendance of relevant industry training and development events throughout the life of the pilot scheme. This will be paid to the Category 1 or 2 farm business as recorded on the GTSS Pilot Scheme application.
- 5.3** CAFRE may cover other costs incurred by the participant where this has received prior agreement from CAFRE’s pilot scheme programme manager. DAERA’s policies on service requisition procedures will be adhered to in all instances where these costs are agreed.

6. Payment of Scheme Grants

6.1 Hosting payments

Where a GTSS Pilot Scheme participant hosts a training event, the following criteria must be met for the farm business to be eligible to receive a hosting payment:

- (a) Prepare the farm for visitors ensuring sufficient farm business public liability insurance (minimum £5 million), biosecurity measures are in place, and health and safety requirements are met (see sections 9 and 10 below); or
- (b) If a situation arises where a member is unable to host an event on the farm (e.g. where a biosecurity issue has arisen), subject to agreement with the facilitator, the training event may be held in an alternative local venue. The venue must hold sufficient public liability insurance and meet required biosecurity and health and safety requirements. Evidence of adequate public liability insurance (minimum £5 million) for the venue must be provided to the Facilitator/Professional services provider prior to the event. The GTSS Pilot Scheme participant will be required to pay for hire of the venue. On occasions, it may be possible to host a workshop/training event via an on-line platform. This will require prior agreement with the facilitator/Professional Services Provider.
- (c) Collate and present relevant farm performance information to peers as agreed with the facilitator/professional services provider.
- (d) Eligible hosting payments will be paid after the hosting event has taken place.

- 6.2** Payments shall be made to the bank account held by DAERA Grants & Subsidies Branch linked to DAERA Business ID Number linked to the GTSS participant.

7. General

- 7.1** All payments made by CAFRE will be paid electronically by the Bankers Automated Clearing System (BACS).
- 7.2** CAFRE does not accept any liability in respect of any loss attributable to any delay in payment of claims or to any suspension, reduction, or cancellation of financial assistance.
- 7.3** The Department may conduct on the spot checks on any element of the GTSS Pilot Scheme, which could include training events.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 8.1** Each GTSS Pilot Scheme participant must provide CAFRE with any information it may require for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating the pilot scheme's objectives and targets.

9. Insurance & Indemnity

- 9.1** Neither CAFRE nor the Department accepts any responsibility, financial or otherwise, for expenditure or liabilities arising out of the work or activities of GTSS participants acting as individual or as a business group.
- 9.2** The GTSS participant, in preparation for hosting a GTSS Pilot Scheme workshop/training event shall indemnify CAFRE, and any employees, servants, agents or sub-contractors of CAFRE in connection with the GTSS Pilot Scheme against all claims, proceedings, actions, damages, legal costs, expenses and any other liabilities in respect of death, personal injury, disease transmission, loss of or damage to property arising out of or in any way connected with the performance or non-performance by the host farm, its servants or agents of all or any activities associated with the host farm and/or the host farm facility, including the provision of advice to third parties by the host farmer, and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing the use, misuse, malfunction or failure of any plant, machinery or equipment involved in the delivery of the GTSS Pilot Scheme workshop/training event.
- 9.3** Nothing in this membership agreement shall restrict any party's liability for death or personal injury caused by its negligence.

- 9.4** When hosting a visit, the participant must ensure that they have public liability insurance (minimum £5 million) for its business. All documents in relation to the above should be available for appropriate inspection by CAFRE. It is the responsibility of the member to ensure that they are adequately insured against claims for damages which may arise throughout the duration of this membership agreement. It is the responsibility of the pilot scheme participant to ensure that insurance is in place prior to hosting the workshop/training event and that the original insurance certificate (or written confirmation of insurance from the broker) is forwarded to the GTSS Pilot Scheme facilitator for verification, copying and copy filing on request.
- 9.5** The GTSS Pilot Scheme participant shall adequately instruct and supervise visitors to their farm and ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of all persons who may be affected by the services provided under the pilot scheme while in their farm. Risk Assessment forms will be completed by the Facilitator in conjunction with the GTSS Pilot Scheme participant before each workshop/training event.
- 9.6** The professional responsible for organising the event shall advise the GTSS Pilot Scheme participants at the outset of a farm visit of any potential risks and dangers presented by the undertaking as required by health and safety legislation.

10. Bio-security Management

- 10.1** CAFRE and its services providers will ensure that DAERA biosecurity protocols will be followed during workshops/training events.
- 10.2** The GTSS Pilot Scheme participant shall notify the Facilitator immediately if there is a suspected or confirmed case of a disease specified in the Diseases of Animals (NI) Order 1981 or if the business has been given a restriction of movement in relation to a plant health issued by DAERA's Forest Service Plant Health Inspection Branch. In these circumstances, the workshop/training event may be suspended until a future date can be set or relocated from that particular host farm. The Facilitator will co-ordinate this and seek to agree alternative arrangements with all participants.
- 10.3** The GTSS Pilot Scheme participant will notify the Facilitator, confirming that any and all restrictions placed on her/his farm business have been lifted. No workshop/training events will be hosted on this particular farm until notification

has been received, or approval has been received by CAFRE, and its services provider delivering the pilot scheme, from the local DVO or DAERA's Forest Service Plant Health Inspection Branch.

11. Sharing of Information, Data Protection and Freedom of Information

11.1 The Department takes data protection, freedom of information and environmental information issues seriously. It takes care to ensure that any personal information received from you is dealt with in a way which complies with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. This means that any personal information you supply will be processed principally for the purpose for which it has been provided. However, the Department is under a duty to protect the public funds it administers, and to this end may use the information you have provided for this purpose. It may also share this information with other bodies responsible for the audit or administration of public funds, in order to prevent and detect crime. In addition, the Department may also use it for other legitimate purposes in line with the UK General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act 2018, Freedom of Information Act 2000, and Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

These include:

- the full range of departmental policy responsibilities;
- the production and safety of food;
- all financial support schemes;
- management of land and other environmental controls;
- animal health and welfare;
- statutory schemes and obligations in the areas of plant health and crop certification;
- occupational health and welfare;
- regulatory and natural resources policy;
- legislation relating to the Northern Ireland Environmental Agency; DAERA Privacy Statement 3
- the prevention and detection of fraud or maladministration (e.g. The Comptroller & Auditor General and HM Revenue & Customs);
- compilation of statistics;

- disclosure to other organisations when required by law to do so;
- disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 where such disclosure is in the public interest;
- administration of UK wide schemes on behalf of the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in Great Britain;
- business development and knowledge advisory service for farmers, growers, and food processors;
- statistical and research purposes; this may include linking or combining the information with data from Arm's Length Bodies, government departments, or other public bodies;
- delivering education and training programmes;
- corresponding with you in connection with the above activities.

The Department uses artificial intelligence to benefit customers and to support the Departmental strategic priorities in accordance with the DAERA Artificial Intelligence Policy: "Securely Maximising the Benefits of Artificial Intelligence." DAERA will not use artificial intelligence for automated decision-making in relation to your personal data in any way.

Please see DAERA's Privacy Statement for more information:

[DAERA Privacy Statement | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

- 11.2** Other than information that could be requested under the prevailing Data Protection, Freedom of Information legislation or GDPR, all personal information discussed as part of the GTSS Pilot Scheme, will be treated confidentially and will not be shared with anyone outside the Department or CAFRE or agents or sub-contractors of CAFRE.
- 11.3** CAFRE and any employees, servants, agents, or sub-contractors of CAFRE, in connection with the GTSS Pilot Scheme, will be required to manage information and data in a confidential manner.
- 11.4** CAFRE may take photographs and videos at announcements and events to publicise its work. Photographs, interviews, videos, or other recordings may be issued to media organisations for publicity purposes or used in promotional

material, including in publications, newspapers, magazines, other print media, on television, radio, and electronic media (including social media and the internet). Photographs and videos will also be stored on the Department's internal records management system. The Department will keep the photographs and recordings for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which they have been obtained. The Department's Privacy Policy is available on our website.

12. Termination or Suspension

12.1. The farm business may be withdrawn from the GTSS Pilot Scheme by CAFRE if:

- (a) The participant attends less than two workshops/training events in any year where there is no clear/specific justification;
- (b) The participant refuses or neglects to share and/or complete financial details as required to fully participate in the pilot scheme;
- (c) The participant refuses or neglects to share business knowledge and data;
- (d) There is an unwillingness to host a workshop/training event where there is no clear/specific justification;
- (e) Irregularities are found as part of a claim for financial assistance;
- (f) Data is shared outside the GTSS Pilot Scheme;
- (g) There is inappropriate behaviour towards other participants and/or the professionals delivering the GTSS Pilot Scheme;
- (h) The GTSS Pilot Scheme participant has been charged with or is convicted of an offence which CAFRE considers sufficiently serious, or CAFRE becomes aware of a serious conviction which was not disclosed during the application and/or enrolment process.

12.2 CAFRE may terminate or suspend membership of the GTSS Pilot Scheme and seek repayment where any other event occurs in relation to the participants which, in the opinion of CAFRE and DAERA, might reasonably be expected to materially and adversely affect its liability to comply with its obligations under this membership agreement.

13. Appeals Procedure where a participant is withdrawn from the GTSS Pilot Scheme

Participants who have been withdrawn from the GTSS Pilot Scheme have the right to appeal the decision. The appeal must be submitted in writing within ten working days of the decision leading to the appeal to CAFREappeals@daera-ni.gov.uk and must be supported with evidence to confirm at least one of the following:

- There has been a significant procedural irregularity.
- New evidence is available which was unavailable at the time the original decision or penalty was being considered.
- The penalty applied is disproportionate or that the original decision was demonstrably unreasonable.

The appeal will be reviewed by another individual (or a panel of individuals) with the appropriate authority to review the previous decision. CAFRE will aim to review the appeal and inform the appellant of the decision within ten working days of the date when the written appeal was received.

14. Withholding and recovery of payment

14.1 DAERA may withhold or recover a payment where an application for payment has been approved by the Department, and it becomes aware that the applicant—

- (a) is not eligible to receive the payment; or
- (b) has failed to meet the requirements/conditions for the hosting payment.
- (c) have received directly or indirectly any DAERA or UK Government funding for any measures claimed for or supported within this scheme.

14.2 The Department may—

- (a) revoke the approval of the application for payment; and
- (b) where payment has not been made withhold the payment or any part of it; or
- (c) where payment has already been made, recover from the applicant an amount equal to the whole or any part of the payment—
 - (i) as a civil debt; or
 - (ii) by way of offsetting against any sum otherwise payable to the applicant by the Department.

- 14.3** Before exercising the powers under 'The Horticulture Pilot Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025' - the Department must by a withdrawal or recovery notice, as is appropriate —
- (a) give the applicant a written explanation of the reasons for the proposed action;
 - (b) afford the applicant the opportunity to make written representations with a reasonable time specified by the Department; and
 - (c) consider representations made by or on behalf of the applicant within a reasonable time period.

15. Review of decision

- 15.1** Where the Department rejects an application under 'The Horticulture Pilot Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025', in whole or in part, an applicant may apply to the Department for a review of the decision.
- 15.2** An applicant must apply to the Department in writing for a review no later than one month beginning with the date of the notification of the decision to be reviewed and specify—
- (a) the name and address of the applicant;
 - (b) the decision of the Department in respect of which the applicant seeks a review and the date of that decision; and
 - (c) full particulars of the grounds upon which the review of the decision sought.
- 15.3** Where an applicant seeks a review under this regulation the Department must review the decision specified.
- 15.4** In reviewing a decision the Department may—
- (a) consider any document or other evidence produced by the applicant (whether or not that document or evidence was available at the time of the decision);
 - (b) invite the applicant to provide such further information relevant to the review as it considers appropriate; and
 - (c) give the applicant or its representative an opportunity to make representations orally or in writing.
- 15.5** Following a review of the decision the Department may—
- (a) confirm the decision; or
 - (b) substitute for it a new decision.

15.6 As soon as reasonably practicable after reviewing the decision, the Department must notify the applicant in writing of its decision and the reasons for it.

Warning

Any person who knowingly or recklessly makes a false statement for the purposes of obtaining grant under this Pilot Scheme or assisting another to obtain grant aid may be prosecuted. The information provided on the relevant application form may be made available to other Departments/Agencies for the purposes of preventing or detecting crime.

DAERA FRAUD HOTLINE – Telephone 0808 1002716

Email: daeracounterfraud@daera-ni.gov.uk

Contact details:

GTSS Pilot Scheme Manager

Horticulture Pilot Scheme

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