

# Putting the Pieces in Place to make a Productive, Profitable, Progressive Welsh Agricultural Industry



NFU Cymru's 2016  
National Assembly Elections Manifesto



## NFU Cymru's Key Asks

### **A Basic Payment Scheme that underpins food production**

Market volatility has highlighted the importance of direct payments to ensure long term food security. The timely delivery of payments is crucial for farming businesses and the rural economy. The BPS needs to support agricultural productivity and support those who take the financial risks associated with food production. CAP simplification changes agreed in Europe must be swiftly implemented in Wales.

### **Welsh food served in hospitals, schools and to troops in Wales**

Too often procurement decisions end up being based predominately on cost. Public bodies in Wales need to set a positive example when it comes to public procurement placing a far greater emphasis on quality marks such as assurance standards and PGI status when food sourcing decisions are made.

### **A TB eradication strategy that removes disease from cattle and wildlife**

Farmers are playing their part in tackling bovine TB through cattle based movements, but the reservoir of infection that exists in wildlife has not been confronted. The disease must be actively removed from the badger population in areas where TB is endemic.

### **Practical & workable livestock movement rules**

A rationalisation of the current complex and confusing livestock movement regime will make for a simpler system and help to deliver a more robust disease management / control regime. We look to the implementation of the CPH programme, the introduction of quarantine units with practical and workable rules and tolerances for sheep EID.

### **Promoting Welsh food to new & existing markets**

There are significant opportunities to promote Welsh food at home and abroad. Markets in the US and China remain largely untapped. We look to Welsh Government to remove the barriers currently in place and open up these export markets. Government needs to ensure that a fair and equitable share of the red meat levy is returned to Wales.

### **An accessible entry level agri-environment scheme**

Farmers in Wales have a key role as guardians of the nation's landscape and wildlife. Irrespective of location, scale of farm, and enterprise type, all farmers should have the opportunity to participate in on-farm conservation work if they so wish and Welsh Government must re-affirm its commitment to an entry level agri-environment scheme.

### **An RDP that supports widespread investment in new technology**

With a budget of almost a £1bn over the course of the programming period, the Wales RDP is a key enabler of our vision for a productive, profitable and progressive Welsh agricultural industry. Welsh Government must now work with industry on the development of integrated programmes of investment support and advice that facilitate widespread uptake.

### **Prioritise existing access arrangements**

Farmers are the key providers of the landscape and countryside upon which many access and recreational activities depend. Wales already has a very extensive network of paths and access land and any future reforms to access legislation should focus resources at the management and maintenance of the existing network.

### **Evidence and science based policy decision making**

Sound science must be at the heart of policy making. Emotion, populist and sensationalist campaigning should not be allowed to cloud and shape decision making. We look to the next Welsh Government to ensure this is the case at both domestic and EU level.

### **Investment in farmer-driven applied research and development**

As farmers we need to be equipped with the right tools in order to meet growing global demand for food. Wales is home to world leading expertise in the field of agricultural science. Investment in research and development must be farmer-driven and support the deployment of innovative practices and technologies at farm level.

### **Voluntary as opposed to regulatory approach**

Farmers own and manage over 80% of the land area of Wales and find themselves operating in a highly complex regulatory context. NFU Cymru is clear that the best outcomes and greatest progress across a number of key objectives can be achieved through a voluntary rather than a regulatory approach - working in partnership with industry.



## Foreword

I am immensely proud of the role my colleagues and I play in producing food and in caring for our countryside. Agriculture plays a vital role in Wales' economy. Nearly 60,000 people are employed either full or part time on holdings in Wales, with agriculture's gross output estimated at over £1.5bn. Agriculture underpins a food supply chain which is worth £6bn annually, employing around 230,000 people – that's 18% of our workforce. Thousands of rural businesses rely on the income generated from providing goods and services to the Welsh farming community.

Farmers care for 81% of the total Welsh land area for the purposes of agricultural production, landscape and environmental management. Collectively we look after 600,000 hectares of environmentally designated areas and in turn support a diverse range of species, habitats and ecosystems, all of which are integral to a tourism industry worth nearly £2 billion to the economy of Wales.

The last few years have proven turbulent for Welsh farming as the various sectors have moved in and out of profitability. We have just emerged from a round of CAP reform which has caused some considerable upheaval to the industry, whilst the unresolved question of the UK's ongoing membership of the EU continues to create an uncertain backdrop for agriculture.

Despite the difficulties and challenges we face, we have a climate favourable to production, and a nation bursting at the seams with passionate, dedicated and skilled farmers. We are therefore well placed to capitalise on the opportunities that will arise for food producing nations, such as Wales, as both domestic and global demand for food continues to grow. The challenge facing our farmers can be summarised quite simply, we need to produce more to satisfy the needs of a growing population, whilst impacting less on the natural environment. Producing more does not have to come at the expense of the environment; we can produce food at the same time as maintaining and enhancing our environment and reducing our carbon footprint per unit of production. The role for government is to help nurture the self-confidence that the industry needs to meet these challenges, and to create an environment that will encourage investment, innovation and attract new entrants and thereby help secure the industry's future.

In putting together this manifesto I am setting out the Union's vision for what we would like to see the next National Assembly and Welsh Government doing for Wales' farmers and rural communities in practical and easily implementable policies, which if adopted will deliver growth and benefits for our countryside and Wales more generally. I want to wish you every success in your election campaign, and I very much hope that you will see fit to support the actions that NFU Cymru has identified for the next Assembly term.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen James,  
NFU Cymru President



## Over-arching themes

### *CAP Pillar One*

European Union direct payments are vital to underpin food production in Wales and with market prices depressed across all the farming sectors the importance of direct payments to ensure long term food security are as important as they have ever been. The timely delivery of direct payments is absolutely crucial for farmers and the wider rural economy that relies on farming businesses for their income.

A mid-term review of the CAP may present the next Welsh Government with the opportunity to re-examine how the basic payment scheme can be used to help deliver NFU Cymru's vision of a productive, profitable and progressive agricultural industry for Wales, as well as meeting the wider EU policy objective of ensuring that consumers have access to food that is affordable, safe and produced to the highest standards of animal welfare and environmental protection.

To help meet our key policy objectives there is a need for Welsh Government, as a matter of urgency, to carry out a remapping exercise across the whole of Wales. Mapping Wales' agricultural land on the basis of the productive potential of the land, with a view to consulting on the introduction of a regional payment system at the first possible opportunity that would be allowed by the European Commission.

It is now evident from the last round of CAP reform that greening doesn't work for Wales. Rather than putting up barriers in the way of cropping in Wales, we should instead be looking at ways of encouraging our arable and horticulture sector. With the EU Commissioner, Phil Hogan, placing CAP simplification at the top of his agenda, the next Welsh Government needs to seize the opportunity that this presents to push back at some of the onerous requirements that impact on our productive capacity and place barriers on our ability to respond to the marketplace.

NFU Cymru is dismayed at the way in which productive land areas with tree densities of more than 100 trees per hectare have been excluded from Basic Payment eligibility. Areas of grazed woodlands offer real agricultural benefits by providing shelter and shade for livestock, whilst real eco-system services derive from the role that woodland and trees on farmland play in reducing flood risk. We believe it is wrong that farmers who have preserved or created areas of woodland should now be penalised for doing so.

NFU Cymru strongly believes that direct payments should be targeted at 'active' farmers. All efforts must be made to target support at those who carry out the activity and take the financial and entrepreneurial risks associated with primary food production.

NFU Cymru is well aware of the current issue surrounding our ongoing membership of the EU. We are of the view that, even if we do eventually withdraw from Europe, this process could take a number of years, during which time we would still participate in the CAP. This makes it vital that we play an active role in seeking to influence the EU policy agenda in relation to the CAP. The next Welsh Government needs to ensure that adequate contingency plans are in place in order to mitigate some of the shocks that could arise as a result of any potential Brexit.

In recent years the Welsh Government's portfolio holder for agriculture has not always had a seat around the Cabinet table. NFU Cymru believes that agriculture does need a voice around the Cabinet table, and with so much going on, particularly in relation to the CAP, this need has now become more acute than ever.



### **How you can make a difference:**

- Ensure the timely delivery of CAP payments to all claimants as early as possible in the payment window
- Instigate a remapping exercise that seeks to map Wales on the basis of the productive capacity of the land
- Actively input into the CAP simplification exercise and any possible mid-term review
- NFU Cymru calls on Welsh Government to press the European Commission to recognise the value of woodland on farm by not excluding them from the Basic Payment Scheme
- Target support at those who take the financial risks associated with food production
- Plan for the possibility of Brexit in order to mitigate the possible shocks that could arise
- Give the portfolio holder for agriculture a seat around the Cabinet table

### *The Wales Rural Development Programme*

With a budget of almost £1bn over the course of the 2014-2020 programming period, and almost a quarter of that coming from pillar transfer, the Wales Rural Development Programme (RDP) is a key enabler of our vision for a productive, profitable and progressive Welsh agricultural industry capitalising on the global opportunities, contributing increasingly to economic growth in Wales with the farming industry at the heart of thriving rural communities.

The Wales RDP must have a transformative and lasting impact and NFU Cymru believes that the Wales RDP has to focus on measureable outcomes with delivery based on the following key principles:

- It should offer clear farmer benefit, with funds going directly to the farmer
- It should ensure high levels of farmer participation and uptake, with farm businesses able to submit multiple applications during the course of the programming period
- RDP programmes must be available to all farmers, easily accessible and clearly communicated with industry
- RDP programmes must be adequately resourced, with programmes given sufficient time to demonstrate effectiveness and impact

### **How you can make a difference:**

- Commit to maintain the rate of co-financing at 57%
- Progress with the development and implementation of RDP schemes in line with the above key principles
- Work with industry stakeholders on the development of RDP strategic initiatives that improve the competitiveness and profitability of our sector whilst minimising our impact on the environment and delivering climate change benefits through an integrated programme of investment support and advice that facilitate widespread uptake
- Re-affirm its commitment to an entry level agri-environment scheme which offers all farmers in Wales the opportunity to participate if they so wish



## *Animal Health and Welfare*

Tuberculosis continues to cause untold heartache and stress to cattle farmers across Wales, and places an enormous emotional and financial strain on farming families. Latest figures show a year on year increase in the number of cattle slaughtered as a result of bovine TB and a rise in the number of new herd incidents. It is a complex disease that must be tackled in the round, including addressing wildlife disease reservoirs, if we are to stand any chance of eradicating the disease.

From its inception, NFU Cymru has consistently raised concerns about the cost and effectiveness of the Welsh Government's badger vaccination policy in the Intensive Action Area in south west Wales. Four years in to what was supposed to be a five year programme a global shortage of the BCG vaccination has led to its premature curtailment. A bovine TB wildlife strategy predicated solely on the vaccination of badgers is not a viable or sustainable policy option.

Farmers across Wales are playing their part in bearing down on disease through cattle based measures, but the disease in wildlife is not being tackled.

Farmers strive to produce healthy animals for the food chain through ensuring good welfare and reducing disease incidence using a variety of preventative and control measures, the Animal Health and Welfare framework can support farmers in continuing to achieve this aim.

Climate change may well have an impact on the range of diseases faced by Welsh livestock farmers. The incursion of Bluetongue and Schmallenberg virus in recent years has highlighted how quickly a new disease can enter the country and threaten the health of our livestock, it is important that this framework is able to quickly respond to future exotic disease threats.

Farmers throughout Wales very much value the relationship they have with their private vet and an increasing number of farmers are working proactively with their vet on herd health management to further improve the health status of their livestock and therefore the productivity of their farming business.

Farmers and vets across Wales need access to adequate laboratory testing facilities so that they can quickly and effectively identify disease issues on farm and we very much hope that aspirations for a Veterinary Institute for Wales, based in Aberystwyth will come to fruition.

NFU Cymru supported the last Welsh Government when it legislated to tackle the issue of fly-grazing. The legislation that was passed gave discretionary powers to local authorities to tackle incidents of fly-grazing and the abandonment of horses. Because there is no compulsion to act, different local authorities have taken different approaches to utilising these powers.

### **How you can make a difference:**

- Implement a targeted cull of badgers, in areas where TB is known to be endemic in the badger population
- Continue to support projects such as Cymorth TB
- Ensure that Welsh farmers have access to world class laboratory facilities
- Do all it can to help secure a Veterinary Institute for Wales, based in Aberystwyth
- Work with local authorities to ensure that powers to tackle fly-grazing are being properly utilised

## *The Strategic Framework for Agriculture*

Red tape, unnecessary regulation and bureaucracy add considerably to costs borne by Wales' farmers, and we therefore welcomed and supported the 'Working Smarter' Initiative. Although some of the changes took longer than expected to deliver, and some are still indeed outstanding, successes under the Working Smarter initiative have been delivered when government and industry have fully embraced the principles of partnership working. The strategic framework launched by Welsh Government last year offers a way of continuing to build on the good work undertaken in the 'Working Smarter' initiative. If it is to succeed then there must be genuine partnership between Welsh Government and industry, as well as buy-in across all departments of Welsh Government.

There must be the strongest possible presumption by the next Welsh Government against the 'gold plating' of any EU legislative requirements. The next Welsh Government should also consider how it might go about rolling back some of the worst examples of gold plating. The lack of any tolerance in place under the Sheep EID regulations remains a real concern for thousands of sheep keepers in Wales. NFU Cymru believes that the guiding principle when it comes to farm inspection should be the targeting of inspections at those farmers at greatest risk of inspection failure, whilst recognising and rewarding those considered to pose a low risk of failure by minimising the number of inspections that they are subjected to.

At the beginning of 2016 European Agricultural Commissioner, Phil Hogan, announced positive moves towards a more proportionate approach to penalties under the Common Agricultural Policy, including simplification of the administrative penalty regime, flexibility to amend aid applications in set time periods without penalty as well as a yellow card system for first time breaches.

### **How you can make a difference:**

- All Welsh Government departments to work in partnership with industry through the strategic framework
- Roll back on any gold plating of EU legislation and ensure there is tolerance in place on sheep EID, reflecting current technical limitations
- Embrace the principles of earned recognition across all inspection regimes, to reward farmers at low risk of non-compliance
- Swiftly implement any flexibility to CAP penalties granted by the European Commission



## *The Welsh Food Sector*

The public sector in Wales is a significant procurer of food, spending over £70m annually, £20m of this on fresh food. All too often these procurement decisions end up being based solely on cost, something which is, in our view, short term and misguided. It is wrong that many bodies chose to procure produce from other countries that do not uphold the same high standards of production as Wales. NFU Cymru therefore believes that there needs to be far greater emphasis placed on quality marks such as assurance standards and PGI status when food sourcing decisions are made. Poor and misleading labelling continues to annoy farmers and to baffle consumers. Government at all levels must continue to bear down on poor practice and ensure that consumers get the clear labelling they need in order to make an informed choice about the products they buy.

The current Welsh Government's Action Plan for the Food and Drink Industry 2014-2020 has set an ambitious target of 30% growth in the food sector to raise turnover to £6.7bn by 2020. There is nothing wrong in setting ambitious targets such as this one. Farmers are of course the primary producers of food, and if the Welsh Government's targets are to be achieved then it will only be through the Welsh Government and the whole supply chain working together to deliver on them, with the necessary measures put in place to ensure that these targets can be achieved.

Significant opportunities exist to promote Welsh food at home and abroad, with markets in the US and China remaining largely untapped.

It is vital that our schoolchildren, the next generation of consumers, recognise the value of food, where it comes from, how it is produced and the health and nutritional benefits of our food.

### **How you can make a difference:**

- Set a positive example when it comes to public procurement and sourcing
- Press for clearer labelling of food, allowing consumers to make an informed choice
- Welsh Government to work towards dismantling some of the barriers that currently exist to the US and Chinese export markets
- Ensure that food and farming are given adequate space in the education system

## *Science and Technology*

The financial squeeze of the last few years has seen investment in science and technology research and development diminish. Ironically this has come at a time when research and development are more important than ever when it comes to ensuring the sector has the ability to meet the twin challenges of producing more from less.

Wales is home to some world class expertise in the field of agricultural science. We need to make sure that we make full use of these facilities that lie on our doorstep and ensure that these breakthroughs are translated into practical management tools. Areas of future research must include climate change adaptation, resource - use efficiency, the genetic improvement of crops and livestock, the control of pests and diseases and reducing waste.

Hostility towards biotechnology and GM runs the risk that Wales' farmers will be left behind their competitors when it comes to accessing new technology. We believe that an open mind needs to be kept by the Welsh Government and the National Assembly on the issue of agricultural biotechnology, including GM, and it would be wrong to dismiss these technologies out of hand or place artificial barriers in their way.



### **How you can make a difference:**

- Research and Development must be industry focussed and requires the full collaboration of industry, Welsh Government and scientists
- Keep an open mind when it comes to new technology, including GM

### *Rural Connectivity*

Whilst there can be no doubting the usefulness and value of broadband in accessing services and for communications, for many people living in deep rural areas, being able to access fast, reliable, broadband with a steady line speed, at an affordable price, is a real challenge.

The Access Broadband Cymru scheme which offers financial assistance toward the cost of buying the hardware needed to get broadband to hard to reach places has been beneficial, the scheme needs to be well publicised in order to ensure maximum levels of participation.

The efforts of farmers, farming unions and agents meant that 72% of SAF applications were completed online in 2015. For many the online option is attractive as it has been straightforward to use and reduces the risk of an administrative error. However many farmers are still struggling to secure the broadband access that they need, and it is essential that Welsh Government recognises this and does not place any rural business at a disadvantage as it migrates more and more services to online platforms.

Mobile phone signal in rural Wales can be a source of real frustration, with signal often patchy or non-existent. Farmers and rural dwellers are increasingly reliant on mobile devices for communications but are being let down by the supporting infrastructure.

### **How you can make a difference:**

- Continue with the Access Broadband Cymru scheme
- Not to disadvantage any rural businesses as more and more services are moved to online platforms
- Encourage mobile phone operators to share transmitters in rural areas where possible to help improve network coverage



## *Planning*

NFU Cymru has long called for a uniform, consistent and easy to understand approach to planning across Wales' local authorities and designated landscapes. As well as allowing farmers to meet with statutory and regulatory requirements, the planning process needs to facilitate the investment on farm that we need to allow agriculture to develop and diversify, rather than hold it back, with planning controls applied more consistently across planning authority areas.

### **How you can make a difference:**

- Ensure the planning system demonstrates a thorough understanding and appreciation of the role of agriculture and recognises that investment and modernisation in farming is essential

## *Renewables*

NFU Cymru's ambition is for every farm to be able to become a net energy exporter, and in doing so helping contribute towards the Welsh Government's greenhouse gas reduction targets. Wales' geography and topography make us particularly suited to generating power from wind and hydro schemes. In the last few years we have also seen investment in photo-voltaic schemes. The planning system for renewables does however need to be made simpler, and easier to go through whilst issues around poor grid connectivity also need to be addressed. Whenever and wherever these developments are sited they need to be done sensitively, engaging in consultation with local communities.

### **How you can make a difference:**

- Help ensure that the planning and regulatory system for renewables is made simpler and that planning controls more generally are applied more consistently across local authority areas

## *Young Farmers*

Our young farmers represent the future of our industry. We need to continue to attract new entrants into the industry, including those who are completely new to agriculture. In 2015 NFU Cymru established its Next Generation Policy Group, representing all our main farming sectors, with members of the group chosen on account of their expertise and passion for the industry.

The Council farm system provides a valuable means of entering the industry for many young farmers. The size of the council farm estate in Wales has declined in recent years as hard pressed local authorities have sold off their council farms. Although we understand why selling off assets in this way may appear tempting in order to meet short term financial needs, we also consider this policy to be misguided. Council farms are a valuable asset, which offer a potential on-going revenue stream.

### **How you can make a difference:**

- Highlight the career opportunities available in agriculture
- Help preserve the council farm estate



## Farming Sector Specific

### *Livestock sector*

Wales' maritime climate places us at a comparative advantage when it comes to producing livestock, and over 90% of our 1.7m hectares of agricultural land is dedicated to grassland and grazing. The quality and tradition of Welsh livestock has been recognised through the conferral of coveted PGI status on our Welsh beef and lamb. The red meat sector has taken a considerable knock in light of the marketplace volatility over the last year, for confidence to be restored we need to secure fair and transparent supply chains.

The issue of the red-meat levy, the way in which it is collected and the funds distributed, means that Wales loses out on its fair share of levy funding, to the tune of around £1m a year. For many years we have been pressing for a distribution of levy income which takes a fair account of the level of red meat production in Wales, rather than a system based on the location of abattoirs. At the end of 2015 levy bodies in Wales, England and Scotland submitted a joint briefing to Ministers outlining alternative options for levy distribution amongst the home nations.

We are pleased that the Welsh Government has finally gone out to consultation on the issue of quarantine units. It has taken considerable lobbying effort to get this far, although we will not see any changes this side of the National Assembly elections. The introduction of quarantine units with practical and workable rules will allow farmers to capitalise on market opportunities whilst minimising risks of disease transmission.

The size of Wales' suckler herd has continued to decline from over 260,000 in 2004 to around 215,000 in 2014 as a response to low profitability in the sector. This means that as a nation we are increasingly forgoing the environmental benefits of suckler cow production.

There is scope within the next Wales RDP for the introduction of strategic initiatives to help maximise the productivity, profitability and competitiveness of Welsh beef and lamb production.

Case law has revealed the National Assembly's legislative competence to be wider than first thought. This may provide the opportunity to introduce a ban on the sale and release of Chinese lanterns due to the dangers they present to livestock, people, wildlife, and property.

#### **How you can make a difference:**

- Exert pressure on processors operating in Wales to sign up and abide by voluntary codes of practice
- Ensure that a fair and equitable share of the red meat levy is returned to Wales
- A practical and workable system of quarantine units is delivered for Welsh farmers
- Encourage suckler beef production via agri-environment schemes
- Maximise the productivity, profitability and competitiveness of Welsh red meat production via RDP strategic initiatives
- Investigate the potential for introducing a ban on Chinese lanterns in Wales



## *Dairy Sector*

Low prices continue to impact the dairy sector in Wales, and in the 15 years between 1999 and 2014 the number of dairy farms in Wales has fallen from 3,977 to 1,753. A properly functioning dairy supply chain should be able to deliver profitability to each and every link in the supply chain

Clearer guidance on how farming co-operatives and producer organisations can collaborate to market their produce is needed, and we look to the Welsh Government to pursue this with the UK Competition Authorities.

The Welsh Government should work closely with the UK Government and the EU to push for stronger food labelling requirements, including clear and unambiguous country of origin labelling on milk and dairy products.

### **How you can make a difference:**

- To implement the recommendations of Andrew Richardson's Independent Review of the dairy sector in Wales, specifically working with the industry to develop dedicated supply chains for both the liquid milk and cheese sectors, and help develop processing capacity within Wales
- Exert pressure to ensure that all milk purchasers operating in Wales abide by the voluntary code of practice for milk contracts
- Work with the UK competition authorities to develop clearer guidance on collaborative working
- Push for clear and unambiguous country of origin labelling on milk and dairy produce

## *Arable and Horticulture*

A diversified rural economy is important to Wales. We have small but important arable and horticultural sectors which complement our red-meat and dairy sectors and make us more resilient, and better able to withstand the shocks of an increasingly volatile global marketplace.

A little over two years ago, Pembrokeshire early potatoes cultivated according to traditional methods, were granted coveted PGI status. Going forward there is significant scope to develop our horticultural sector, through improvements to infrastructure, processing capacity and supply chains. There is also scope to stimulate and grow our arable sector to become more efficient via the RDP.

Over the last few years the number of plant protection products available to farmers in Wales has dropped significantly, falling from over 800 different active substances in 2001 to around 250 now. As available products dwindle, the task of producing more from finite resources, to feed a growing global population, becomes more and more of a challenge. The loss of products has occurred



despite the great strides made by manufacturers in producing more targeted and safer pesticides, and by farmers and growers in using them more responsibly. At the root of the loss of so many active substances is the European Commission's failure to take account of risk, choosing instead to focus on intrinsic hazard. The next Welsh Government must do all it can to ensure that a risk based approach is at the heart of European decision making.

**How you can make a difference:**

- Through the investment measures available under the Wales RDP support investment in precision farming technology
- Seek to ensure that a risk based approach is at the heart of European decision making on pesticides

*Poultry*

Wales' poultry sector has undergone considerable expansion in the last few years as farmers have sought to diversify their businesses, there are opportunities through the Welsh food strategy to help our poultry industry brand and market our product. Avian Influenza continues to be a threat to the poultry industry in Wales, partnership working can help keep the disease out of Wales and minimise the disruption to business if an outbreak were to occur.

**How you can make a difference:**

- Help and support the sector to brand and markets its products
- Work in partnership with the industry to keep disease out and minimise business disruption in case of an Avian Influenza outbreak



## Environmental Objectives

### *Voluntary vs Regulatory*

Farmers own and manage over 80% of the land area of Wales and find themselves operating in a highly complex regulatory context. NFU Cymru is clear that the best outcomes and greatest progress across a number of environmental objectives can be achieved through voluntary rather than regulatory approaches, working in partnership with industry.

#### **How you can make a difference:**

- Make a fundamental pledge to take forward delivery of environmental objectives through voluntary rather than regulatory approaches. Where regulation is necessary it must focus on outcomes and not process
- Establish a Farm Liaison Service within Natural Resources Wales to offer farmers advice and guidance on environmental best practice and regulation

### *Evidence Based Policy Making*

All legislation as well as Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales decision-making must be based on the latest robust scientific evidence if it is to have the desired effect, avoid unintended consequences and stand up to scrutiny. Precedence must be given to sound science, and populist and sensationalist campaigning should have no place in the decision making process.

#### **How you can make a difference:**

- Make a fundamental pledge that all policy decision making should be made using robust scientific evidence

### *Nitrates Review and NVZ designations*

Proposals to designate significant additional parts of Wales as Nitrate Vulnerable Zones are of massive concern to our members operating in those areas, with thousands of farms potentially at risk of falling within the designated area with significant economic impact to their businesses and the wide rural economy.

#### **How you can make a difference:**

- Commit to no gold-plating of the Nitrates Directive at Wales level and ensure that the evidence base underpinning proposed designations is robust and stands up to scrutiny
- Establish a NVZ Task Force to ensure a joined up and co-ordinated response to provide farmers with advice and investment support required to comply with new designations and associated regulatory burden

## Access

Farmers are the key providers of the landscape and countryside upon which many access and recreational activities depend, however, proposals to reform access legislation to allow the right of responsible recreation to all land in Wales are unworkable. Risk minimisation to the public should be a key guiding principle in taking forward any reform of access in Wales. It is also vital that changes to access legislation do not result in increased costs, burden or liabilities being placed on farmers. Wales already has a very extensive network of paths and access land, and in NFU Cymru's experience members of the public, in the main, appreciate clearly defined routes which are well signposted and maintained. The fact remains that despite a threefold increase in land accessible by right since devolution, the proportion of Welsh residents undertaking outdoor recreation has remained pretty flat at 27% over this period.

### **How you can make a difference:**

- Abandon legislative proposals for an entirely new access settlement in Wales and focus reforms and resources at the management and maintenance of existing Public Rights of Way
- Harmonise legislation to ensure that all dog owners are clear of their rights and responsibilities with respect to dogs in the countryside. Close control should mean on a short lead except where the dog owners' personal safety is threatened

## Climate Change

Globally, agriculture can provide practical solutions to climate change. Welsh farmers are at the forefront not only in adapting to climate change to provide food now and for future generations, but also helping to mitigate its effects through improved efficiency, renewable energy generation and carbon sequestration. The Environment Bill includes a requirement to achieve emissions targets by 2050 together with interim emissions targets and the establishment of carbon budgets for each budgetary period.

### **How you can make a difference:**

- Recognise the fundamental priority of safeguarding food security in line with the COP21 Paris Agreement
- Develop measures to support farmers to take action and make investments that will contribute to increased climate resilience - this includes managing flood risk



## Designated Landscapes

Designated landscapes, including the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, make up a total of 25% of the land area of Wales and their future role has been closely examined via the independent review and subsequent Future Landscapes of Wales Working Group.

It is important to recognise that agricultural land - which has been created, shaped and maintained by generations of farmers - makes up the largest proportion of the land area within these designated areas and it is vitally important that National Parks and AONBs are viewed as living, working environments which are constantly evolving.

### How you can make a difference:

- Ensure that any revised purpose for Designated Landscapes should acknowledge equally the economic, social, cultural and environmental strands of sustainability and not prioritise landscape conservation above all else
- Ensure that the planning system within National Parks should not impose limitations on the development and technological advancement of farming and other economic activities in these areas

## Fly-tipping

Fly-tipping is an issue that affects members of the farming community disproportionately. It is farmers who frequently have to face the consequences of fly-tipping with impacts on their business both in terms of time and money. NFU Cymru fully endorses the vision of a fly-tipping free Wales; however, we have concerns that making this vision a reality is undermined by increasing regulation and expense associated with legal waste disposal in Wales together with diminishing public resources.

### How you can make a difference:

- Place a statutory duty on local authorities to investigate all fly-tipping incidents on private land
- Release farmers from the regulatory burden of registering with NRW as a Waste Carrier and develop a system that allows farmers to dispose of fly-tipped waste at no cost



**IT'S TIME TO BACK  
WELSH FARMING**

**MAE'N AMSER CEFNOGI  
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