



WHITCOMBERD/ADOBE STOCK



Key Asks for... Wales

“Food security isn’t just about the volume of food we produce - it’s about what we produce and how we produce it, who can access it, what produces food waste. Policies that support farmers in Wales need to reflect that.”

Rhys Evans, NFFN Sustainable Farming Lead for Wales

Around 90% of Wales’ total land area is used for agriculture.¹¹⁵ As such agriculture is at the core of the Welsh economy and holds an important place in Welsh social and cultural life. Within this landscape, many farmers are already working in tandem with nature to deliver environmental benefits like sequestering carbon, increasing biodiversity and improving water quality; however, nature friendly farming is not yet the ‘norm’ in Wales. To enable a country wide, landscape-scale transition to a nature friendly food system, we ask the Welsh government to undertake the following actions:

Lead with holistic, pro-nature food strategy. The Welsh Agricultural Bill — currently passing through a period of Senedd scrutiny — includes a welcome emphasis on sustainable food production, mitigating and adapting to the climate emergency, restoring biodiversity, and promoting farming as a cultural resource. We support the current direction of travel. We do, however, see a need for greater connection between agricultural and food policy in Wales,

which includes facilitating shorter supply chains and local food economies. The current draft Food (Wales) Bill needs to complement and work alongside the Agricultural Bill to ensure that food production in Wales is treated in a joined-up way.

Support a just transition to payments that support nature friendly farming. The transition away from CAP-style subsidies and towards the Sustainable Farming Scheme is critical to creating a more resilient farming landscape. Facilitating a just and considered transition will be vital to its success. The Welsh Government has made a good start in outlining plans for this new scheme, but there is a need for greater clarity on how it will work and what payments farmers can expect. Greater clarity and communication will allow farmers and farming families to plan ahead and adapt to the new policy landscape.

Champion a global nature-positive food system through trade policy. Under the ‘Well-being of Future Generations Act in Wales’, the Welsh Government has recognised the need to reduce

impact on the global environment and climate change. The Government needs to continue championing reduction of its international footprint, by reducing its imports of commodities, like soy-based feed, which are often linked to land-use change and deforestation abroad.¹¹⁶ Rewarding Wales’ farmers for environmental improvements is a futile exercise if we continue to import food and commodities that contribute towards global nature and climate declines.

Fund farmer peer-to-peer learning. The Welsh Government’s farm advisory body, Farming Connect, will play an important role in delivering the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS). To date, Farming Connect has focused its advice to help farmers improve production, yields and efficiency. Now, it needs to serve a new purpose by providing affordable advice to help farmers deliver benefits for nature and climate.

Support research into nature friendly farming approaches. Wales lacks robust monitoring approaches for agri-environment schemes. Farmers are often asked to implement new practices, but there is limited follow up to assess what impact new practices are having. The Welsh Government needs to encourage farmers to keep and capture data that can be used to understand the impacts of new farming schemes. Furthermore, encouraging farmers to undertake simple monitoring activities such as spade tests or soil infiltration testing, in addition to offering more specialised services such as soil carbon and biodiversity testing, would be very beneficial. After all, you can’t manage what you don’t measure.

Lead by example in procurement. Welsh public procurement guidelines need to give preference to farmers with established nature and climate friendly farming practices and excellent environmental land management. The Welsh Government can ensure that schools, hospitals, and public institutions are sourcing from local farmers that practise nature friendly practices.