# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Future of Farming in Wales**  |
| **DATE**  | **14 May 2024** |
| **BY** | **Huw Irranca-Davies, Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs** |

Working in partnership with the farming industry is key to me to ensure we achieve our shared goal of ensuring that farming in Wales has a long, successful, and vibrant future.

This successful future for Welsh farming is about producing food sustainably, looking after our environment and underpinning our rural communities, all the while overcoming the climate and nature emergencies we and our future generations are facing.

Today I am visiting a farm in the Vale of Glamorgan to announce the introduction of a Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) Preparatory Phase of activity in 2025 with the proposed SFS Transition Period starting from 2026.

This new timeframe will give us the opportunity to do a number of important things.

It will allow me to have the conversations and discussions we need to have with Plaid Cymru, as part of the Cooperation Agreement, and with the members of the Ministerial Roundtable. I intend to work at pace to identify areas of agreement and place the emphasis on matters where more work is required.

The SFS must provide farmers with the right level of support to help with business resilience. This is why we have always said we will include payment for the wider benefits farming provides, going beyond income forgone and costs incurred, to recognise social value. The Roundtable will help find an appropriate payment methodology and will consider the updated economic assessment based on the revised Scheme as well as any further and alternative proposals to achieve additional carbon sequestration within the SFS.

We will also use this time to undertake a data confirmation exercise which, with feedback from farmers, will provide an accurate picture of the habitat and tree cover across all farms.

Under the Habitat Wales Scheme, we saw an increase in the area of habitat land under management this year. I want to build on this success and so I am exploring giving more farmers the opportunity to access support in 2025.

During the preparatory phase, we will also work with stakeholders to identify and develop a set of proposals for further Optional and Collaborative Actions, with the aim of introducing these as soon as possible.

Recognising the need for certainty, I also want to confirm my intention for BPS to be available in 2025, with the proposed SFS transition period starting from 2026. I will make announcements on the BPS ceiling for 2025 in due course.

I expect existing rural investment schemes, such as the small grants schemes, will continue to support infrastructure changes during this period and we are working on a new landscape scale scheme which will build on the experience of previous collaboration schemes.

Working with Farming Connect we will also continue to promote the benefits and opportunities of tree cover and woodland on farms and work on knowledge transfer, focusing on farm activity which supports efficiencies and aligns to the outcomes and actions being developed for the SFS. I will also consider continuing support to organic farmers next year.

As I have said a number of times, working with the industry is key and I intend on moving forward quickly to ensure we develop a Scheme that supports a sustainable and resilient agricultural industry in Wales.