# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Responses to Sustainable Farming and Our Land Consultation :** Proposals to continue and simplify Agricultural Support for Farmers and the Rural Economy |
| **DATE**  | **16 November 2020** |
| **BY** | **Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs** |

Today I am pleased to announce the outcome of the consultation which I launched on 31 July 2020 seeking views on proposals for agricultural support for Welsh farmers from 2021. The consultation closed on 23 October 2020 and received 99 responses from both organisations and individuals.

In the consultation we proposed a regulatory basis for the Welsh Government to continue to support farmers, land managers and the wider rural economy after the end of the EU Withdrawal Agreement Implementation Period - 31 December 2020. It proposed a legislative framework to support the competitiveness of farming and food production, whilst responding to the climate emergency in the interim period ahead of the planned introduction of an Agriculture (Wales) Bill in the next Senedd term.

<https://gov.wales/sustainable-farming-and-our-land-simplifying-agricultural-support>

<https://llyw.cymru/ffermio-cynaliadwy-tir-symleiddio-cymorth-amaethyddol>

Of the 11 Basic Payment Scheme proposals set out in the consultation, respondents were in broad agreement with eight. The feedback has been reviewed and those 8 proposals will be taken forward as outlined out in the Welsh Government response document.

Three proposals generated a high level of contrasting views (either in volume of negative response or associated commentary). These were:

* Stopping new applicants to the Young Farmers Scheme from 2021 (Question 7)
* Adding a new eligible category to the National Reserve (Question 11)
* Removing Hemp as an eligible crop code for BPS. (Question 17)

Following review, I have decided these 3 proposals will not be carried forward at the current time. This means the Young Farmers Scheme will continue to support young farmers into the industry, hemp will also remain eligible to activate BPS entitlements, as it is considered to be a viable crop for farmers and no new National Reserve category will be introduced given the divergence of views from those who responded.

The changes being taken forward are small but impactful and will help to ensure stability and continued support for farmers once the UK withdraws from the European Union.

The majority of respondents were in favour of all 5 Rural Development proposals set out in the consultation. However, 2 proposals generated significant comment and a high level of contrasting views, these proposals were:

* Replacing the European Union mission, objectives and priorities for rural development support with Welsh specific definitions for rural development.
* Removing the detailed requirements on the content and amendment of a future rural development programme and strengthening the role of the Managing Authority in the administration of the RDP.

Following review, I have decided to take forward these 2 proposals with amendments to reflect the views of respondents:

* The structure provided by retained EU Law will be expanded to incorporate the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and Environment (Wales) Act 2016, as they complement Wales’ ambitions in this area.
* I will establish a non-statutory Rural Development Advisory Board to advise on the content and delivery of the domestic rural support programme. The role of the Managing Authority will be retained to oversee and support the Rural Development Advisory Board, provide advice to the Welsh Ministers and oversee delivery of the programme.

The remaining three proposals will be taken forward as outlined in the Welsh Government response document.

I have instructed officials to begin drafting legislation to make these amendments. The legislation governing the Basic Payment Scheme for Wales will come into force before the end of the year in readiness for claim year 2021. The legislation governing Rural Development in Wales will come into force in early 2021.