

Brexit, agriculture and rural life in Wales: Assembly Committee publishes report

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Following the result of the EU referendum, the Assembly's Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee launched an inquiry into the [Future of Agricultural and Rural Development Policies in Wales](#).

The Committee gathered a wealth of evidence over the six months of the inquiry hearing from, amongst others, farming unions, academics, environmentalists, foresters, LEADER representatives, the tourism industry and the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs. This included a stakeholder workshop, oral evidence sessions, written evidence and an on-line dialogue.

The Committee visited farms in Ceredigion and Snowdonia to learn more about the challenges and opportunities facing farmers and those working in the rural economy. A delegation also visited Ireland to hear first-hand about the Burren programme to learn about outcome-based agricultural schemes that favour habitat restoration.



The Committee has now published its report; [the Future of Land Management in Wales \(PDF: 2.82MB\)](#), which sets out recommendations to both the Welsh Government and UK Government that are based on the evidence gathered during the inquiry.

The report is divided into two parts.

Part 1 addresses the immediate challenges facing Wales' agricultural sector as a result of the decision to leave the EU. Key conclusions taken from the report include:



Access to the EU Single Market:

The risks of failing to achieve a trade deal with the EU are grave – trading under World Trade Organization rules will be hugely detrimental to the agricultural sector in Wales. The UK Government must ensure that Welsh producers, including Welsh lamb producers, are not exposed to the severe risks arising from restrictions on access to EU markets and the imposition of tariffs.

An appropriate level of funding:

The UK Government must continue to provide funding for agriculture and rural development in Wales at the present level of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) support until at least 2020/21. Thereafter, the most important benchmark will be the next cycle of CAP, from 2021–2027. In turn, the Welsh Government must commit to spend that funding on agriculture and rural development. The constituent nations of the UK must together agree a mechanism to determine funding in the longer term.

A regulatory framework that supports the agricultural sector:

The current regulatory framework maintains standards of production which allow access to the EU Single Market and beyond. The opportunity for reforming regulations should draw on the views of food producers. Any future regulations should support the production of high quality food and ensure the widest possible access to markets.

Access to labour:

There is understandable concern in Wales that a reduction in migrant labour could have a negative impact on the agricultural and food processing sectors. The UK Government must take into account the labour needs of Wales when determining future immigration policy.

The Welsh Government should seize this opportunity to consider its workforce planning for the agricultural and food processing sector.



Transitional arrangements:

Comprehensive transitional arrangements are needed to minimise any negative impact arising from the UK's exit from the EU and to give as much certainty as possible to the sector in Wales. Any future funding arrangement which covers this interim period should be agreed by all devolved administrations.

We believe that changes to funding arrangements which are significantly different from the current CAP funding model will require a transitional period equivalent to the duration of the current and the next CAP cycles.

Part 2 explores the potential of a model of payment and support for land management that is based on sustainable outcomes. It calls for delivery of outcomes in the following areas:

- Tackling climate change, including flood prevention and improving water quality;
- Supporting a **resilient, more self-reliant food production sector, producing food of the highest quality;**
- Maintaining sustainable forestry and woodland;
- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity;
- Managing the landscape for the benefit of tourism, recreation and local communities; and
- Nurturing the Welsh language and vibrant rural communities.

The Committee considers the report to be an important contribution in informing the debate on the implications of Brexit for land management in Wales.

You can find out more about the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee and its up-coming work on [its website](#).

Article by [Katy Orford](#), National Assembly for Wales Research Service.

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