# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TITLE** | **Extreme Weather Summit Update and Infrastructure Investment Support** |
| **DATE** | **29 April 2024** |
| **BY** | **Huw Irranca-Davies, Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs** |

In response to the prolonged period of wet weather, I recently chaired an ‘Extreme Weather Summit’ with key agricultural partners to discuss its impact on farmers and growers. The Summit was an opportunity to examine the impacts and discuss the actions Government and the supply chain might take collectively to deal with the circumstances some farmers are facing. I am grateful to those who gave their time at short notice and for their constructive input. I have committed to convene regular meetings with partners. I also intend to have meetings with the banking and retail sectors.

Whilst the weather has slightly improved recently, the delayed access to work the land and increasing costs incurred during the extended winter months will have short, medium and long-term impacts.

In the short term, I am acutely aware of the human impact on farming families and I am clear we need to face this issue with communication and a pragmatic approach. The mental health of those involved in the agricultural industry is of great concern to me and I strongly encourage anyone suffering with stress or other mental health issues to ask for help. Welsh Government will also play its part; if farmers have any difficulties meeting the requirements of their contracts, as a result of this prolonged wet weather period, they should contact Rural Payments Wales as soon as possible to discuss their options or to request a derogation. All requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

My officials are currently monitoring the impact the wet weather may have on farmers and growers in Wales, including through the UK-wide Agriculture Market Monitoring Group and I will be discussing with Ministers of the Devolved Governments in the Interministerial Group meeting on 1 May.

Our future generations will be farming in much more challenging conditions. We must act today to adapt and mitigate for this - taking steps to build resilience to the potential impacts of climate change.

Longer term, the impact of the current wet weather shows the importance of investing in resilience and during the Summit I heard of significant issues in relation to slurry storage capacity.

Today, I am therefore pleased to be able to provide an update on the package of measures the Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru have agreed in order to progress the implementation of the relevant commitment in the Co-operation Agreement.

The Water Resources (Control of Agricultural Pollution) (Wales) Regulations 2021 are designed to help Wales meet its commitment to improve water quality in our rivers and their tributaries. To enable farmers to contribute to these outcomes, I am pleased to announce that two schemes which specifically support investment in on farm infrastructure, the Nutrient Management Investment Scheme and the Small Grants – Yard Coverings scheme, will open shortly and £20m has been committed to support farmers to reach compliance with the Regulations.

Both schemes are designed to enable farmers to address nutrient management and storage by providing support for additional slurry storage capacity and/or prevent rainwater entering slurry stores to reduce storage capacity requirement. I have decided to increase the support to provide a maximum 50% contribution towards certain project costs and detailed guidance will be available shortly.

In making this announcement today, I also reiterate our continued commitment, under the Co-operation Agreement, to work with the farming community in the deployment of the regulations to improve water and air quality, taking an approach targeted at those activities known to cause pollution.