# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Sustainable Farming and our Land: Summary of responses**  |
| **DATE**  | **06 May 2020** |
| **BY** | **Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs** |

The Welsh Government’s *Sustainable Farming and our Land* consultation published last year, sought views on our proposals for a new Sustainable Farming Scheme for Wales. The consultation proposed a new system of financial support for farmers, linked to the delivery of Sustainable Land Management outcomes. These included improved air and water quality, and more resilient ecosystems, alongside the ongoing production of safe, high quality, sustainable food.

Over 3,000 responses were received from a range of farmers, stakeholder organisations and members of the public.  I am pleased a significant proportion of respondents reported they are directly engaged in farming.  I am grateful to all those who responded, including the National Farmers’ Union Cymru, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and Ramblers Cymru, each of whom ran a campaign to encourage their members to submit views and who shared distinct views and perspectives on the proposals.

I commissioned a research company to produce an independent and detailed summary of responses. Today, I am publishing the summary.

There was a wide range of responses with overall, broad support for the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) framework.  For many respondents, this support was contingent on a number of factors, such as the nature of the outcomes we are proposing. I will consider all these comments and other relevant matters, as we refine our proposals.

Some respondents focussed on the need to ensure the continued competitiveness of the farming sector in Wales, with some arguing the focus on environmental outcomes would harm the competitiveness and financial sustainability of Welsh farming.

Our proposals are intended to provide an important income stream for farmers who participate in the Scheme, recognising the important work they do in delivering environmental outcomes and reward them for it.  In addition, we are seeking to reinforce the long term competitiveness of the sector through enhanced business advice and support. Work is also being undertaken to understand the financial impacts on the sector of the proposed Scheme.

The competitiveness of farming, food production and improved environmental resilience are complimentary agendas.  Our proposals are clear that sustainable food production is a major part of the SLM approach, in a way which responds to the climate emergency, reverses biodiversity decline, ensures high standards of animal health and welfare and protects our natural resources.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires the Welsh Ministers to carry out sustainable development. In accordance with the sustainable development principle this Government is committed to the protection of our both current and future farmers.  Tackling climate change and mitigating the impact of increased floods and droughts it is likely we will continue to experience,  is vital to safeguard future food production in Wales.  Taking a refreshed approach to soil and grassland husbandry is about sustaining the productive capacity of our soils whilst also safeguarding our other natural resources.

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important for everyone we are clear about our next steps.  I continue to propose to provide financial support to farmers who manage their land in a way which enables the sustainable production of quality Welsh food, tackles the climate emergency, reverses the loss of biodiversity, ensures high standards of animal health and welfare and protects our natural resources.

I originally proposed, and then launched, a co-design exercise with the aim of involving as many farmers as possible in helping to shape the detail of the proposals. This co-design exercise has had be adapted in light of Covid-19 control measures. In the short term, we are now taking this forward through an online survey and one-to one interviews. I know, at this difficult time, many farmers will be unable to spare the time to take part.  For those who are able, this is an important opportunity to share their expertise and knowledge in a positive and forward looking exercise.  We will look to re-arrange workshops when it is safe to do so and social distancing measures have been eased.

Over the next year, we will continue to progress with our detailed and comprehensive programme of analysis, as set out in *Sustainable Farming and our Land*. Some of this will build on, and be taken forward by, our Environment & Rural Affairs Monitoring and Modelling Programme and we are commissioning, economic analysis of our proposals. Together, the results of the evidence and analysis will inform the impact assessments of the proposed Scheme

As the situation with Covid-19 and EU transition evolves, I will continue to support Welsh farmers and ensure our proposals provide a sustainable approach which will deliver long term resilience for the industry.

The summary of responses can be found [here](https://gov.wales/revised-proposals-supporting-welsh-farmers-after-brexit).