



## Nature Friendly Farming Network *Agriculture Bill Report Stage & Third Reading Briefing*

The **Nature Friendly Farming Network** (NFFN) is a farmer-led independent organisation, established in November 2017, uniting farmers across the UK who are committed to managing their land for wildlife and public goods at the same time as growing and providing safe, healthy and nutritious food. We come from a **range of backgrounds** big and small, organic and conventional. We are passionate about ensuring our countryside is productive and bursting with wildlife. We hope to highlight that farming and nature can go hand in hand, feeding the nation, including during challenging moments such as the recent **COVID-19 pandemic**.

Because of our values and collective experience, the NFFN believes that the Agriculture Bill and associated funding mechanisms **must** help farmers to produce safe, healthy food at the same time as helping our soil, landscapes, rivers and wildlife to recover and flourish, providing:

1. **Public money for public goods secured long-term**, not undermined by additional clauses on food production
2. **High environmental standards for trade deals in law**, so UK farmers are not undercut by cheap imports and our footprint is not exported
3. **Strong environmental regulations** to raise current nature and climate standards on all farms
4. **Long-term funding and certainty** so farmers are properly rewarded for environmental goods into the future.

### Key points

#### **Public money for public goods secured long-term**

The NFFN welcomes the public money for public goods approach in the Agriculture Bill, which will create an effective landscape model for future food production. In fact, hundreds of farmers are already leading the way on sustainable farming, and the NFFN tackles the perception of ‘farmers vs environment’.

We believe that the shift towards a nature-friendly approach is not just good for wildlife but is key to the long-term survival of farming, delivering broader benefits to the public, including flood protection, climate change mitigation, water and air quality, and access to thriving natural landscapes. Public money for public goods will support farmers to deliver all these benefits and produce sustainable food into the future.

The NFFN supports calls for greater certainty about long-term funding under the Bill including **amendment 5**, which would require budgets to be clearly set out. We welcome additions to the Bill that require Ministers to establish a multi-annual financial assistance plan, but we would like to see these plans strengthened, giving clarity and stability for farmers.

#### **High environmental standards for trade deals in law**

We remain concerned that future trade deals could **undercut** the high standards set by UK farmers. The NFFN would strongly support additions to the Bill to ensure that trade deals promote high standards for environment and food and protect farmers and the public from products which do not meet the high



standards of UK agriculture.<sup>1</sup> Agreeing trade deals with high standards will mean UK farmers who manage their land in a sustainable way, sequestering carbon and providing a countryside bursting with wildlife will be championed and supported, rather than undermined by cheap, damaging imports.

**Amendments NC2 and NC6** place a requirement for imported produce to meet UK standards in law, giving certainty to farmers that they have a level playing field, and to consumers that their food meets the current basic standards.

### **Strong environmental regulations**

To achieve long term food security, the Agriculture Bill should also set a robust baseline of environmental standards for land management for all, even those who choose not to engage with any environmental land management schemes to receive financial support. This baseline should aim to raise current standards and keep land in 'good heart' for future generations. A strong regulator is needed to enforce these standards, which is missing from the Bill at present. We support **NC8** and its focus on establishing a clear regulatory framework.

### **Additional Points**

The NFFN supports over 1,300 farmers across the UK that are working around the clock to produce nutritious food while delivering benefits for the environment and reversing wildlife decline.

From restoring vital field margins, species-rich grasslands and wildflower meadows, to agroecological farming practices, reducing pesticide use and soil damage, as well as creating new habits, like ponds and wetlands on farms, NFFN farmers have been part of a significant shift in UK farming towards more environmentally and sustainable farming methods.

Many of these farming practices can be rolled out across different locations and part of our work is sharing this information between farmers, so that best practices are learnt by as many farmers as possible. Indeed, we are passionate believers that peer-peer support and education is crucial to supporting farmers to effectively make this transition to more sustainable farming methods.

We are also pleased to welcome additions to the Bill to include soil health as a public good, as well as payments for regenerative and agroecological approaches, measures that are essential to nature and [climate friendly farming practices](#). As such we are supportive of **amendments 18 and 19** to include direct references to agroecological practices in the Bill. In addition, we work across the UK, supporting farmers in all four nations and support **NC9** – in support of a clear timeframe for Northern Ireland.

The NFFN works closely with several different farming and environmental partners, and we are supportive of the priorities and recommendations made by both *Greener UK* and *LINK* in their submissions to Government.

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<sup>1</sup> 96% of respondents to our NFFN farmer survey want high environmental standards to be a key requirement of future trade deals to combat the threat of cheap imports.