

Senedd Cymru  
Bae Caerdydd  
Caerdydd  
CF99 1SN

Rhwydwaith  
Ffermio  
er Lles  
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Nature  
Friendly  
Farming  
Network

Dear First Minister of Wales,

## RE: COP26 & Nature Friendly Farming

As the UK hosts COP26, it is vital that the Welsh Government leads by example and enacts a bold national climate and nature agenda.

As farmers and representatives of consumer, environmental, animal welfare and community organisations across Wales, we are urging you to take action before it's too late.

We know that farming practices and the condition of our environment are inextricably linked. In Wales, the Welsh Government has promised to deliver a set of world-leading agricultural policies to ensure a sustainable food and farming sector capable of contributing significantly to environmental goals, including nature's recovery and addressing climate change, whilst also producing sustainable healthy food and sustaining thriving rural communities.

As nature friendly farmers we strongly welcome this commitment. With nature in decline and the climate crisis looming, we know that business as usual is not an option. Helping to mainstream nature friendly farming is essential to build resilient businesses, repair and enhance our natural environment and ensure farmers can produce healthy, nutritious food.

Our recent report: "[Rethink Farming: A Practical Guide to Climate & Biodiversity Restoration](#)" demonstrates how farmers across Wales (and the rest of the UK) are already putting these systems in place. We represent a unique community within the sector who are ready to tackle the twin crises of the climate and nature emergencies. What is at the heart of these farmers' efforts is a sense of collaboration and obligation that farming has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We demonstrate, across many pockets of the UK, what the evolving role of a farmer looks like.

To achieve the necessary scale of change, farmers need to be supported through ambitious policies that reward the delivery of public goods that are not paid for by the marketplace, such as increasing wildlife habitats and species, maintaining and increasing carbon storage, ensuring clean watercourses, reducing flood risk, improving air quality, building healthy soils, improving public access, as well as health and wellbeing and social benefits.

We urge the Welsh Government to implement the following measures so farmers are supported to make the changes that are desperately needed to deliver a resilient food and farming system;

- **Deliver on ambition:** Future agricultural support systems must facilitate and reward farmers appropriately for delivering environmental benefits. This should factor the farmer's costs, time and effort, whilst also reflecting the value of environmental and social benefits. The Welsh Government can play a key role in helping farmers move beyond basic good practice to drive genuine improvements in the natural environment. This will require investment - but it'll be worth every penny.



Cyswilt Amgylchedd  
Cymru | Wales  
Environment Link



✉ info@nffn.org.uk

🐦 @nffnuk

📷 nffnuk

📌 Nature Friendly Farming Network

www.nffn.org.uk



- **Provide clarity:** Whilst we welcome the high-level ambition proposed in the recent Agriculture (Wales) White Paper, there continues to be a worrying lack of clarity and detail surrounding the future Sustainable Farming Scheme and the associated transition period. We ask that a roadmap for the next 10 years of farming policy in Wales is outlined, with clear targets and milestones, to give farmers time to prepare and plan for the changes ahead.
- **Ensure fairness:** The future Sustainable Farming Scheme should be made accessible to all active farmers whether they farm as owner-occupiers, tenants, in common or on other land occupation agreements. All farmers have the potential to provide environmental goods and services, and this can be encouraged without prejudice to any one sector. We must avoid creating a patchwork of support that only some farmers can access, whilst others cannot.
- **Net Zero Agriculture:** Build on the commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by implementing practical next steps and a supportive framework for farmers to do so, alongside sequestering carbon on their farms. We must be careful that *net zero* terminology is not used to justify 'carbon offsets' that allows the continuation of high emissions elsewhere. Supporting farmers to deliver sympathetic nature-based solutions to climate change is vital. Also, when it comes to tree planting, we must *plant the right tree in the right place* with a plan and sufficient resources for long term management.
- **Protect and ensure high standards:** Maintaining our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food safety standards has never been as important (both home and abroad). Fundamentally, the proposed National Minimum Standards for Agriculture must enable farmers to produce safe, healthy food whilst helping our natural resources to recover and flourish.
- **Set ambitious targets** in law for the restoration of nature in Wales. New targets should have clear timelines and should empower farmers by linking future incentives to the delivery of key environmental commitments.
- **A Welsh Food System Fit For Future Generations:** We need a transformative food system that ensures farmers earn a fair return whilst ensuring food is healthy, affordable, locally and sustainably produced. The Welsh Government's proposed Community Food Strategy offers a vital opportunity to coordinate food policy across all areas of government including health, education, the environment and the economy. The wonderful thing about food is that you get three votes a day. Every one of them has the potential to change the world.
- **Quantify** how farming systems impact biodiversity and our natural environment by introducing transparency, traceability and clearer labelling on food products so consumers are better informed of food production measures and their contribution to public benefit.

The time is now for the Welsh Government to lead with bold and ambitious laws and policies that will transform farming in Wales for the better of our climate and wildlife, and in turn, create a healthier environment for nature and people.

You have the talent, ingenuity, knowledge and skills of farmers across the nation who can make this ambition possible. Take action and demonstrate leadership that can positively make change before it's too late.

Yours Sincerely,

**Hilary Kehoe, Wales Chair, Nature Friendly Farming Network**

*cc Minister for Rural Affairs, Minister for Climate Change, Deputy Minister for Climate Change*

