

Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP
Rt Hon George Eustice MP
House of Commons
Westminster
SW1A 0AA



Dear Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP & Rt Hon George Eustice MP



RE: COP26 & Nature-Friendly Farming

As hosts of COP26, it is vital that the UK Government leads by example and enacts a bold domestic climate and nature agenda, including ambitious laws for food and farming, that will reduce GHG emissions from UK agriculture, protect UK farmers, elevate the quality of our food, and sustain thriving rural communities.



As farmers, with the support of environmental organisations across the UK, we are urging you to take action before it's too late.

We know the impacts that farming is having on our environment and how actions on farmland are accelerating climate change. In England, the Westminster Government has committed to delivering a set of world-leading agricultural policies to ensure a sustainable sector capable of contributing significantly to environmental goals including nature's recovery and addressing climate change.



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 mainstream nature-friendly farming is essential to build resilient businesses, repair our natural environment, stop further damage by an overreliance on artificial inputs and ensure farmers can produce healthy, nutritious and affordable food.



As the NFFN report, "A Practical Guide to Climate & Biodiversity Restoration", demonstrates, farmers across 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 and are providing nature and public benefit in diverse and innovative ways. What is at the heart of these farmers' efforts is a sense of collaboration and obligation that farmland has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We demonstrate, across many pockets of the UK, what the evolving role of a farmer looks like.



But this action isn't the case on all farms. For this to be achievable on a wider scale, we farmers need support through ambitious policies that reward the public goods we can deliver, but which aren't paid for by the marketplace, such as increasing wildlife habitats, ensuring clean watercourses, improving air quality, building healthy soil and improving carbon storage.



We urge the Government to champion climate- and nature-friendly farming systems, by:

- **Delivering on ambition** – Farmers need ambitious schemes that help them to unlock the benefits of working in harmony with nature. In England, the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), seems more about supporting simple good practice that most of us farmers are already doing. We need Government to help farmers move beyond basic good practice to ensure we can receive a fair reward to help cherish wildlife, rebuild soils, plant trees and reduce inputs that can harm our precious natural environment.
- **Provide clarity** – Please link proposed farming incentives to the contribution we farmers can and want to make to the delivery of key environmental commitments such as the planned legally binding target to



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halt the loss of nature by 2030 or the net-zero target. Farmers need to understand what the offer is and be confident that it has longevity.

- **Ensure fairness** – In 2018 Michael Gove promised farmers that they would not be disadvantaged in the transition to new schemes. But in England, the SFI risks creating a patchwork of support that only some farmers can access, whilst others cannot. The transition needs to be safe and equitable to truly unlock the benefits.
- **Invest for the long-term** – Ringfencing agricultural budget until at least 2029 to help farmers transition to more sustainable land use.
- **Protect and ensure our domestic high standards, in the first instance we ask that Government** – Publish a response to the Trade and Agriculture Commission's March report and provide farmers with confidence that their high domestic standards will be protected by legislation. This would help protect farmers from cheaper imports produced to lower standards and avoid offshoring the UK's environmental footprint.
- **Ensure a green and transparent food supply chain:** 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 Westminster and the UK Government to lead with bold and ambitious laws that will transform UK farming for the better of our climate, 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,

Martin Lines, UK Chair, **Nature Friendly Farming Network**

This letter is endorsed by the following organisations:-

Gill Perkins, CEO, **Bumblebee Conservation Trust**

Jenna Hegarty, Deputy Director, **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds**

Russel Hobson, Director of Evidence and Resources, **Butterfly Conservation**

Dr Nick Palmer, Head of Compassion UK, **Compassion in World Farming**

Dr Tony Gent, CEO, **Amphibian and Reptile Conservation**

Liz Bowles, Associate Director Farming and Land Use, **Soil Association**

Nicholas Watts MBE, Chair of the Board of Trustees, **The Countryside Restoration Trust**

Darren Moorcroft, Chief Executive, **Woodland Trust**

Honor Eldridge, Policy Lead, **Plantlife**

Rob Macklin, Head of Farming, **National Trust**

Vicki Hird, Head of Sustainable Farming, **Sustain**



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