



Summary

LINK's Food and Farming Group welcomes the reports of the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (ECCLR) and Rural Economy and Connectivity (REC) Committees on the Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan update (CCPu). This briefing focuses on the recommendations in those committee reports in relation to Scotland's agriculture and supports the following recommendations:

Agriculture

- A new rural policy for Scotland must be developed as soon as possible, with government leadership on setting the direction of travel for what will be required from Scotland's farmers, crofters and land managers in the future. (REC recommendation 100)
- Replacement funding for the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme must be secured to enable action to meet climate targets and restore biodiversity and that the Farm Advisory Service is updated to support action. (REC recommendation 102)
- The Scottish Government should publish the available evidence on the contribution individual policy measures will make towards meeting the 24% anticipated emissions reductions for agriculture. (REC recommendation 103)

Food

- A Good Food Nation Bill be brought forward by the end of 2021, providing clarity on the links between Scotland's ambition to double the value of Scotland's food and drink sector while meeting climate change targets. (REC recommendation 158)
- That the CCPu incorporates reference to dietary change and actions to deliver behaviour change. (REC recommendation 160 and ECCLR recommendation 105)
- That public procurement focuses on securing net zero outcomes. (REC recommendation 161)

Land Use

- That the CCPu takes an integrated approach to agriculture and Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) and recognises the role of farmers and other land managers in delivering emissions reductions for both emissions envelopes. (ECCLR recommendation 56)
- That the CCPu details plans for the accelerated rollout of Regional Land Use Partnerships, including tools and resources available to them. (ECCLR recommendation 144)

Agriculture

The transition to more climate- and nature-friendly farming must begin now if Scotland is to meet its ambitious net zero and interim targets and address the nature crisis. However, to do that successfully, farmers, crofters and other land managers must be given a clear steer from government as to the sector's future direction of travel. LINK members agree with the

recommendation of the REC Committee that “the timetable for bringing forward a new rural policy for Scotland needs to be significantly accelerated” to support a significant shift in farming practise. Putting farming and food production on a more sustainable trajectory is also a crucial element of delivering a green recovery from the effects of Covid-19 pandemic, delivering better outcomes for the economy, society and the environment. LINK members believe that future rural support must deliver public goods as a priority, facilitate change by providing support for innovation and responding to evolving market requirements, and support activities that underpin the adoption of new farming practises such as research, advice and training. For more details please see LINK’s [Renewing Rural Areas Revisited paper](#) (2020).

LINK members share the Committees’ concerns about the cut to the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS) at a time when action must be stepped up to meet climate targets and deliver improvements in biodiversity. The recently published Scottish Budget 2021-22 shows that the budget for the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme is intended to be cut from £42.7m to £34.2m.¹ The AECS funding was already insufficient to secure the scale of uptake by farmers needed to address declines in farmland wildlife and help tackle climate change. This cut makes matters significantly worse and takes agri-environment funding down to just 6% of total farm support at a time of a nature and climate emergency and when farmers and crofters face uncertainty about post-EU arrangements. The budget deal announced on 8 March² secures an additional £5m for agri-environment funding through the Agricultural Transformation Fund and it is critical that is allocated in a way consistent with the aims of the AECS programme. For more information on the impact of reduced agri-environment funding see [this previous briefing](#) from LINK.

LINK members agree with the recommendation that the Scottish Government publish the available evidence on the contribution individual policies will make to achieving the desired 24% reduction of agricultural emissions.

Scottish Government should publish the available evidence on the contribution individual policy measures will make towards meeting the 24% anticipated emissions reductions for agriculture. We note that evidence to the REC Committee suggested that the policies as proposals in the CCPu might fall short of delivering that ambition³ and risks putting farmers, crofters and other land managers in the position of having to make deeper cuts to emissions in future in less time.

Food

LINK members strongly support the introduction of a Good Food Nation Bill early in the next Parliamentary session to achieve CCPu targets and support the REC Committee’s recommendation that this is published by the end of the year. This Bill should provide the framework for transformative integrated food policy, making links between activity to reduce agricultural emissions and increase biodiversity while producing nutritious, affordable food. By looking at the Scottish food system as a whole, including public procurement, a Good Food Nation Bill would allow us to align priorities for good food and a prosperous food and drink sector with meeting our ambitions for climate and nature.

LINK members agree with the recommendation that reference to dietary change and actions to influence behaviour change is incorporated into the CCPu. Moving to a higher proportion of plant-based food in our diet can ease the pressure on our land for raising livestock while reducing emissions.

¹ Scottish Government, 2021. [Scottish Budget 2021-22](#). p.124.

² Scottish Government, 2021. [Correspondence with Patrick Harvie MSP and Mark Ruskell MSP, 8 March 2021](#).

³ See opening comment from Professor Deb Roberts (SEFARI)

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=13107&i=118636>

Land Use

The CCPu places more demand on the LULUCF sector to reduce emissions in an effort to protect the agricultural sector from more extensive cuts. LINK members believe that this demonstrates a lack of integration between policies for these sectors and agrees with the ECCLR Committee's recommendation that the CCPu must recognise the role of farmers and other land managers in delivering emissions reductions in both sectors. There seems to be an assumption that if LULUCF sector is set higher targets it will deliver more. However, this overlooks that fact that land managers day to day work is affected by agricultural policy. The lack of direction for future agricultural policy will also have an impact on how innovative land managers feel they can be in choosing to plant more trees or deliver nature-based solutions without more clarity over long-term arrangements for agricultural policy and support payments.

LINK members agree with the ECCLR Committee's recommendation to accelerate the rollout of Regional Land Use Partnerships. The timeline for rolling out RLUPs has slipped, with partnerships originally intended to be established across Scotland in 2021 however the update to the Land Use Strategy has suggested pilot projects will now be rolled out instead. LINK members support RLUPs being rolled out across Scotland simultaneously to ensure benefits accrue in all areas and all areas can be involved in policy development, rather than relying on a limited number of pilots. RLUPs can also inform the development of a future rural support scheme.

This briefing represents the collective view of LINK's Food and Farming Group. Members may also respond individually in order to raise more detailed issues that are important to their particular organisation.

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 40 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

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