



October 2022

Introduction

The Scottish Government's [vision for Scottish agriculture](#) sets an ambition of Scotland becoming 'a global leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture'. The vision states that farmers and crofters will be supported to 'deliver emissions reductions in line with our climate targets' and 'contribute to the restoration of nature through biodiversity gain on the land they farm'.

Scottish Environment LINK and the Farm for Scotland's Future campaign support the Government's vision and desired outcomes and especially welcome the emphasis on nature restoration as well as climate mitigation. The aspirations contained within the vision are achievable but will require an ambitious approach to the design and implementation of the new system of agricultural support. A report from WWF Scotland has highlighted that policy measures currently proposed to reduce emissions get us less than halfway to where we need to be for Scotland to remain on track to reach net zero by 2045.

1) Farming has to play its part in tackling the climate and nature emergencies

Agriculture is Scotland's third largest source of Greenhouse Gas emissions, yet emissions from farming have fallen at a significantly slower pace than almost all other sectors.¹ 75% of Scotland's land is used for agriculture, and agriculture is a major cause of the loss of Scotland's wildlife.²

Business as usual is not an option. Environmental security underpins food security, and climate change and nature loss are already having an impact on farming. We are already seeing the impacts of climate change now, with extreme weather and water shortages impacting food production. In 2017 alone extreme weather contributed to losses of up to £161 million for Scotland's farmers.³

Food production depends on a stable climate, functioning ecosystems, healthy soils, and populations of pollinators as well as other complex natural systems. Public funding must support a transition towards farming practices compatible with a healthy climate and natural environment.

The Agriculture Bill should:

- Set a target to reach 10% of land farmed organically by 2030
- Support trees on farms, through the management of existing farm woodlands, integration of trees with crops and livestock as well as hedgerows and buffer strips as part of a well planned agroforestry system
- Set targets to reduce chemical inputs. These targets should be aligned with the EU Farm to Fork policy, with a target of a 20% reduction in nitrogen fertiliser, 50% in pesticides, and 50% in antimicrobials.
- Support farmers and crofters to create space for nature, including working together to contribute to wider 'Nature Networks' - for example, by coordinating placements of hedgerows, wildflower meadows, and other wildlife corridors.

ANSWER: Section 2 (Climate change adaption and mitigation); Section 2.1 (Nature Protection and Restoration)

2) The current funding system is unfair

Farming has to work for farmers and crofters. At present, some benefit massively from government funding, while others lose out. We need a fair funding system that helps all agricultural businesses to thrive.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-greenhouse-gas-statistics-1990-2019/pages/3/>

² <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2019-10/State-of-nature-Report-2019-Scotland-full-report.pdf>

³ <https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/severe-weather-cost-scottish-farmers-ps161m-2018>



The new system of farm payments should not reward large landowners simply for owning land, but instead pay farmers and crofters to manage their land well. The system of base payments under Tier 1 of the proposals should be designed to be redistributive. This payment should provide a form of income support for small to medium sized farms and crofts, especially those in the more agriculturally and economically disadvantaged parts of Scotland. The amount of support any farm can receive under this payment should be capped.

ANSWER: Section 1, Question 2 (Future Payment Framework)

3) Most of the money we spend needs to support nature and climate friendly farming

The Scottish government spends more than half a billion pounds on farm funding every year. Yet it is failing to help farmers and crofters to protect and restore Scotland's nature or tackle climate change.

Over time, the new system must transition away from providing any support for practices that are incompatible with a healthy environment. This will be achieved by phasing out all funding for Tier 1 (Base payments) over the term of the next parliament (2026-30) in order to move money into the higher Tiers, where it can deliver for nature and climate.

The Scottish Government should ensure that at least three quarters of public spending on farming supports methods that restore nature and tackle climate change.

ANSWER: Section 1, Question 1 (Future Payment Framework)

4) Establish a new nature restoration scheme

Building on the action taken for nature through Tiers 1 and 2, a new nature restoration scheme should be introduced under Tier 3 to enable agriculture to make its contribution to reversing nature loss. This action should support farmers to undertake the creation and restoration of specific habitats such as wetlands, heath, habitat mosaics, species-rich grassland, as well as species specific management.

ANSWER: Section 1, Question 4 (Future Payment Framework); Section 2.1 (Nature Protection and Restoration)

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LINK is a Scottish Charity (SC000296) and a Scottish Company Limited by guarantee (SC250899), core funded by Membership Subscriptions and by grants from NatureScot, Scottish Government and Charitable Trusts.

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