

Senedd Cymru
Pwyllgor yr Economi, Masnach a Materion
Gwledig
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd
ETRA - 58
Ymateb gan: CLA Cymru

Welsh Parliament
Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs
Committee
Priorities for the Sixth Senedd.

Evidence from: CLA Wales



Consultation Response

Priorities for the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

Response from CLA Cymru

1st September 2021

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CLA Cymru: The Voice of the Rural Economy in Wales

One-third of the Welsh population lives in rural areas and our rural economy supports 459,000 people. The Country Land and Business Association in Wales (CLA Cymru) represents many farms, but also farm businesses which have developed additional business activities. Such activities may be referred to as diversification, but they remain mutually dependent with the foundation farm business. It means that we represent a very broad range of economic players in the rural economy. In addition to our expertise in agricultural issues, we also have knowledge and experience relating to the breadth of issues affecting rural businesses, including concerns with planning, investment and economic development, skills provision, connectivity, physical infrastructure and housing. In Wales, CLA Cymru's membership reaches nearly 3,000 rural businesses.

Priorities for next six months and beyond

Wales-wide agricultural pollution regulations

The introduction of the Wales-wide agricultural pollution regulations is a key issue for the farming sector going forward. We note the ongoing review taking place by this committee and will be submitting evidence separately through this review with a deadline set for the 10th September.

Development of the Agriculture (Wales) Bill

A key priority of the committee for the next six months and the rest of the Senedd term needs to be the scrutiny of Welsh Government's development of the Agriculture (Wales) Bill. We understand the Bill will be laid before the Senedd by Spring 2022 and we argue the committee should have a pivotal role in ensuring Welsh Government commits to clear timeframes for its introduction. We also argue the committee should monitor and analyse the scope of the Agriculture Bill. This should include how Welsh Government will ensure a fair and clear transition from the current Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and existing Rural Development Programme to the new Sustainable Farming Scheme and Wales Rural Development Programme.

We also want the committee to monitor the progress of the Environment and Rural Affairs Monitoring & Modelling Programme (ERAMMP). The committee should ensure that the findings of the programme should be made public in addition to how Welsh Government intends to use the programme in developing future policy.

Trade

International trade agreements

UK Government has been undertaking a range of negotiations in regard to future trade agreements with countries outside the European Union. We note the recent agreement in principle with Australia and the planned negotiations with New Zealand, other Pacific rim nations and the Mercosur group of countries in central and South America. While we appreciate UK Government leads on trade, we want the committee to ensure Welsh Government is clearly articulating the impact of trade agreements on the Welsh farming sector to UK Government. The committee should investigate how Welsh Government liaises with the Department for International Trade, how much stakeholder engagement it is undertaking and whether it is acting strongly enough in representing the interests of the rural sector within Wales.

Intra-UK trade and cross border holdings

Following EU-exit the nations of the UK have begun to develop their own agricultural policies. While we fully appreciate devolution and the ability for Wales to develop its own Agriculture Bill it is vital the intra UK market can function. We expect the committee to scrutinise the actions of Welsh Government to work with UK Government to make sure the market continues to operate.

The CLA has members who operate across the Wales-England border who are subject to different land use policies. Welsh and UK Governments must continue to work together to ensure the policies dovetail and we expect the committee to monitor this relationship as a key priority both in the next six months and to the end of the Senedd term.

Community Renewal Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund

The committee should investigate the progress and impact of these funds in both the next six months and to the end of the Senedd. The Community Renewal Fund has begun to operate and we understand the prospectus for the UK Shared Prosperity Funds is due to be published imminently. We want the committee to ensure both these funds are being scrutinised by Welsh Government and that the level of funding matches the scale of need in Wales.

Rural Connectivity

Rural connectivity is vital for the long-term economic sustainability of the Welsh rural sector. We want the committee to ensure Welsh Government is focussing upon the following key areas:

- Clarity of responsibility between governments and between Welsh Government departments and clarity for customers about what they need to do, options and their responsibilities;
- Investment via regional funding and growth deals should be invested in vital connectivity infrastructure to create economic growth;
- Long term fair deal for landowners who support vital infrastructure.

We look forward to working with the committee going forward and are happy to provide further evidence verbally in the future.