

The Farmers' Union of Wales' initial views on the Net Zero Wales Plan

1. The FUW welcomes the commitment to **increase renewable energy production and provide support for innovation**, given that farm businesses have already embraced such technology, and are willing to invest when incentives allow them to do so. In order to achieve the ambition of installing 1GW of additional renewable energy production capacity, financial incentives and the tailoring of planning laws must be reintroduced. (Proposal 26 & Policies 22 & 25).
2. The Union is disappointed by the lack of policies which focus on **increasing the carbon sequestration ability of existing habitat on farms**. Improving the management of existing woodland, hedgerows and soil organic carbon in grasslands can create larger carbon sinks alongside providing for biodiversity. Improving such on-farm practices would ensure that carbon sequestration occurs alongside current farming systems, food production, rural communities and existing habitats, as opposed to the obsession that new tree plantations are a silver bullet for the climate crisis.
3. For all sectors, **offsetting must complement rather than replace lowering emissions**. In order to allow Wales to achieve net zero as a nation and tackle the global climate crisis, the Welsh Government must also tackle the threats posed by large companies and individuals purchasing Welsh farms for the purpose of carbon offsetting- and effectively exporting Welsh carbon sequestration away from Welsh industries. Such land grabs and using or selling carbon credits to offset emissions outside of Wales risks undermining our ability as a nation to achieve net zero, to the detriment of Wales' food production, environment and rural communities.
4. Policies and proposals relating to **'Low carbon farming practices' (Policies 61-69) will need to be financially viable for farming businesses**. Whilst some policies and initiatives will undoubtedly result in reduced costs through improved efficiency and on-farm advice, there is little evidence to suggest that others will directly contribute to farming income while others may make farms less competitive compared with competitors not subject to the same regulations. It must be remembered that direct (BPS) payments make up around 80% of farm incomes in Wales, underpinning the viability of the majority of farm businesses and livelihoods. Therefore, a 'just transition' is required to ensure that farm businesses are financially viable in order to adopt low carbon farming practices and contribute to tackling climate change.
5. **Measures to 'release' land as one of two areas to mitigate climate change within the Agriculture Strategy is a major concern**. A land sharing approach was promised by the Welsh Government rather than land sparing as is now being proposed. The language used is important as the 'releasing of land' suggests a removal of people and economic activity, at odds with the three pillars of sustainability; social, economic and environmental. This fails to recognise the balanced 'win-win' approaches outlined above, such as using 'hedged and edges' to sequester more carbon alongside agriculture. The FUW would also emphasise the potential of managing existing woodland as part of the proposal for *"10% of agricultural land [to be] shared to support tree planting by 2050"* rather than focusing entirely on new woodland plantations.
6. The FUW welcomes the call on the UK Government to **"ensure future trade deals do not undercut the high agricultural and environmental standards delivered by Welsh farmers."** Notwithstanding the importance of protecting Wales' high standards, this is also essential for tackling the global climate crisis and avoiding the offshoring of emissions to other nations. However, there is also a duty on the Welsh Government to ensure that Wales' family farms are supported and that provisions in the Agriculture (Wales) Bill do not place them at a competitive disadvantage in light of recent developments.

The [FUW's response](#) to the Senedd Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee request for views on the priorities of the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee for the sixth Senedd term contains further details.