

More Farmers - Better Food

A framework for British Agricultural Policy

The UK's small-scale, ecological and family farms are at the heart of our rural culture and communities; they create employment, protect cherished landscapes and provide a huge amount of the food we eat. However, in the past, the UK's farming strategies have undermined domestic production of healthy, affordable food and left many small farms unfairly disadvantaged.

The task of creating a post-Brexit 'British Agricultural Policy' that support producers, protects the environment and guarantees access to healthy, nutritious food for all is essential. It represents a great opportunity if the Government is ready to listen to the needs of all stakeholders and put in place a truly long-term plan for environmental, social and economic resilience.

In this booklet the Landworkers' Alliance proposes 8 points that we believe must be integral to forthcoming policy in order to sustain a healthy, vibrant and just farming sector.

1. Focus on National Food Security

Leaving the EU puts UK food security at a greater risk. We produce less than 60% of the food we consume¹, rely on the EU for almost 30% of our food imports² and hold only 3–5 days of food reserves³. Post-Brexit, increases in the price of imports, shortages of farm labor and a more volatile market will make this situation worse.

Food and agricultural policy should focus on reclaiming sovereignty over food security by increasing national self reliance. This should be premised on:

- **Increasing domestic production** to replace imports where possible.
- **Protection of British producers** from imports, especially from countries with lower labor, environmental and welfare standards, and cheaper costs of production.
- **Preferential procurement** of British produce by public services and private retailers.
- **A long term plan** for a more self-reliant future.

2. Direct public money to affordable food and good farming

Area based payments are an inherently flawed form of subsidy because they directly undermine the ability of small, medium-scale and family farmers to compete with large scale industrial producers. They also do not effectively target end-results for the public good.

Post-Brexit farm support should guarantee access to healthy, affordable food for everyone, environmental sustainability and animal welfare, along with fair remuneration for producers. To achieve this, all payments should be directly linked to the three key pillars of sustainability:

- **Economic** – The production of healthy affordable food.
- **Environment and animal welfare** – The protection of traditional forms of land management, environmental sustainability and animal welfare



- **Social** – Maintenance of farmers and agricultural workers livelihoods, decent work conditions and community access to agriculture.

In order to maintain a diversity of farm sizes and types, whilst limiting land concentration, all payments must also be reliant on a strict active farmer clause, weighted towards the first 40ha and subject to a cap on individual payments to any one farmer.

In addition, targeted support should focus on re-localising production, supporting new entrants and developing ecological agriculture.

3. End the discrimination against small farms

It is unjustifiable for Defra to continue to discriminate against small farms in the allocation of subsidies and collection of farm data when there is plenty of evidence that small farms support more jobs and produce more food per ha than larger farms while providing important environmental, economic and cultural benefits.

- Post-Brexit policy must recognize the role of small farms by **reintroducing a minimum claim area** of 1ha
- National statistics should **collect data on farms from 1-5ha and 5-20ha** for the annual agriculture in the UK report.

The Landworkers' Alliance (LWA) is a grassroots union of small-scale, ecological and family farmers across the UK. We campaign for the rights of producers and lobby the UK government and European parliament for policies that support

the infrastructure and markets central to our livelihoods. We are official members of the international peasant farming movement La Via Campesina which represents 200 million small-scale producers around the world.



4. Create and maintain decent jobs in farming

A lack of EU labour and the need to increase national food production will lead to increasing demand for more farmers and agricultural workers. Defra should seize this opportunity to create good jobs in agriculture by monitoring and improving agricultural work pay and conditions, support new entrants and young farmers, providing capital support to new entrants. This should be delivered through 4 channels:

- **A new-entrants and young farmers scheme** - Including top up payments and capital grants to address barriers including access to land, capital, markets and education. This should be universally available - not solely available to families already receiving direct payments, as is currently the case.
- **An agricultural workers scheme** – Including the reintroduction of a robust agricultural wages board to monitor work conditions and pay.
- **A job creation scheme** – Focused on education and training to encourage more people into agricultural work.
- **A land access scheme** – To actively enlarge the county farm estate and reintroduce holdings specifically oriented to horticulture with associated accommodation.

5. Improve environmental and welfare standards

Environmental and welfare standards must be protected and made a mandatory condition for public support to farmers. Decisions should be made on sound, peer-reviewed science, rooted in the precautionary principle. This should include:

- **Mandatory method-of-production labeling** on all meat, dairy, and eggs and clearly displayed pesticide residue data on all crop derived products.
- **A moratorium on live export** of animals destined for slaughter.
- **A moratorium on the development of factory farms** and mega dairies.
- A robust plan to **reduce antibiotic dependence** in farming.
- **A moratorium on the use of GMO, glyphosate and neonicotinoids** unless proven safe beyond doubt.
- **A ban on husbandry systems** that do not enable animals to express their natural behaviors and rely on routine mutilations.

6. Invest in farmer-led research for resilient solutions

Public money must be directed towards research and development into the issues facing farmers of all scales. The thrust of research should focus on ways in which farmers can use low-cost, knowledge-intensive solutions rather than expensive inputs.

- A **cross-sector farmers voice** in public spending on agricultural R&D.
- The introduction of a **farmer-led extension program** focusing on low-input solutions.
- The **precautionary principle** must remain central to risk assessment on new agricultural technologies and chemicals.

7. Build markets that work for farmers

The most important way to maintain our food and farming system is to ensure that farmers can earn a fair livelihood from good production. We want a market system that fosters domestic production of healthy and affordable food. This should be premised on:

- Improving farmers position in the supply chain by **limiting the power of retailers** – progressive regulation to maintain affordable food for consumers and fair prices for buyers.
- **Development of short supply chains** – investment in the local food infrastructure and the development of territorial markets and public procurement.
- A **ban on imports produced to lower labor, environmental, welfare standards** than in the UK. Tariffs should be applied to imports to prevent the undercutting of domestically produced food.

8. Democratize agricultural policy making:

Public opinion and civil society must have a more significant weight in agricultural policy with mechanisms created for structured and regular dialogue between all organizations representing farmers and agricultural workers.

- The introduction of **public consultation** on contentious issues such as licenses for GM crops, glyphosate and neonicotinoids
- **Increased transparency** within government by creating a public database of individuals within each department and the process by which policy is formulated.
- The creation of a cross-departmental **national food and farming policy**.

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References: 1. Defra, Agriculture in the UK 2015. London: Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs, 2016. 2. Defra, Food Statistics Pocketbook 2015. 2015, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: London. 3. Lang, T. Food and Brexit. City University. June 27 2016

