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Contact: Holly Tomlinson

Email: holly.tomlinson@landworkersalliance.org.uk

Phone: 07737970229

GWEITHWYR Y TIR URGES WELSH GOVERNMENT TO USE SFS DELAY TO BOOST SUPPORT SMALL FARMS AND HORTICULTURE

Farming union Gweithwyr y Tir (GyT) / Landworkers' Alliance (LWA) Cymru is urging the Welsh Government to not water down its ambition for the Sustainable Farming Scheme, following Welsh Government's announcement that it will now be pushed back to 2026.

Instead, they are calling on the Welsh Government to use this time to ensure that it will support farms of all sizes, and sectors; and ensure that the Optional and Collaborative parts of the Scheme are all ready for implementation in 2026.

Expressing disappointment at the delay after 6 years of consultation, the union - which represents small-scale agroecological farmers from all sectors across Wales and the rest of the UK - notes that many of its members are already achieving many of Welsh Government's SFS objectives, but struggle to stay afloat with little or no government support.

Holly Tomlinson, Policy and Campaigns Coordinator for GyT / LWA Cymru has responded:

*"We are desperately running out of time to build a food and farming system that is able to adapt to the climate and biodiversity crisis. The wettest winter on record and severe floods this year have significantly delayed cultivation and planting, and severely disrupted the lambing season for many, proving that climate change is *already* causing business and financial losses for many farmers in Wales.*

It is crucial that this delay to the SFS does not result in a watering down of ambition. Instead, Welsh Government must use this time to amend its current plans for an exclusively area-based payment system, which would not reward small farms fairly.

Fruit and vegetable production in particular would receive negligible support under the current model, despite being vital to our food security. It is therefore crucial that Welsh Government uses the next 18 months to develop a dedicated horticulture SFS action that is not area based.”

Gweithwyr y Tir are also concerned that a narrow focus on developing the SFS scheme, particularly its Universal layer, must not come at the expense of developing a wider food system strategy in Wales.

While the SFS is a crucial element to transforming our agriculture system, GyT believes that the government needs to take a holistic approach to Wales’s food system and work to implement policies around local food systems, new entrant support and training, public procurement and planning system reform.

Alex Heffron, Gweithwyr y Tir Member and small-scale livestock farmer from Pembrokeshire, said:

“I am concerned that not enough is being done to fix the wider food and farming system. The Sustainable Farming Scheme needs to be just one aspect of larger reforms.

Our biggest hurdle as a farm is difficulty finding a market for our produce. This is a concern I hear from others also involved in small-scale, agroecological farming. We desperately need more support in local supply chains and market development if we are to build a thriving, resilient rural economy for Wales.”

GyT also recognises that supporting farmers through a just transition to nature-friendly methods will require a boost in public spending, which is why the Landworkers' Alliance is calling for the UK Government to [double the agriculture budget](#) available for all four nations.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

- [The Landworkers' Alliance](#) (LWA) is a grassroots union of farmers from all sectors, foresters and other land-based workers with a mission to improve the livelihoods of our members and create a better food system for everyone. We have over 2400 members across the UK and [Gweithwyr y Tir](#) (our Cymru branch) represents around 400 members in Wales.
- Gweithwyr y Tir members are workers, and small business owners, who practise, or are seeking opportunities to work in, agroecological farming, sustainable forestry and other sustainable land work.

- Gweithwyr y Tir - LWA Cymru's full response to the most recent Sustainable Farming Scheme Consultation can be found here:
<https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/GyT-LWA-Cyjr-u-Response-to-SFS-Keeping-Farmers-Farming-Consultation-March-2024.pdf>