



Landworkers' Alliance Cymru Response to Economy Trade & Rural Affairs Committee Consultation on its Priorities

The Landworkers' Alliance (LWA) is a grassroots union of farmers, growers, foresters and land-based workers with a mission to improve the livelihoods of our members and create a better food system for everyone. We have over 1000 small, medium, community, and family farms and prospective new entrants across the UK and LWA Cymru represents around 200 in Wales.

Our members are small business owners and workers, who practice, or are seeking opportunities to work in, agroecological farming and sustainable forestry. Their markets are largely local, using short supply chains, keeping money in local rural communities. The practices they use are already achieving many of the goals that Welsh Government seeks to achieve with its new Sustainable Farming Scheme such as improving biodiversity and sequestering carbon, whilst producing food and generating local employment. As practitioners of sustainable agriculture and forestry our members have a valuable insight into what needs to change if Wales is to meet the challenges of tackling the climate and biodiversity crises, whilst providing food and maintaining resilient rural communities. Many have offered to share their knowledge, experience and challenges with committee members either in a meeting or through hosting farm and woodland visits. Please contact on 07737970229 or holly.tomlinson@landworkersalliance.org.uk to arrange this.

Response to Ministers' Letter on Welsh Government Priorities Regarding Climate Change

We are concerned that neither agriculture nor the wider food system is included within the Welsh Government's priorities with respect to Climate Change. Agriculture alone is responsible for 16% of Wales' total greenhouse gas emissions and is a key driver of biodiversity loss. When the broader food system including transportation, refrigeration, processing packaging and retail is accounted for, the proportion is higher still with 30% of global emissions due to the food system. How we produce, process, trade, transport, sell and consume food is of critical importance to the climate and ecological emergencies.

The food system as a whole is not the responsibility of any minister or department, despite how we feed ourselves being perhaps the most fundamental question for any society. Its cross departmental relevance means it should be considered by all departments and Senedd committees, not least Climate Change. We understand that the Minister for Rural Affairs is responsible for agricultural policy; however, given the relevance of agriculture to climate and biodiversity and the crossovers with forestry and flood management, it must also be a priority for both the Climate Change Ministers and this committee. If not, there is a danger of siloed and incoherent policy making from Welsh Government as a whole.

Wales' resilience & the need to expand edible horticulture

Within Wales there is a deficit in fruit & vegetable production compared to what consumers currently buy, which itself is well below health recommendations. Addressing this is essential for both improving our resilience to climate change, and reducing the impact that our food consumption has on greenhouse gas emissions. The UK overall produces just 57% of the vegetables and 16% of the fruit we consume. In Wales just 0.1% of agricultural land is currently used for fruit & vegetable production. This reliance on imports makes us more vulnerable to supply chain shocks. The current lorry driver shortage is just one example of this, but with many of our fruit & vegetables coming from climate change vulnerable countries, we risk many more. Research by Dr Amber Wheeler has found that if just 2% of Welsh agricultural land were used to produce fruit & vegetables, it would be possible to produce all of Wales' population's "5 a day" needs. Lack of access to land, housing and capital, and planning constraints are all barriers to horticulture farm establishment and expansion. Addressing these barriers should be a priority for both the Ministers and the committee.

The Sustainable Farming Scheme

The new agricultural support system must be a priority for both the Ministers and the Committee. Whilst LWA Cymru would like more ambition with respect to food production and support for social and health benefits farms can provide, we support plans to move the basis for financial support to environmental benefits and away from land ownership.

However, we are concerned that farms below 5 hectares may be excluded. Research by LWA and Coventry Universityⁱⁱ found that small diverse farms often deliver more environmental, social and economic benefits per unit area compared to larger farms. They must therefore be included both in their own right and as part of landscape, wildlife corridor or catchment wide projects. As an alternative eligibility threshold, we propose Farming Connect's criteriaⁱⁱⁱ of 550 hours worked per year. **We urge the committee to ensure that the new scheme enables participation by small farms (<5ha).** Please see enclosed our response to the Agriculture White Paper for more of our position on Welsh Government's plans.

A Bold Community Food Strategy

The Programme for Government includes a commitment to developing a Community Food Strategy. This presents a huge opportunity for transformative change to increase our food security, ensure farmers have access to secure local markets; build local community resilience and tackle climate change. However, without sufficient ambition, this will not be realised. **The Committee should prioritise scrutiny of the Community Food Strategy, to ensure that it has ambitious plans such as:**

Prioritising climate & nature friendly farming: The Community Food Strategy should include education and financial support to help farmers and community groups produce food in ways that help sequester carbon and enhance biodiversity. We refer you to The LWA's publication, *Food, Farming, and the Climate Crisis: How we can feed people and cool the planet*^{iv} for details of specific measures that should be pursued.

Targeted local public sector procurement: hospitals, schools and other public bodies could provide a secure market for local Welsh produce at a time when Welsh livestock farmers face threats from new imports produced to lower standards; increased challenges exporting to the EU. The Committee should look to Preston's^v Community wealth building, Copenhagen's^{vi} success with local organic procurement and the findings of the Foundational Economy Carmarthenshire pilot, to see how procurement can achieve public policy aims and support local businesses.

Supporting Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) schemes: CSAs are a partnership between farmers and local communities, where risk is shared. They give farmers a guaranteed local market and many customers, who become members also get involved in growing. Several market gardens, such as Cae Tan in the Gower and Caerhys Organic Community Agriculture near St David's, have been set up using the CSA model. However, access to land and capital hold back more CSAs from being established and the Committee should explore how a bold community food strategy could address this.

Engaging local communities and councils: the strategy should combine national strategic direction with bottom up community engagement. Community kitchens and food groups, community and town councils and other public bodies should be a part of this process. The Sustainable Food Places network provides a good model for this.

Includes land allocation: to be successful, land must be available to meet the demands of food growing for the community food strategy. Where there is public land available that could meet this, it should be allocated to community food growing as a priority and planning policy should facilitate rather than obstruct this.

Based in agroecology: agroecology is a wholistic approach to farming and food systems which works with nature, whilst prioritising worker and community empowerment. The FAO's 10 Elements of Agroecology^{vii} provide an excellent basis for a community food strategy. These include Diversity; Co-creation and sharing of knowledge; Synergies; Efficiency; Recycling; Resilience; Human and Social Values; Culture and Food Traditions; Responsible Governance; Circular and Solidarity Economy.

Ensuring forestry benefits local communities

To help tackle the climate crisis, Wales must significantly increase tree cover with diverse well managed woodlands and agroforestry. Just 15% of Wales is currently forested and recent records on planting have been pitiful (just 80 hectares in 2017/18). Getting more trees in the ground is challenging and must be done with care with the right tree in the right place ensuring biodiversity, not monocultures. However, with enough support, working with farmers and land managers, tree cover in Wales could significantly increase. We welcome plans to increase tree planting, but it is essential that local communities can access woodlands and it does not lead to rural unemployment and depopulation.

New forests can create new jobs but only with the right policies. **The Committee should consider the potential impact of tree planting on rural communities and policies** to ensure they benefit. We propose support for new entrants into primary and secondary timber processing; investment in short timber supply chain infrastructure and using public procurement to support local timber processors. As with farming, planning policy should be reviewed to enable better forestry tied housing as well as permission for primary processing and storage on site. Please see our Forestry Manifesto^{viii} for more details on how working woodlands can be supported.

Agroforestry

It is disappointing that, like agriculture more generally, agroforestry is not mentioned in the Ministers' letter as it can play a crucial role in tackling climate change whilst enabling food production. Tree planting is integrated with farming, bringing multiple benefits such as shelter belts and flood management, whilst ensuring farming can continue. Trees can be used to provide additional products for sale as well as delivering public goods. Ways of supporting agroforestry include:

- Directly supporting the integration of trees and cropping as well as silvipasture;
- Supporting collaboration between farmers on the same land where multiple crops can be produced (e.g. orchards with grazing), including with demonstration farms and allowing for this in Sustainable Farming Scheme agreements; and
- Including agroforestry in the provision of specialist advice and knowledge transfer activity;
- Investment in the supply chain to develop markets for secondary products from trees.

Scrutinising the impact carbon trading & offsets

Tree planting is crucial in tackling climate change and we welcome plans to increase forest cover. However, it should not be used to justify business as usual elsewhere. We are concerned about the impact of hedge funds and other others buying up Welsh land for tree planting to be used in carbon offsetting schemes from both a carbon accounting perspective, the danger of displacing food production and because of the potential impact on communities. We must be clear: where tree planting is simply offsetting

rights to pollute elsewhere, there will be no overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Tree planting funded by offsets must not be counted in Wales' own net-zero targets as to do so would be to double count their carbon impact.

There is also a danger that, left to the free market, the location and types of trees planted will not be ecologically optimal. If they are grown on good agricultural land in a way that displaces food production, this could simply lead to food imports that have a higher carbon foot print.

We urge the committee to investigate offset payments in Welsh forestry and in particular look at:

1. The polluting practices and industries that such offsets justify.
2. The way in which carbon is accounted for and whether there is scope for double counting.
3. Whether and how additionality (that tree planting couldn't have happened without the offset payment) is assured.
4. Whether offset schemes are funding the plantations that have a low ecological value in unsuitable places.
5. The impact of offset schemes on food production and impact of it being displaced by imports.
6. The impact that offset schemes have on local communities.

References

ⁱ Wheeler, A. (2018) 'A New Food Diplomacy: Participatory Action Research Findings of a Food System Approach to Public Health Nutrition', PhD Thesis, Prifysgol De Cymru/University of South Wales, available at: [https://pure.southwales.ac.uk/files/5479834/Amber Wheeler PhD 1 .pdf](https://pure.southwales.ac.uk/files/5479834/Amber_Wheeler_PhD_1_.pdf)

ⁱⁱ Laughton, R. (2017) *A Matter of Scale: A study of the productivity, financial viability and multifunctional benefits of small farms (20 ha and less)*. Landworkers' Alliance and Centre for Agroecology, Coventry University available at: <https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/matterofscale.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Farming Connect *Eligibility Criteria* [https://businesswales.gov.wales/farmingconnect/sites/farmingconnect/files/documents/eligibility %20%281%29.pdf](https://businesswales.gov.wales/farmingconnect/sites/farmingconnect/files/documents/eligibility_%20%281%29.pdf)

^{iv} The Landworkers' Alliance, 2019. *Food, Farming, and the Climate Crisis: How we can feed people and cool the planet*. <https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Food-Farming-and-the-Climate-Crisis.pdf>

^v Preston City Council (2021) *Community Wealth Building* <https://www.preston.gov.uk/article/1334/Community-Wealth-Building>

^{vi} FAO (2018) *Copenhagen: Organic Conversion In Public Kitchens* <https://www.milanurbanfoodpolicypact.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Brief-15-Copenhagen-2017.pdf>

^{vii} Food & Agriculture Association of the United Nations (2018) *The 10 Elements of Agroecology Guiding The Transition To Sustainable Food And Agricultural Systems* <http://www.fao.org/3/I9037EN/i9037en.pdf>

^{viii} The Landworkers' Alliance Woody Branch (2020) *Forestry Manifesto* <https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Forestry-Manifesto-LWA-final.pdf>