



The Agriculture Bill

We introduced our landmark Agriculture Bill to Parliament on 16th January.

The Agriculture Bill gives us the necessary powers to design England's agricultural policy so that we deliver strong outcomes for farmers and the environment when we leave the EU.

Agriculture is devolved. This means that once we're outside of the EU each UK administration will have the flexibility to develop agricultural policy suited to their own unique circumstances.

The Bill will allow us to move away from the EU's bureaucratic Common Agricultural Policy.

In doing so, in England, we will move towards a new approach where farmers and land managers are able to be rewarded with public money for providing public goods, through:

- activities to protect and improve the land, water and air that makes up our environment
- measures to support thriving plants and wildlife
- actions for reducing and protecting from environmental hazards
- actions to adapt to and mitigate climate change
- maintaining, restoring or enhancing the beauty of our heritage and increasing engagement and access to the environment
- measures to improve the health and welfare of our livestock

The introduction of this Bill has given us the opportunity to make improvements to the original Agriculture Bill introduced in 2018, taking into account feedback from those working in the agricultural sector.

The new Bill maintains our flagship policy to pay those who look after our land and animals for the provision of public goods, particularly the environmental public goods listed above. It also now includes more of a focus on food production. Environmentally-friendly farming and food production can go hand in hand.





Highlights of what's new in this Bill

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The new Bill maintains our flagship policy of public money for public goods, but now includes more of a focus on food production. Environmentally-friendly farming and food production can go hand in hand.

- **Food security** – we're including a new requirement for the UK Government to regularly report on food security to Parliament, demonstrating the importance we place on this subject (see section below for more information)
- **Financial assistance monitoring** – the Secretary of State will monitor, evaluate and regularly report on our financial assistance schemes. This means Parliament and our stakeholders will be able to scrutinise how well the schemes work
- **Soil quality** – we know that soil is an essential natural asset and its careful management can help to provide a whole range of public goods. We've made sure that soil is specifically named in the Bill, so we can provide financial assistance to farmers for protecting or improving its quality.

For example, we can provide assistance for soil monitoring programmes and soil health research to support farmers with their decision-making and soil management

- **An animal traceability service** – we have put powers into place that allow a service provider to improve the collection and management of information relating to the identification, movement and health of animals
- **Fertiliser regulation** – the power to effectively regulate this industry as we leave the EU, including updating the definition of a fertiliser to take account of the latest technological advances
- **Organics regulation** – powers to tailor organics regulation so that it works for UK producers and so we can continue to trade organic produce across the world

A transition period to the new system will allow farmers and the agricultural sector to prepare

Change won't happen overnight. There will be a seven-year transition period - from 2021 to the end of 2027 - so that farmers can plan and adjust to a new domestic farming system.

During the transition period, Defra will phase out Direct Payments in England. We'll reduce the payments fairly – in the first year, the biggest reductions will be applied to the higher payment bands.

Defra also plans to 'delink' Direct Payments from the requirement to farm the land with farmers having a choice on how they use their 'delinked' payments, for instance, to:

- invest in improving the productivity of their farm
- diversify their business or
- retire from farming

Alongside these changes, Defra will also invest in supporting farmers to improve productivity.

Individuals can still apply for Countryside Stewardship (CS) agreements in the first years of the transition, allowing them to secure longer-term funding while the system changes. CS also allows individuals to put in place environmental practices that will prepare them well for the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme. No one in a CS agreement will be unfairly disadvantaged when we transition to new arrangements under ELM.

For more general information on future changes to English agricultural policy, please read our [Farming is Changing leaflet](#).

More information on the food security provision

The UK has a high level of food security that allows consumers to access a range of domestic and imported produce.

Currently, over half of the food we eat is produced in the UK. The rest is imported, with 28% coming from the EU and 19% from other countries.

This report will allow us to build on our understanding of the UK's food security landscape and help inform future policy.

The report is likely to cover a range of current issues including:

- global food availability
- supply sources
- the resilience of the supply chain
- household expenditure on food
- food safety
- consumer confidence in food

