# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Sustainable Farming Scheme Consultation Publication** |
| **DATE**  | **14 December 2023** |
| **BY** | **Lesley Griffiths, Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales and Trefnydd**  |

Today I have launched a 12 week consultation on our proposals for future farm support: [Sustainable Farming Scheme, Keeping farmers farming](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.wales%2Fconsultations&data=05%7C02%7CGovernment.Plenary.Business%40gov.wales%7Cbe2cc3a3927342cf4ae208dbfbf5b17b%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C638380804881439538%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=2chM5zjzNhRajJcOApPctLAfSf9XOC0EDwNWyApL%2FTA%3D&reserved=0).

This consultation marks a significant step forward in the completion of our Programme for Government commitments. The input of farmers from two phases of co-design and the positive discussions with Plaid Cymru’s Designated Member in relation to those elements that are within the Co-operation Agreement – the continuation of stability payments which will be available beyond the Senedd term and the transition period towards SFS, have helped shape its content. The relationship with our farmers is important and has enabled us to be more inclusive of ideas and experience from the people working tirelessly to put sustainable, safe, and nutritious food on our plates in a way we have not done before*.*

The consultation presents our intentions to provide an integrated, long-term approach to support the resilience of our agricultural industry in Wales and outlines what farmers will need to do annually to be part of the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS). We have retained the three-layer structure (Universal, Optional or Collaborative) and propose these layers are introduced in clear phases between 2025 and 2029, which we are calling a Transition Period.

The Scheme will help deliver against our ambition for Welsh farmers to be world leaders in sustainable farming, as established in the Sustainable Land Management Objectives in the Agriculture (Wales) Act 2023. The Scheme recognises the delivery of environmental and social outcomes are dependent on ensuring farm businesses are economically sustainable in the long term. The Scheme will support farm businesses to become more efficient and resilient, enabling them to compete in a decarbonising global economy.

There is no choice between producing food or protecting the environment. Farming takes place within the environment and the wider environment provides the conditions and resources needed to produce food. Farmers know how to produce exceptional food, but need to continue to adapt practices to respond to the climatic and nature emergencies and ensure agriculture is not only resilient, but a profitable thriving industry, now and for future generations.

Farmers will be paid an annual Universal Baseline Payment to achieve a set of Universal Actions which have been designed to be accessible to all farmers in Wales and make the best of their resources. These will support further action to benefit the farm business and wider society needs. We also propose a Stability Payment is paid during the Transition Period to support the move from the current Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) to SFS by providing continuity of income.

SFS payments will be different to the current BPS. Aligned to public expectation, the SFS payments will be linked to the actions farmers take, beyond the legal requirement. The consultation explains the proposed approach and the evidence base which will be used to inform the final decision on the payment rates and outcomes we all want to see from the Scheme. I expect to make this decision following consideration of the consultation outputs, updated evidence and in time to give farmers the opportunity to consider the final Scheme design before its introduction in 2025.

I acknowledge the complexity of the issues at hand, especially amidst a challenging financial climate. However, we remain steadfast in our commitment to prioritise sustainable practices that not only address the pressing concerns we face today, but also pave the way for a thriving future for generations to come.

I encourage everyone to take the time to respond to this consultation on this long-term commitment to support our food production systems, keep farmers farming, safeguard our environment and address the climate and nature emergencies.