

Agriculture Bill is an important step in supporting Welsh farmers post-Brexit – Lesley Griffiths

The Bill will provide a legal base for future support for farmers as we transition away from the provisions in the Common Agricultural Policy. At the Cabinet Secretary's request, the Bill includes significant new powers for Welsh Ministers.

These powers will be used until a Wales Agriculture Bill is introduced to the National Assembly. The intention is to bring forward a Bill by the end of this Assembly term. It allows the Welsh Government to start to deliver a 'Made in Wales' system which works for Welsh farmers, rural industries and our communities.

In July, the Cabinet Secretary launched a consultation on proposals for a new Land Management Programme to replace the Common Agricultural Policy in Wales post-Brexit. The consultation is open until 30 October.

The proposed powers for Welsh Ministers include:

- new financial powers for future schemes
- collection and sharing of data
- powers to intervene in exceptional market conditions
- setting of marketing standards
- modification of retained EU law relating to the financing, management and monitoring of payments to farmers including the CAP Basic Payment Scheme.

The Welsh provisions in the Bill closely mirror those intended for England. In addition to a small number of technical differences, Welsh powers also include an emphasis on supporting rural communities and businesses involved in supply chains.

In general, these are enabling powers which provide for Welsh Ministers to bring forward Wales-specific regulations to the Welsh Assembly for scrutiny. Regulations will not be brought forward until the consultation process has concluded. In "Brexit and our Land" a commitment was made to bring forward a white paper in spring 2019.

Cabinet Secretary said:

"This is the first piece of post-Brexit legislation which allows us to continue to support farmers and develop new ways of working.

"We have worked closely with the UK Government to make sure this legislation works for Wales and it provides us with significant new powers. The Bill gives us the freedom and flexibility to take

forward our own proposals for a made in Wales support system for farmers.

“Whilst we are generally supportive of the Bill as drafted, there are two outstanding issues – the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement on Agriculture and the Red Meat Levy – which we have not resolved.

“The UK Government has classified WTO as reserved but I am clear these powers could have a significant effect on devolved competence. We need to agree a better process for managing this important part of agricultural support. .

“I am disappointed the Bill does not contain provisions to improve the functioning of the Red Meat Levy. It is important the red meat industry can access funds to prepare best for the opportunities of Brexit and to react to inevitable change. Legislative change is required to underpin mechanisms for a fairer and more representative distribution of the levy. This Bill is a timely and appropriate opportunity and I continue to press the Secretary of State to bring forward a Government amendment to meet his commitment to resolve this longstanding issue through the Bill.

“The introduction of the Agriculture Bill is an important step in our transition to an agriculture support mechanism reflecting the needs and aspiration of Welsh industries as proposed in our Brexit and our Land consultation.”