

Government unveils path to sustainable farming from 2021

Plans to deliver a better, fairer farming system in England have been set out by government today. They will transform the way we support farmers, in the most significant change to farming and land management in 50 years.

The roadmap outlines changes that will come into force over a period of seven years to help farmers adapt and plan for the future. Outside the EU and no longer bound by the EU's bureaucratic Common Agricultural Policy, the plans set out how government plans to introduce a new system that is tailored in the interests of English farmers, centred on support that rewards farmers and land managers for sustainable farming practices.

The changes will be designed to ensure that by 2028, farmers in England can sustainably produce healthy food profitably without subsidy, whilst taking steps to improve the environment, improve animal health and welfare and reduce carbon emissions.

Next year marks the start of the transition where we will begin to move away from the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) towards new policies that will be co-designed and tested together with farmers, land managers and experts, to ensure that the new systems work for them.

The government remains committed to its manifesto commitment to guarantee the current annual budget for every year of this Parliament.

The 'Path to Sustainable Farming' document, published today, sets out more detail on the changes we are going to make, and what they will mean for farmers.

The key changes include:

- Introducing the Environmental Land Management scheme to incentivise sustainable farming practices, create habitats for nature recovery and establish new woodland to help tackle climate change.
- Investing in improving animal health and welfare as part of our sustainable farming approach. This will initially focus on controlling or eradicating endemic diseases amongst cattle, pigs and sheep .
- Direct Payments will be reduced fairly, starting from the 2021 Basic Payment Scheme year, with the money released being used to fund new grants and schemes to boost farmers' productivity and reward environmental improvements.

- Launching a Farming Investment Fund, which will support innovation and productivity. This will open for applications next year and will be used to offer grants for equipment, technology and infrastructure for the future.
- Simplifying and improving existing schemes and their application processes further from January 2021 to reduce the burden on farmers, and we will take a modern approach to regulation, cutting unnecessary red tape for farmers and working together with industry to design a more targeted regulatory system.

In a speech to farmers and environmental groups, Environment Secretary George Eustice will say:

We want farmers to access public money to help their businesses become more productive and sustainable, whilst taking steps to improve the environment and animal welfare, and deliver climate change outcomes on the land they manage.

Rather than the prescriptive, top down rules of the EU era, we want to support the choices that farmers and land managers take. If we work together to get this right, then a decade from now the rest of the world will want to follow our lead.

While the roadmap provides a clear view on the changes coming through the transition, this will be followed by a period of engagement with farmers, land managers and other stakeholders to finalise the design and operation of the future system to ensure they work for everyone. For example, the final design for the future Environmental Land Management scheme will continue to evolve and adapt to the lessons learnt through co-design exercises, such as the ongoing tests and trials and upcoming National Pilot for the scheme.

The new roadmap comes a few weeks after the government's landmark Agriculture Bill passed into law, providing the powers needed to incentivise farmers to make the right environmental choices and help them to make the most of the opportunities available outside of the EU.

Further detail on the National Pilot for Environmental Land Management and the government response to the national conversation around the new scheme that took place earlier this year are due to be published early next year.

These measures apply to England only. Now we have left the EU each UK administration has the flexibility to develop agricultural policy suited to their own unique circumstances.

Direct Payments

The Direct Payments currently made through the Basic Payment Scheme offer poor value for money, reward those with most land, inflate rents and stand in the way of new entrants. The savings from phasing out these untargeted payments will free up more of the agricultural budget, which will go back to farmers through the roll-out of Environmental Land Management scheme, and the introduction of schemes to help farmers to boost their productivity.

The document published today sets out how Direct Payments will be reduced fairly over the next four years, with the biggest reductions made to the higher payment bands. Further reductions will be applied until the last payments are made in 2027.

In order to ensure that farmers are adequately supported throughout this journey, farming resilience programme will be made available throughout the first three years of the agricultural transition period to help those most affected by the phasing out of Direct Payments. This will help farmers plan and manage their businesses through the transition to the new system.

The document also sets out the various steps that have been taken to simplify the Basic Payment Scheme for next year, in order to reduce the burden on farmers as they focus on transitioning to the new system. This includes important changes to cross-compliance, such as an increased use of warning letters and offers of advice over farmers receiving a penalty as the default response to a breach of the rules. It was also [announced earlier in the year that the greening requirements for BPS customers](#), which were complicated and historically delivered little for the environment, would be removed next year. This was documented in the [European Court of Auditors 2017 Special Report on greening](#). The new Environmental Land Management scheme, expected to be rolled out in late 2024, will introduce new ways of working together with farmers to deliver better environmental outcomes.

A statutory instrument (SI) is expected to be laid in Parliament this week to implement these simplifications ready for next year's scheme. This SI will also allow for improvements to cross compliance, such as the greater use of warning letters instead of default financial penalties and better inspection targeting.

Defra will consult formally on a proposal to offer lump sum exit payments to farmers who may wish to leave the sector and plans to delink Direct Payments from land for all farmers later in the agricultural transition.

Environmental Land Management

Environmental Land Management will consist of three components:

- the Sustainable Farming Incentive, which will support approaches to farm husbandry that deliver for the environment, such as actions to improve soil health, hedgerows and integrated pest management,

- Local Nature Recovery, which will pay for actions such as creating, managing or restoring habitats, natural flood management and species management,
- Landscape Recovery, which will focus on landscape and ecosystem recovery through projects looking to achieve large-scale forest and woodland creation, peatland restoration, or the creation and restoration of coastal habitats, such as wetlands and salt marsh.

Farmers and land managers will be able to assess which component is best-suited to their land.

Work is ongoing to design the future scheme in collaboration with farmers and land managers and will continue next year, with the expected launch of the National Pilot in late 2021, which will involve up to 5,500 farmers over a three-year period. This will build on the lessons from the 68 live tests and trials being carried out by farmers across England to assess how the fundamental building blocks of the scheme will work on the ground. This will ensure that the new scheme delivers for our farmers and land managers, as well as delivering greener, cleaner landscapes and reversing the decline of some of our most cherished species.

Expressions of interest for the National Pilot are also expected to open early next year.

Some of the core elements of the Sustainable Farming Incentive will also be introduced from 2022.

Productivity

At the same time, the funding gained from phasing out Direct Payments will be used to introduce new schemes to help farmers become more productive and meet the growing demand for their produce all around the world.

The new Farming Investment Fund will open for applications next year. The fund will provide targeted support to businesses so that they can invest in equipment, technology, and infrastructure that will improve their productivity and deliver environmental and other public benefits.

The two levels for this fund will be the Farming Equipment Technology Fund, which will offer small grants to contribute towards the purchase of a list of specified items and the Farming Transformation Fund, which will provide larger grants towards the cost of more substantial investments in equipment, technology or infrastructure, with the potential to transform business performance.

Eligible investments under these funds may include on-farm water storage infrastructure, robotic or automated technology, items to improve animal health and welfare and equipment for processing agricultural products, which may help farmers to streamline or diversify their businesses.

From 2022, farmers will also benefit from an increased investment in agricultural Research & Development that will enable more farmers and agri-food businesses to drive innovation. This will see farmer-led R&D projects to trial and demonstrate viability of new and existing technologies to address immediate on-farm productivity challenges as well as research into how agriculture can meet its longer term goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve net zero. Example projects could be trialling new feed additives or demonstrating the integration of autonomous farm machinery.

Other available support

More funding will also be made available under an improved Countryside Stewardship scheme, which will be an important stepping stone for many farmers ahead of the full roll-out of the future Environmental Land Management scheme, expected in late 2024. Steps will be taken to simplify the administration of the scheme, making it easier for more people to take part whilst it remains open to new applications for the first few years of the agricultural transition period. This will help them to springboard into the future scheme, which will reward them for delivering environmental outcomes, such as those already paid for by the Countryside Stewardship scheme.

Prime Minister announces £20m to grow medicines manufacturing in the UK

- New £20m fund to manufacture medicines and diagnostic equipment in the UK
- Fund will put the UK ahead in medicines manufacturing, creating economic opportunities and highly skilled jobs across the country
- Supports the Government's ambitions to build back better, ensuring greater resilience in UK medicines supply chains

The UK's ability to respond to future pandemics will be strengthened thanks to a new £20 million fund to expand medicines manufacturing, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced today (Monday 30 November).

The Prime Minister will launch the Government's new capital investment fund, the Medicines and Diagnostic Manufacturing Transformation Fund, while visiting North Wales later today.

This will open-up investment opportunities for medicines manufacturers in England, Scotland and Wales – improving our domestic medicine supply chains and creating thousands of highly skilled jobs in the process.

This will put UK companies ahead of global competitors in advanced medicines manufacturing, while helping them respond to future healthcare needs – and increasing the overall health resilience of the UK.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

This new £20m fund will significantly increase the capacity and resilience of our medicines and diagnostics manufacturing supply chains and equip us to fight future health crises.

Throughout the pandemic we have seen a coming together of British scientific industry and innovation and this new fund will enhance the UK's manufacturing capabilities even further.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

The positive and timely response of our medicines manufacturers to the pandemic has been remarkable, but we want to ensure that the UK's supply chains are even more resilient in the future.

There are huge opportunities for innovation in medicines and diagnostics, and this new fund will put the UK head and shoulders above others, boosting the UK's capabilities and generating significant economic opportunities across the country.

The pandemic has shown the importance of having a strong domestic medicines and diagnostics manufacturing industry. This new fund has been established to grow and strengthen the UK's capabilities, by encouraging companies to develop new technologies, build new factories and harness new advances, including bioprocessing, data and using greener manufacturing processes.

With two-thirds of life science manufacturing jobs already outside London and the South East, the fund will also open-up economic opportunities in different parts of the UK, creating thousands of new, highly skilled manufacturing jobs while safeguarding existing jobs.

This multi-year fund will have an initial pot of £20 million, which will be available from next year, as part of the government's 2021/2022 Spending Review announced by the Chancellor on 25 November.

Eligible manufacturing companies can bid for the fund to help with their capital costs.

More information will be made available over the coming months, ahead of the fund launching mid-next year. The fund will be run through a competitive process overseen by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

H5N8 strain avian influenza confirmed on farm in North Yorkshire

Avian influenza of the H5N8 strain was confirmed at a turkey fattening premises near Northallerton on Saturday 28 November.

All 10,500 birds at the farm will be humanely culled to limit the spread of the disease. A 3km and 10km Temporary Control Zone has been put in place around the infected site to limit the risk of the disease spreading.

Public Health England (PHE) advises that the risk to public health from the virus is very low and the Food Standards Agency advises that avian influenzas pose a very low food safety risk for UK consumers. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat.

Chief Veterinary Officer, Christine Middlemiss, said:

Avian flu has been confirmed at a commercial turkey fattening farm near Northallerton, North Yorkshire. Immediate steps have been taken to limit the risk of the disease spreading and all the remaining turkeys at the farm will be culled.

Public Health England has confirmed that the risk to public health is very low and the Food Standards Agency advises that bird flu poses a very low food safety risk for UK consumers.

Bird keepers should remain alert for any signs of disease, report suspected disease immediately and ensure they are maintaining good biosecurity on their premises.

We are urgently looking for any evidence of disease spread associated with this farm to control and eliminate it.

Dr Gavin Dabrera, Consultant in Acute Respiratory Infections at PHE said:

To date the World Health Organisation has never confirmed any cases of H5N8 in humans and the risk to the public is considered very low.

As a precaution the local Health Protection Team will offer routine health advice to those working on the farm. We will work with DEFRA to monitor the situation closely.

A Food Standards Agency spokesperson said:

We advise that, on the basis of the current scientific evidence,

avian influenzas pose a very low food safety risk for UK consumers.

Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, remain safe to eat.

A detailed investigation is in progress to determine the most likely source of this outbreak.

There is not anticipated to be any impact on the supplies of turkeys or other birds over Christmas.

Wild birds migrating from mainland Europe during the winter period can spread the disease to poultry and other captive birds. There are some simple measures that all poultry keepers, whether they are running a large commercial farm, keeping a few hens in their back garden, or rearing game birds, should take to protect their birds against the threat of avian flu.

These include:

- All bird keepers in England (whether they have pet birds, commercial flocks or just a few birds in a backyard flock) are required by law to take a range of biosecurity precautions.
- If you keep poultry or other captive birds, you must take action to reduce the risk of disease in your flock by following government advice on biosecurity. Further details of the measures that apply in the AIPZ can be found in the AIPZ declaration and our biosecurity guidance.
- Keeping the area where birds live clean and tidy, controlling rats and mice and regularly cleansing and disinfecting any hard surfaces
- Cleaning footwear before and after visits
- Placing birds' feed and water in fully enclosed areas that are protected from wild birds, and removing any spilled feed regularly
- Putting fencing around outdoor areas where birds are allowed and limiting their access to ponds or areas visited by wild waterfowl
- Where possible, avoid keeping ducks and geese with other poultry species.

UK-Bangladesh Climate Partnership Forum launches virtual series

On 24 and 25 November, the UK and Bangladesh launched the first of a virtual series of events designed to build on the countries' growing collaboration in advancing the climate agenda on the journey towards next year's UN climate change conference (COP26).

The UK-Bangladesh Climate Partnership Forum virtual series brings together

experts and leaders from Bangladesh and the UK to identify innovative ideas, partnerships and initiatives to catalyse climate action. These first two events focus on adaptation and resilience with future events structured around the COP26 themes of nature, clean energy and finance.

Bangladesh Director of Development at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Judith Herbertson opened the series on 24 November.

She said: One of the UK's top objectives for COP26, and for this forum, is to hear voices from frontline, from the young, from the experts, from the private sector, from our friends and from people we haven't heard from yet. We want to hear all your ideas.

The virtual series is led by Professor Saleemul Huq, Director, International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCAD) and Simon Maxwell, Senior Research Associate, Overseas Development Institute (ODI). It is managed by Mott MacDonald in partnership with ODI on behalf of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the British High Commission Dhaka.

The event on 24 November featured four exciting and innovative approaches to climate adaptation and resilience from the UK and Bangladesh. Presentations were given by Dr Golam Rabbani, Head of Climate Bridge Fund Secretariat; Brian Kilkelly Development Lead, EIT-Climate KIC; Md. Bazlul Karim, Deputy Team Leader Char Development and Settlement Programme; and Dr Ed Suttie, BRE Centre for Resilience.

Presentations were followed by reflections from the panellists Erin Roberts, ODI Research Associate; Dilruba Haider, Programme Specialist on Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change and Humanitarian Actions, UN Women; Denise Bower, Executive Director, External Engagement, Mott MacDonald; and Professor Mashfiqus Salehin, Institute of Water and Flood Management, Bangladesh University Of Engineering and Technology.

The event on 25 November featured opening remarks from British High Commissioner in Dhaka, Robert Chatterton Dickson; State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh, Md. Shahriar Alam; Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon; and UK International Champion on Adaptation and Resilience for the COP26 Presidency, MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed, Anne-Marie Trevelyan.

Speaking about the partnership between the UK and Bangladesh, Lord Ahmad said

"This UK-Bangladesh partnership on climate action is built on the strong links between our two countries and will last long beyond COP26...The UK as COP26 President Designate, and Bangladesh as chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, are uniquely placed to play leading roles in this critical year ahead for our planet."

Speaking on the topic of adaptation and resilience, Anne-Marie Trevelyan said

"Bangladesh has not stopped being a highly climate vulnerable country, but it is also now a leader on adaptation and resilience. There is much that the UK, and other countries, can learn from Bangladesh's experience."

Khurshid Alam, Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP and Baroness Brown of Cambridge, Chair of the Committee on Climate Change's Adaptation Committee and Chair of the Carbon Trust delivered the keynote speeches on climate adaptation from the perspective of Bangladesh and the UK.

Mr Alam and Baroness Brown were joined by Abul Kalam Azad, special envoy to the Climate Vulnerable Forum's (CVF) Presidency; Dr Rebecca Nadin, Director of Programmes for Risk and Resilience, ODI; Dr Atiq Rahman, Executive Director, Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies; and Anu Jogesh, Policy and Governance Lead for Acclimatise South Asia, Acclimatise. The panellists reflected on the importance of seeing adaptation as a global issue requiring a systems-resilience approach that takes into account the transboundary nature of climate risks and acknowledged that the climate community needed to get better at communicating with policy makers, the media and the general public on issues around adaptation.

The next events in the series will focus on nature-based solutions and will take place on 8 and 9 December. Find out more and register at the series event page <http://cop26-uk-bangladesh-forum.eventbrite.com>

The UK will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow in November 2021. The climate talks will be the biggest international summit the UK has ever hosted; bringing together over 30,000 delegates including heads of state, climate experts and campaigners to agree coordinated action to tackle climate change. In its role as president of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, Bangladesh will be representing more 1.2 billion people living in 48 of the world's most climate vulnerable countries at COP26.

Further information

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UK government secures additional 2 million doses of Moderna COVID-19 vaccine

- UK government has now secured 7 million doses of Moderna vaccine, which will be available in Europe as early as spring 2021
- trials show vaccine is almost 95% effective
- deal means the UK now has access to a total of 357 million doses of vaccines from 7 different developers

The UK government has today (Sunday 29 November) signed a deal for a further 2 million doses of Moderna's promising vaccine candidate, bringing the total to 7 million doses for the UK.

Following today's deal, the UK now has access to enough doses of Moderna's vaccine candidate for around 3.5 million people.

To be approved for use in the UK, the Moderna vaccine must meet the strict standards of safety and effectiveness of the independent medicines regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). If it is approved, 7 million doses could start to be delivered to the UK as early as spring 2021 – the same timetable as other countries in Europe.

The latest agreement is part of the government's strategy to develop a diverse portfolio of promising vaccine candidates. The government has now secured 357 million vaccine doses from 7 different developers, giving the UK the best possible chance of protecting the public from coronavirus as soon as possible.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

It is essential that we continue to bolster our portfolio of vaccine candidates to ensure we're in the best possible position to protect the public once we see that breakthrough.

The UK was one of the first countries in Europe to sign a deal with Moderna, and I'm delighted we have been able to secure a further 2 million doses of their promising candidate for the British public.

On 16 November, Moderna published initial data showing that its candidate is nearly 95% effective in protecting against COVID-19, with no safety issues identified to date. The safety data is still to be released by Moderna to show whether the vaccine is both safe and effective. Moderna is currently conducting phase 3 clinical trials of its vaccine and is using mRNA vaccine technology.

Until all the necessary stages are completed and a vaccine has been approved for use by the medicine regulator, the MHRA, the public must continue to take necessary actions to keep themselves and their loved ones safe, including following the [Hands, Face, Space guidance](#) and other public health advice in line with the area they live in.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Every week, we are getting more positive news about the range of vaccines in development, and thanks to the work of our taskforce the UK has pre-ordered hundreds of millions of doses from those companies most advanced in their work.

This includes buying a further 2 million doses of Moderna's vaccine, on top of the 5 million we've already secured.

With a wide range of vaccine candidates in our portfolio, we stand ready to deploy a vaccine should they receive approval from our medicines regulator, starting with those who will benefit most.

Chair of the government's Vaccine Taskforce Kate Bingham said:

Since its inception in June, one of the most important stated aims of the Vaccines Taskforce has been to secure access to the most promising vaccines across a broad range of technologies – thereby increasing the chances of having a safe and effective prevention as soon as possible against COVID-19. Moderna's vaccine was an important addition to our portfolio and securing an additional 2 million doses further adds to the protection we can provide to the public to end the pandemic.

Today's deal follows the independent regulator's [confirmation this week](#) that it has received the necessary data of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine to progress their review into whether the vaccine meets the required standards. Encouraging results from the phase III trials of the Oxford University/AstraZeneca were also published this week.

We have secured early access to over 357 million vaccines doses through agreements with several separate vaccine developers at various stages of trials, including:

- 100 million doses of University of Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine – phase 3 clinical trials
- 40 million doses of BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine – phase 3 clinical trials
- 7 million doses of Moderna vaccine – phase 3 clinical trials
- 60 million doses of Novavax vaccine – phase 3 clinical trials
- 60 million doses of Valneva vaccine – pre-clinical trials
- 60 million doses of GSK/Sanofi Pasteur vaccine – phase 1 clinical trials
- 30 million doses of Janssen vaccine – phase 2 clinical trials

We have invested over £230 million into manufacturing any successful vaccine and an enormous amount of planning and preparation has taken place across government to be able to quickly roll out the vaccine, including ensuring we have adequate provision, transport, PPE and logistical expertise to do so. We are also working at pace to prepare for the delivery of any potential COVID-19 vaccination programme as quickly as possible.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) will carefully and scientifically review the safety, quality and effectiveness data once it has all been submitted to determine how it protects people from COVID-19 and the level of protection it provides.

The data must include results from the lab and clinical trials; manufacturing and quality controls, product sampling, and testing of the final product.

Once they have thoroughly reviewed the data, the MHRA will seek advice from the government's independent advisory body, the Commission on Human Medicines. They will critically assess the data too before advising the government on the safety, quality and effectiveness of any potential vaccine.

The MHRA is globally recognised for requiring the highest standards of safety, quality and effectiveness for any vaccine.