

We will continue to support farmers post-Brexit but in a smarter way – Lesley Griffiths

Reaffirming her commitment to do everything possible to ensure the agricultural sector thrives post-Brexit, the Cabinet Secretary thanked everyone who contributed to the 'Brexit and our Land' consultation and helped start a national debate on future farming support.

Over 12,000 responses have been received to the consultation on proposals for a new Land Management Programme, to replace the Common Agricultural Policy in Wales.

The Cabinet Secretary confirmed that changes to how the Welsh Government supports farmers will not be rushed and made three commitments:

- no decisions will be taken until all consultation responses have been reviewed
- no changes to existing payments will happen without further consultation next year; and
- old schemes will not be removed before new schemes are ready.

Speaking at the conference, the Cabinet Secretary said:

“Our plans for future farming support are firmly based on helping ensure farms are resilient and sustainable, whatever the deal on Brexit .

“We’ve had an overwhelming response to our ‘Brexit and our Land’ consultation – I am very grateful for each of the over 12,000 responses we have received and am pleased we’ve had a national debate on our proposals.

“I have been clear from day one. Maintaining the status quo is not an option post-Brexit because it does not help farmers adapt to the challenges of a different and rapidly moving trading environment. Whether we like it or not, the UK will leave the Common Agricultural Policy next year. That is a certainty.

“The Basic Payment Scheme is not the most effective way to support farmers after Brexit – it is too blunt an instrument to deliver. There is no link between BPS and a farmer’s effort, the performance of the farm business or the outcomes achieved. The BPS delivers neither long term resilience nor prosperity.

“I have always stated we have to provide ongoing support to farmers but we need to do so in a better, much smarter way. Farmers need and deserve our support. This is the only way we can keep farmers

on the land and protect our valued rural communities.

“Our proposals for a Public Goods Scheme will do just that – it is a new and meaningful income stream for farmers. It will pay over and above the ‘income foregone and costs incurred’ of our current agri environment schemes. For some farmers it will be the major part of their income and importantly, it will linked to outcomes Wales needs from its land now and in the future’.

“Our proposed Economic Resilience scheme will target funding towards improving businesses. It will be designed to increase productivity, invest in efficiency and diversification and help farmers adapt to new market opportunities.”

The Cabinet Secretary also reminded farmers of the BPS loan scheme support that is available this year and urged those who wish to apply to submit their applications by no later than 30 November.

The Cabinet Secretary added:

“We will be starting BPS payments on 3 December and will ensure we pay as many farm businesses as possible on day 1 of the payment window. Following the exceptionally hot and dry summer, I introduced a BPS loan scheme to support farm businesses and alleviate the short term pressures on a small proportion of claimants not able to receive their BPS early in the payment window.

“I would like to remind everyone this is an ‘opt in’ scheme. The application is currently available to everyone on RPW online and applications must be submitted by 30 November. I urge all farmers to consider applying for this valuable support.”