

# Consultation on Future Agricultural Policy Proposals for Northern Ireland

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Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

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**INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE**

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<http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/>

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- **Telephone: 028 9052 4398** and talk to one of the Consultation Team. If you have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via Text Relay. Dial **18001 028 9052 4398**



- **Email:** [NIFutureAgriPolicy@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:NIFutureAgriPolicy@daera-ni.gov.uk)



- **Visit:** <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-future-agricultural-policy-proposals-northern-ireland>

# About us

We are the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

## What do we do?

Here are some of the things we do.



- We look after the development of farming, forests and fishing in Northern Ireland.
- We provide a service to look after the health and welfare of animals, fish and plants.
- We look after environment and rural development in Northern Ireland.
- We provide research, expert advice and education.
- We look after some parts of public health in how food is made.

# Consultation on the Future Agricultural Policy Proposals for Northern Ireland

- We now have a unique opportunity, for the first time in almost 50 years, to redefine our agricultural policy and target support to meet our local priorities and needs much more effectively.
- We want to devise support schemes that provide opportunities for all of Northern Ireland's farmers.
- Our aim is to develop a future sustainable agricultural industry in which all farmers are supported on an equitable basis to make best use of the assets at their disposal, and to invest in all forms of capital.
- This consultation provides an opportunity for you to share your views on the Future Agricultural Policy Proposals for Northern Ireland.
- A collaborative effort with industry and stakeholders is essential in the co-design and development of new measures and interventions to redefine our future agricultural policy and target support to meet our local priorities and needs more effectively going forward.
- All stakeholders with an interest in food production and land use are encouraged to respond.

# Outcomes: what we want to achieve

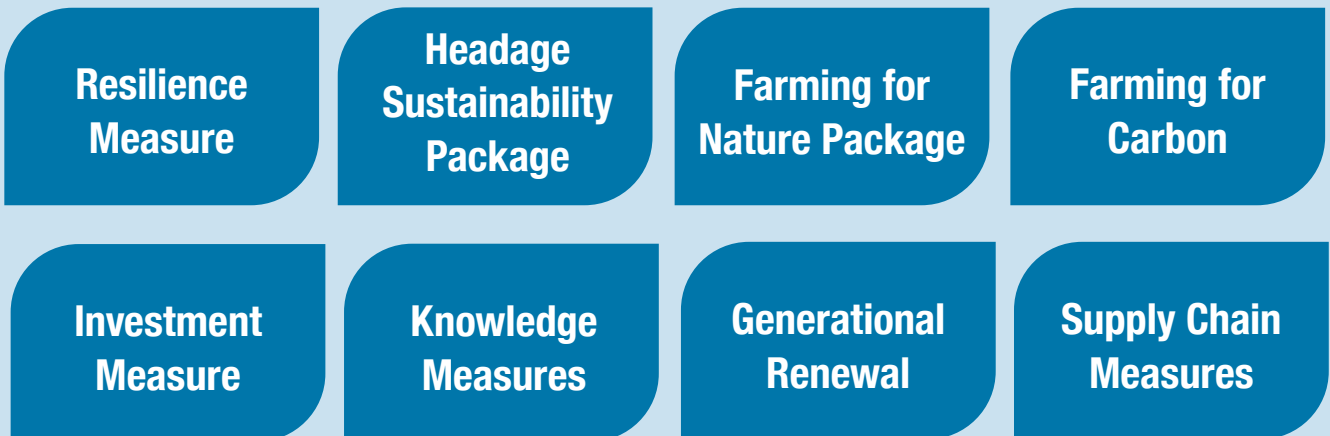
- A comprehensive portfolio of measures is being developed to begin to address four key outcomes of increasing agricultural productivity; environmental sustainability; improving resilience; and an effective functioning supply chain.

1. An industry that pursues **increased productivity** in international terms as a means to sustained profitability, closing the productivity gap which has been opening up with other major suppliers.
2. An industry that is **environmentally sustainable** in terms of its impact on, and guardianship of, air and water quality, soil health and biodiversity, while making its fair contribution to achieving net zero carbon targets. This outcome is an integral part of the new Green Growth Strategy and associated Climate Action Plan which will be the Department's initial route map to climate action, green jobs and a clean environment.
3. An industry that displays **improved resilience** to external shocks (such as market and currency volatility, extreme weather events, etc.) which are ever more frequent and to which the industry has become very exposed.
4. An industry which operates within an integrated, profitable, efficient, sustainable, competitive and **effective functioning supply chain**, with clear transmission of market signals and an overriding focus on high quality food and the end consumer.

# What does the Consultation Cover?

- This consultation presents the Policy Proposals of the workstreams for future support measures that are currently being developed.

These include **8** key primary workstreams:



These workstreams are underpinned by 5 further cross cutting elements and there is an additional sectoral workstream for Horticulture as shown below:



## 8 key workstreams and the issues we want to help address

- **Resilience Measure** - The agricultural sector is particularly prone to uncertainty and farm businesses need to be resilient to persist over the long term in the face of unpredictability and change. We want to provide an area based income payment to provide a basic safety net along with funding for crisis management when needed.
- **Headage Sustainability Package** - We want to design intervention measures for the beef production sector, to drive economic and environmental performance and help address sector vulnerabilities.
- **Farming for Nature Package** - Having more land with grass, crops and animals leaves less land for other creatures and plants to live on. This means that they may soon disappear if we do not try to keep suitable places for them to live or grow. We want to support farmers across all land types to contribute to environmental improvements and sustainability.
- **Farming for Carbon Measures** - We want to encourage carbon reduction actions to improve the sustainability of agriculture in Northern Ireland.
- **Investment Measure** - We want to provide support for capital investment to help where there is evidence of market failure.

- **Knowledge Measures** - We want to help the people involved in the agri-food industry to gain and use knowledge to help farm businesses prosper in changing markets and trading conditions.
- **Generational Renewal** - We want to encourage younger people to become actively involved in farming and assume leadership roles within farm businesses.
- **Supply Chain Measures** - We want to ensure that our supply chains are efficient and competitive by encouraging transparency, skilled and knowledgeable workforces, and high levels of joined up working and partnerships.



## Other cross cutting work areas and the issues we want to help address

- **Soil Testing and Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR)** - We want to establish a database of soil nutrient and carbon status across Northern Ireland to find out which soils could be improved. We will do this by testing the soil in each field. We will use LiDAR to provide maps to show surface water run-off areas and the extent and location of hedgerows, trees and woody biomass on farms.
- **Livestock Genetics and Data** - We want to help you make informed breeding decisions for dairy, beef and sheep through an industry-led genetics improvement programme.
- **Environmental assessments** - We are considering how to deliver the future support programme to achieve better environmental outcomes.
- **Controls and Assurance** - We want to have a simple way to ensure that farm sustainability standards are met. Farmers must keep their agricultural land in good agricultural and environmental condition in line with certain requirements. They must also meet legislative standards relating to the environment, food safety, animal and plant health, and animal welfare.
- **Metrics, Monitoring and Evaluation** - We want to determine how well we are helping you. This includes developing ways of measuring how well the four outcomes we want to achieve are being met.
- **Horticulture** - We want to explore ways of unlocking the potential within this sector in Northern Ireland.

## Some of the rules we have for each work stream when planning how to help

- We want to stay inside World Trade Organisation rules;
- We do not want to affect trading within the UK;
- We want to meet the needs of Northern Ireland;
- We want to work in line with our other policies;
- We want to show we are working with others when we design and put things in place;
- We want the best use of public money;
- We want things to be simple and easy to understand by everyone;
- We want things to be flexible and be able grow bigger if needed;
- We do not want to encourage undesirable behaviours;
- We want to be able to check and change things if they are not working well; and
- We must meet the requirements of legislation.

# The policy proposals we have for each Workstream

## **Resilience Measure**

- A simple, area based income (resilience) payment;
- Area based with entitlements; eligible to all land based agriculture and horticulture;
- Eligible claimants = retaining definition of active farmer; removing businesses solely engaged in grass selling;
- Upper and lower thresholds in keeping with its policy rationale and with associated conditionality;
- Must meet a set of conditions to address the key outcome of improved environmental sustainability;
- Must comply with new Farm Sustainability Standards to replace Cross Compliance; and
- Crisis Framework.

## **Headage Sustainability Measure**

- Suckler Cow Measure:

- Quotas to apply - on individual farms based on historic reference period; and
- No stocking density to apply.

### **Additional conditions**

- Reduce age at first calving - towards the ideal of 24-26 months;
- Reducing the calving interval - towards the ideal of 365 days; and
- Retention periods to be set - must be in that herd for at least 6 months of the year.

- **Beef Transformation Measure for finished clean beef cattle:**

- Born and reared in Northern Ireland and registered on APHIS;
- Claimants take steps to reduce age at slaughter of clean cattle to 24 months;
- Minimum slaughter age of 12 months is proposed; and
- Tiered approach may be considered and potential negative subsidy if insufficient movement towards younger slaughter age.

## **Farming for Nature**

- Initial focus will be on actions to maintain and improve biodiversity at farm and landscape level, increasing ecological connectivity:
  - Hedgerows and restoration of dry stone walls;
  - Field margins;
  - Pollinator strips;
  - Riparian buffer strips;
  - Winter stubble and provision of wild bird cover;
  - Native trees;
  - Ancient woodlands;
  - Parkland;
  - Tree plantations around livestock farms;
  - Integration of trees within crop and livestock farming systems (agroforestry);
  - Semi-natural grasslands (and improved grasslands and croplands);
  - Ponds;
  - Protected areas for biodiversity; and
  - Peatland restoration and management.

## **Farming for Carbon Measures**

- Reduction in numbers of older cattle presented for slaughter and improved suckler cow productivity;
- Feed additives;
  - Industry challenge fund to evaluate use of feed additives; and
  - Consideration of mandating inclusion of enteric methane reducing additives into animal feed in the future.
- Breeding - industry led genetics programme;
- Urease inhibitor fertilisers;
- Legumes and herbs;
- Farming carbon;
- Peatland rewetting; and
- Biomethane and hydrogen.

## Investment Measure

- Support innovation and new technologies to drive increased productivity, better nutrient management and reductions in carbon, ammonia and nitrates emissions, improved water quality and improved farm safety;
- Careful consideration of investment measures to support these objectives; and
- We define a number of guidelines which we will follow and draft design principles for future schemes.

## Knowledge Measures

- **Aligned** with the Department's policy position;
- **Evidence-based** and informed by the evaluation of current scheme;
- Focused on delivery of **four key outcomes**;
- **Integrated** with other DAERA programmes/schemes;
- Effectively **targeted**;
- Support **continuous professional development** crucial to development of sustainable growth;

- Provide **access to global innovations** which are appropriate for local adoption;
- Encourage **cooperation and partnership**;
- Embed **peer learning** and sharing of **best practice** in the delivery model; and
- Utilise **technology** in delivery - use of both face to face and online delivery.

### **Generational Renewal Measure**

- Development and delivery of a three phased programme;
- Education to ensure the successor has an appropriate Level 3 qualification;
- Capacity building for the successor with a particular focus on leadership, technical, environmental and business training;
- Appropriate Incentives when agreed actions are met;
- Access to support and guidance for future-proofing the business; and
- Links to other support services, particularly for the retiring farmer.



## **Supply Chain Measures**

- **Improving information flow and transparency:**
  - Help to create the information infrastructure needed;
- **Addressing fragmentation:**
  - Provide tools to encourage collaboration and integration; and
- **Driving better strategic outcomes:**
  - Productivity, resilience, environmental sustainability, supply chain functionality.

## **Soil Testing and LiDAR**

- Soil Nutrient Health Scheme to provide a strategic platform;
- A unique benchmark;
- A valuable resource for farmers;
- Facilitate improvements to our water environment; and
- Assist the achievement of environmental sustainability.

## **Livestock Genetics and Data**

### **Industry-led programme:**

- Increase the annual rate of genetic gain in the ruminant livestock sectors; and
- Drive productivity, resilience, animal health and welfare and environmental gains.

### **Department's role:**

- Consideration to pump priming the initiative;
- Encouraging the industry to participate in it; and
- Allow policy recognition and policy support.

## **Controls and Assurance**

- New Farm Sustainability Standards to replace Cross Compliance
- Reform of Penalty System;
- New approach to land eligibility for schemes; and
- New approach to controls.

## **Metrics, Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Outcome focussed and relevant;
- Simple to understand and meaningful to stakeholders;
- Consistent and comparable with metrics used elsewhere to enable benchmarking;
- Based on transparent and robust methodology;
- Not subject to long lags so that corrective actions can be timely;
- Have a frequency of measurement that is at least annual; and
- Subject to quality assurance by professional statisticians.

## **Horticulture**

- Focus will be on **production horticulture**;
- Developing programmes through a **collective process**;
- Creating improved **supply chain integration**;
- Assisting in building **collaborative partnerships** to access Research and Development and innovation;

- Providing access to cutting-edge **knowledge transfer** and innovation support programmes;
- Facilitating **learning from others**;
- Optimising **precision of data** used in decision making; and
- Supporting businesses transition and **adoption of new technology**.

# How to respond

You can respond to the full consultation survey online through the Citizen Space website at:

<https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/daera/daera-app>

Or tell us what you think about it by:



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Please respond through Citizen Space.  
Please note you can complete as few or as many questions as you want.