

Dear Sirs,

RE: Welsh Sustainable Farming Policy.

I am the managing director of Hereford, Talgarth and Builth Wells Markets. Two of the markets being in Wales and one on the Welsh border. We currently sell around 600,000 sheep per annum between the three markets and 20,000 cattle per annum at Hereford. 70% of the livestock sold in Hereford comes from Wales. We as a company are massively committed financially and morally to livestock farmers. We have invested heavily in livestock premises to serve the Welsh border farmers. Between the three markets we employ approximately 70 people from full to part time. There has been terrific comment about farmers wellbeing and mental health and these proposals from Welsh government will do nothing to address farmers concerns for the future and will impact negatively, on a massive scale, to the detriment of their mental health.

Farmers want to produce food to feed the nation, they do not wish to become park keepers focussing solely on environmental subsidies rather than their in built in destiny to be food producers. 40% of the world is hungry and it is moral bankrupt for us not to produce food when we are perfectly capable of doing so. Grass does it's own part towards carbon capture whilst producing nourishing feed for livestock to produce meat and milk.

Great Britain's contribution to the world carbon problem is negligible in the extreme as we are but a pin prick on the globe. We will sacrifice our farming systems and industries to comply with global requirements whereas most other nations will pay lip service or do nothing because they cannot economically afford to do so.

It would appear that Mr Trump will find his way to the Whitehouse which is deeply concerning, he has already invited Putin to take on countries who have not contributed fully to NATO. It is also likely he will withdraw funding from Ukraine and today (29/02/24) Putin has warned that foreign troops in Ukraine may lead to nuclear war. If the Israeli/Gaza war, the Red Sea conflict and possible confrontation in Taiwan are taken in context the world is becoming a very dangerous place. Two weeks ago the chief of the defence staff warned of the threat from Russia, and that we should increase our military personnel and spending. All of these factors together with global warming would suggest that we should protect at all costs, a home grown and sustainable food supply. Currently thousands of acres are going to go out of production in Great Britain, at a time when rising temperatures in North America, Canada, Central Russia and all of the continental land masses will mean that their grain production is almost certainly going to reduce due to rising levels of heat and lack of moisture. Great Britain has a maritime climate, protected from extremes of heat and cold by the surrounding sea. This means that we are able to produce a wide variety of livestock, cereals, vegetables and fruit. In World War 2 this island was only saved from starvation by American convoys, in 2020 we experienced a global pandemic, politicians have learnt nothing from these events and protection of a home grown food supply is sacrosanct.

Welsh farmers already provide their fair share of forestry and wildlife habitat running in parallel with tremendous agricultural produce. There are large areas of southern and eastern England that may benefit from further forestry and habitat creation but farmers have managed the Welsh landscape to great effect over hundreds of years and do not need to have further constraints forced upon their food production capability. Wales is a tremendously important producer of cattle, breeding ewes and store lambs to be finished and breed in the lowlands of Wales and England, to provide meat for home consumption and export.

Farmers are less than 2% of the voting public but produce 60% of food requirements for 66 million people in this country. China and Russia are building roads, railways, airports, ports and bridges in countries all over the world and are grooming them to source their food, fuel and resources to sustain their populations. The days of readily available food throughout the world are numbered and if Russia and China take control of third world countries' resources they will either not be available to the west or will be at inflated prices. It is therefore imperative that this island maintains its food growing capability to the highest level possible, to prevent price escalation and shortage. We have forgotten very quickly, the panic buying that took place during the covid pandemic.

Wales is a massive area of food production but if there is no profit in farming, Wales from north to south and west to east will become an economic waste land. Forestry has a harvest from 30 to 70 years after planting with thinning taking place during the lifecycle. Forestry employs very few people, it is agriculture in rural Wales that makes communities flourish and businesses succeed. Forestry can be relocated to the un-grazed hills, of which there are many, following the demise of the ewe premium. To take 20% of land out of food production is immoral and the problem of agricultural property relief (APR) on habitat land has yet to be addressed and is a massive concern to those involved.

Farmers generally feel undervalued and forgotten because food has been plentiful since rationing after World War 2, this situation could rapidly change not only from global circumstances but also from short term and ill thought policies for agriculture in Great Britain.

I strongly urge the Welsh Government to re-think their Sustainable Farming Scheme policy to encompass food production and allow farmers to retain pride in their vocation and production in their fields and hills.

Richard Hyde MRICS MRAC