

# Consultation on Future Agricultural Policy Proposals for Northern Ireland



**Presentation to Defra - AES Meeting**

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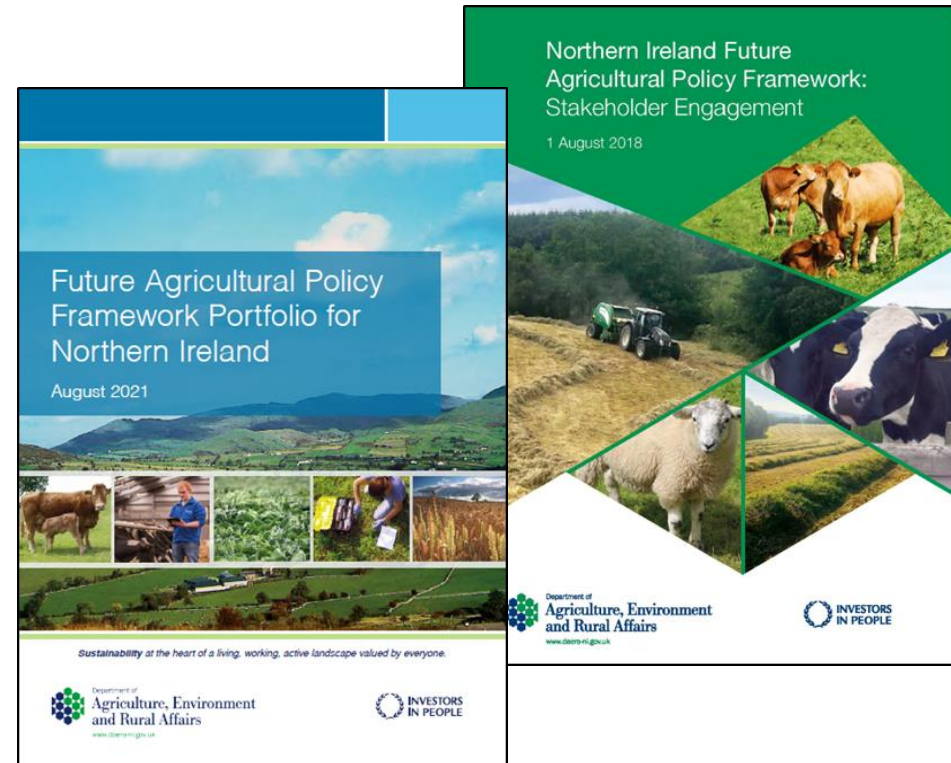
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# Future Agricultural Policy Framework

- Published on 24 August 2021
- Seeks to chart a way forward to a future agricultural policy which better meets the needs of NI
- Takes into account views from key stakeholders across food, farming and the environment from an engagement exercise in 2018



# Future Agricultural Policy – Key outcomes

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
- is environmentally sustainable in terms of its impact on, and guardianship of, air and water quality, soil health, carbon footprint and biodiversity
- displays improved resilience to external shocks which are ever more frequent and to which the industry has become very exposed
- which operates within an integrated, efficient, sustainable, competitive and an effective functioning supply chain, with clear transmission of market signals and an overriding focus on high quality food and the end consumer



# Portfolio of Measures (Primary workstreams)

Resilience

Headage  
Sustainability

Farming for  
Nature

Farming for  
Carbon

Investment

Knowledge

Generational  
Renewal

Supply Chain



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# Cross cutting elements (Underpinning workstreams)

Soil Testing  
and LiDAR

Livestock  
Genetics and  
Data

Controls and  
Assurance

Metrics  
Monitoring and  
Evaluation

Environmental  
Assessments

Horticulture

**Some of the policy proposals are more developed than others but each will evolve over time to ensure that a coherent package of measures, actions and schemes is developed to deliver against the four key outcomes**



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# Resilience Measure

## Proposals

- A **simple, area based income (resilience) payment** to provide a safety net, progressing down to a level which does not blunt innovation or productivity
- Area based with entitlements
- Eligible claimants = retaining definition of active farmer but removing businesses solely engaged in grass selling and maintenance of GAEC
- 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
- Crisis Framework

# Headage Sustainability Package

- Funded by the immediate redirection of up to 17% of the overall farm support budget
- Aimed at improving productivity, reducing carbon and environmental footprint



## Two proposals

1. Suckler Cow Measure
2. Beef Transformation Measure

# Farming for Nature Package

## Principles

- **Landscape Scale** - schemes that are scalable and strategically focussed
- **Eligibility** – receipt of the Resilience Payment will not be a gateway requirement
- **Minimum land area** – a minimum land area of 3 ha
- **Financial incentives** – recognise and reward public goods; no individual business cap
- **Outcome based** - though activity based prescription will have a place where appropriate
- **Time Horizon** - an appropriate time horizon will be adopted
- **Collaborative Participation** – schemes will be incentivised to encourage collaborative working
- **Monitoring and Evaluation** - robust monitoring and evaluation essential



# Farming for Nature Package

- Encompass a number of bespoke support schemes that will be available depending on the type of land managed
- Over time, increasing levels of funding will move from the Resilience Payment to this package as momentum builds and it will form the central plank of agricultural support with the aim of ensuring that the environment becomes both an enterprise and a profit centre on farms
- Package will evolve and expand as we move forward, to ensure that impact, scalability and deliverability are achieved
- Initial focus will be on actions to maintain and improve biodiversity at farm and landscape level, increasing ecological connectivity – boundaries, buffers and biodiversity

# Farming for Carbon

- Assist and incentivise farmers to adopt carbon reduction actions into their management will also be central to this future policy

- Seek to ensure that as many of the policy interventions as possible help drive down the carbon footprint of the agricultural industry



- Will evolve over time as baselines and reduction targets are established – starting with relatively simple measures that can assist all farm businesses now to begin to reduce their carbon footprint

# 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, improved farm safety, etc.
- Mindful, however, of the burden of capital overheads that the sector already carries, so careful consideration of investment measures to support these objectives will be a key consideration
- We define a number of guidelines which we will follow and draft design principles for future schemes



# Knowledge Measures

## Proposals/Principles

- **Aligned** with the Department's policy position
- **Evidence-based** and informed by the evaluation of current schemes
- 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
- Utilise **technology** in delivery through the use of both face to face and online delivery

# Generational Renewal

- Facilitate the acceleration of the transition of farming businesses to those with better training and skills, who are more open to innovation and change and who have a longer investment horizon

## Proposals

- Development and delivery of a three phased programme
- Education to ensure the successor has an appropriate level 3 qualification as minimum
- 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 help and guidance for future-proofing the business
- Links to other services, particularly for the retiring farmer

# Supply Chain Measures

## Proposals

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

# Soil Testing and LiDAR

## Proposals

- Soil Nutrient Health Scheme to provide baseline for pH, major nutrients and carbon
- A unique benchmark
- A valuable resource for farmers
- Facilitate improvements to our water environment and future platform for carbon measures
- 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
- 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
- Allow policy recognition and policy support





# Controls and Assurance

## Proposals

- New Farm Sustainability Standards to replace cross compliance
  - Protection of waters from pollution
  - Protection of habitats and biodiversity
  - Protection of landscape and heritage
  - Livestock food and feed/herd and flock health and biosecurity
  - Welfare and protection of farmed livestock
  - Livestock identification and traceability
- Reform of Penalty System
- New approach to land eligibility for schemes
- Modern approach to controls

# Metrics, Monitoring and Evaluation

## Principles to measure four Key Outcomes

- Outcome focussed and relevant
- Simple to understand
- 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
- Subject to quality assurance by professional statisticians

# Horticulture

## Proposals

- 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
- Supporting businesses transition and **adoption of new technology**

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