



**NFU SCOTLAND'S
2019
GENERAL ELECTION
PRIORITIES**

Three years of stagnation since the outcome of the 2016 EU referendum have been seriously damaging to the confidence of Scottish agricultural businesses. Our survey in June 2019 identified that almost half of NFU Scotland members have experienced negative business impacts since 2016, with many putting off new investments and expansion or taking on new staff.

This election will undoubtedly be about Brexit. But as well as sorting out Brexit in the interests of Scottish agriculture and the hugely important food and drinks sector it underpins, Scottish farmers and crofters need and expect more from our political representatives if we are to secure a profitable, productive and positive future.

With Article 50 still in motion, we need our political parties to give urgent and unambiguous commitments to industry about the process ahead. These are NFU Scotland's priorities for the new UK Government.

1. Avoid a 'no deal' outcome.

No deal would be disastrous for Scottish agriculture, with the application of export tariffs on products of key significance to Scotland, such as Scotch beef and lamb, and the removal of import tariffs on other important products including cereals, horticulture, potatoes and eggs. That would open the UK market to uncompetitive and sub-standard imports. The new UK Government must prioritise a deal that protects and enhances Scotland's high-value agricultural outputs.

2. Ensure as free trade in agri-food goods as possible with our principal EU market.

Outside of the UK, the EU remains Scotland's main trading partner. NFU Scotland wants to maintain a close relationship with the EU which upholds exacting standards, limits regulatory divergence and protects the UK market from cheap imported produce.

3. Gain greater regulatory control and discretion over UK farm practice.

Much of the food and farming sector is highly regulated, and rightly so – as it is regulation that underpins our world-leading standards. But it is also vital that the agricultural industry is not restricted by unnecessary red tape and that regulatory decisions are based on risk and sound science. NFU Scotland wants to work with the new UK Government to improve the regulatory landscape in areas where better results could be achieved for the environment, water quality, animal welfare and compliance by taking an approach that is fit-for-purpose.



4. Maintain access to the seasonal and permanent workforce.

Scottish agri-food is a key growth sector of the Scottish economy but will not meet industry targets if there are not enough people to fill vacancies on farm and in food and drink processing. The UK's immigration system must genuinely fit the needs of the labour market, and that can't be done with the application of blunt and ineffective salary and skills thresholds. The new UK Government must implement an immigration policy that ensures Scottish agri-food can continue to employ valued and skilled workers from outside the UK into both seasonal and permanent occupations.

5. Ensure international trade respects domestic production standards.

Scottish farmers produce food to some of the highest production standards in the world, enabling significant opportunities to grow our export markets overseas. But this must not be at any cost. We need the new UK Government to ensure agri-food is protected in any new trade agreement so that we don't expose the UK to imported food from third countries produced to lower standards and at a lower cost. Negotiating new deals, particularly away from the EU, must be done on quality rather than quantity. We call upon the new UK Government to establish a Commission on Standards to establish a trade negotiation baseline.

6. Implement a new agricultural funding framework that ensures Scottish Ministers have the tools to develop and deliver a bold new Scottish agricultural policy.

There are huge opportunities for Scottish farmers and crofters to be properly rewarded and incentivised as both food producers and custodians of the environment, if given the right policy tools to improve productivity, environmental benefits and financial stability. To do this, the new UK Government must deliver funding commitments beyond the lifetime of the new parliament so that agricultural businesses can plan ahead and invest. That requires a new agricultural policy beyond the CAP that properly delivers for farmers, crofters and the wider economic, environmental and social interests of society.



Looking beyond the EU debate

7. Work with us on the climate crisis.

Scottish agriculture will take on the climate change challenge and provide solutions. Net Zero and interim targets for reducing emissions may be devolved, but climate change is anything but. The new UK Government must enable farming across the UK to play an even greater role in tackling climate change by providing dedicated resources that can be drawn down to implement actions and investments on farm that drive input efficiencies. In addition, the new UK Government must embrace farmland as both a carbon store and a focal point for renewable energy – and should structure fiscal incentives to encourage greater uptake.

8. Recognise best practice in animal welfare.

Scottish farmers and crofters care deeply about the welfare of their animals and rear them to world-leading standards. Scottish agriculture has worked hard to ensure that welfare is at the forefront when animals are being transported by road or boat. The UK Government must properly consult and engage with industry when developing new measures to enhance animal welfare in order to learn from best practice that is already underway. Government must not implement poor or unscientific policy, no matter how well-intentioned, that would seriously hinder the efforts of Scottish food producers.

9. Creating opportunities for new entrants.

Those who aspire to farm find it difficult to establish a viable agricultural business, as access to land and capital can be limited. The UK Government must significantly increase the use of tax and fiscal incentives to encourage the letting of land to new agricultural businesses and ensure that the fledgling businesses that then follow are afforded every opportunity to thrive.

10. Improve the standing of farmers and crofters in the supply chain.

Agriculture is the foundation stone of Scotland's successful food and drink sector but, too often, farmers do not receive a fair share of the successes. The new UK Government must work to increase confidence between producers, their customers and consumers. That means strengthening the remit of the Groceries Code Adjudicator so it can root out unfair treatment of primary producers. We also need legislation to create compulsory contracts within the dairy supply chain and a mandatory country of origin labelling scheme for meat and dairy products that builds consumer confidence in Scotland and the United Kingdom.

