

Here to help

Speaking up for Scotland's
farmers and crofters



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Introduction

Every single day in Scotland, decisions are made that influence how you run your farm or croft. The results for your business could be positive, or less so; they could be intentional or the unintended consequence of a decision on a completely different issue.

Because of this, it's essential that politicians, policymakers and regulators – as well as our customers – understand farming and crofting better: what you do, what prevents you from doing it better, how it benefits Scotland, and how their decisions (or lack of them) affect you. And so every day, NFU Scotland engages with them – as well as industry, media and the wider public – to tell them about what you do, why, and what you need in order to deliver for the benefit of all.

Our eight priority areas

To make this engagement more effective, we've put together a list of eight priority areas and issues we'll lobby on over the next couple of years. This document summarises them and gives examples of what they mean in practice.

It's worth pointing out that:

- The list may change – one aspect of our work with politicians and others is to find out what's coming round the corner, so that as new issues or opportunities come up, we'll be onto them.
- If something isn't mentioned here, we may still be working on it. We've picked examples of issues rather than listing them in full detail.
- This lobbying activity is all about you. If other issues start to affect you, please do tell us about them.



Future Support

Building a system that works for farming and crofting and works for Scotland

We know that every farmer and crofter wants certainty about post-Brexit agriculture policy and support. Without it, you can't plan or invest.

We also know that a productive, profitable farming sector needs a new approach to support – one that:

- Offers you incentives to produce high-quality food efficiently and sustainably.
- Rewards improvements in productivity, husbandry and stewardship .
- Supports you to meet environmental and climate targets.

What we're doing

To drive progress, we're continually putting your case to Scottish Government (and UK government, where appropriate) and working the levers to make change happen. We want to move on from discussing future support to delivery of a system that's fit for purpose.

So, we will;

- Continue to push for the ideas we set out in *Steps to Change* and to build on positives such as the Farmer-led Groups.
- Keep up pressure for better support and incentives for those wishing to enter farming (e.g. access to land, capital, advice) or retire from it.
- Press the government to make payments on time, keep systems simple and ensure the switch to any new system is seamless.



We have been clear and consistent in our message to Government that the time for talking is over and the time for delivery on a new agricultural policy for Scotland is now."

Martin Kennedy, President, NFU Scotland



Rural economy

Opportunities to develop your business and income streams

It's sometimes forgotten that farms and crofts are businesses. And like other businesses, you don't operate in isolation. You need good transport infrastructure; decent broadband connectivity; a planning system that allows you to diversify and use assets creatively; and advice and support to help you innovate and grow your business. We know this because you tell us.

What we're doing

Progress on all of these things is one of our priorities for the coming years. For example, we will:

- Work with different parts of government, local authorities and others towards better rural connectivity and transport networks, and a more supportive planning system.
- Identify any hurdles you face in pursuing specific rural opportunities, from agritourism to renewable energy, and encourage relevant organisations and businesses to dismantle them.
- Press the case for farmers and crofters to benefit from business support to diversify; this could include access to funding, training, mentoring and business advice.
- Raise awareness of your business support needs among organisations such as Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE), South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) and Scottish Enterprise.





Better regulation Legislation that's fit for purpose

We all understand the need for regulation, and no one in farming and crofting is asking for a free-for-all. But you do want better regulation – or, rather, regulation and legislation that:

- Does its job of producing good outcomes without tying you up in disproportionate red tape, costs or restrictions.
- Is applied fairly and proportionately – including any penalties.
- Allows you to try out new ideas and plan with confidence.

What we're doing

The job of achieving better regulation is never finished, and we're constantly talking to government, regulators and others about this.

Our ultimate goal is to ensure that all regulation is based on robust, current scientific evidence and defined risk, and that legislators and regulators understand the realities of farming and crofting. More specifically, we will:

- Work all the angles on every issue that affects you, from rural crime and protection of livestock from dogs to plant protection products and the use of

- gene editing and breeding techniques.
- Continue to urge major crofting law reform
- Identify and head off other legislation that could affect the viability of your business.
- Promote examples where awareness raising and education would provide better outcomes than regulation and enforcement.
- Look for areas where regulation and quality assurance schemes could be streamlined.



If people in government had a better understanding of the realities of farming, we'd get better regulation. That way, we could deliver better for Scotland and better for consumers."

Peter Moss, farmer, Orkney



Public engagement Getting across the value of what you do

The Covid-19 lockdown helped people understand better how their food reaches their plates. But there's still more change needed to show the wider public how they benefit from your work. This could persuade them to pay more attention to what they eat, buy more local food, take more care when they access your land, decide to work or invest in farming, and more.

What we're doing

First, we want people to understand more about your role in providing them with high-quality and affordable food.

Second, we want to raise their awareness of what else you provide, such as the spaces where they walk or holiday, habitats for their favourite wildlife, jobs that keep rural areas alive and benefits to Scotland's economy.

Third, we are working with levy bodies in the promotion of positive messages around our produce in terms of balanced diets, sustainability and low emissions.

We will do this through different activities, looking to include all age groups from 3 to 103:

- Spell out farming's benefits, so people see the bigger picture.

- Work with the education sector, local authorities, Scottish Government and others to build understanding of local and seasonal food, through the national curriculum, farm visits etc.
- Push for progress on the Scottish Government's Good Food Nation agenda, putting the farmer and crofter at the heart of it.
- Develop initiatives to help you engage with the public on your own account, such as information materials.



Fairer supply chains

Improved and fair margins for farmers and crofters

Empty shelves resulting from Covid-19 and Brexit brought supply issues into firmer focus, but you're still nowhere near where you want to be on this. To make individual farming businesses viable for the long term, you need improved and fair margins on what you produce.

What we're doing

Your ask is simple, but this is complex territory. There's no single measure that will make supply chains fairer, so we're acting on multiple fronts to improve your situation. We will:

- Maintain the pressure for legal protections, where suitable. Milk contracts are one area where this could improve certainty for producers; if we get the model right here, we could adapt it for other produce.
- Make the case for government to support more processing capacity in Scotland in order to protect your interests and create more opportunities to add value to Scottish produce.
- Press for clearer labelling and increased promotion of all Scottish produce so consumers can make the right choices.
- Work with government and the food and drink sector to develop new markets at home and abroad – in a way that brings benefits back to your own farm gate.



I don't feel that people always see the full picture when it comes to farming. That applies on a whole range of issues, from the prices we're paid to our role in protecting the countryside. So, NFU Scotland's work to speak up for us is really important."

Amy Geddes, farmer, Angus





Effective conservation

Balance in how wildlife is protected

There are two headline points you tell us about conservation and biodiversity.

First, you want government and the public to pursue a more objective course between protecting wildlife and producing food. Second, you want more recognition of your own positive contribution to flourishing habitats and wildlife.

What we're doing

Some of our work in this sphere is quite high-level: it's about getting legislation, policy and 'public conversations' about biodiversity to reflect the needs and value of farming. We work every angle here – from talking with the right politicians and civil servants to explaining it in the press.

We also lobby them on specifics. For example, we will:

- Push for wildlife protection laws to prioritise management, rather than blanket protection, of single species that can create significant agricultural damage and loss, such as beavers, geese and badgers.
- Highlight examples of good practice that could be used more widely to get balance in biodiversity. NatureScot's Shared Approach to Wildlife Management is a good example of this.



Optimal land use

Better decisions on how we use Scotland's land

Many of you feel that discussions about land use in Scotland are far too black and white – that people talk as if it's a choice between farming on the one side and forestry, for example, on the other. So, we need to make government and campaigners see that:

- The best land use and management choices involve using land for what it is most suited for, which in many cases is sustainable food production.
- Farmed land also performs a wealth of other functions such as carbon capture, wildlife conservation, recreation, renewable energy production and flood prevention.

What we're doing

We're constantly putting your case to government, media and others, in conjunction with our work on future support, conservation and climate change.



What we're doing

We're fighting your corner hard on this area, linking it to our work for you on future support, public engagement, land use, better regulation and other topics. As well as making sure that farming is at the table when government and others set their plans on climate change, we will:

- Encourage the government to support your climate activity with incentives and advice, not regulation, and to base all targets and requirements on up-to-date scientific evidence and robust, accurate data on emissions and sequestration in Scottish agriculture.
- Protect your interests in emerging markets for carbon and safeguard Scottish agriculture's green credentials.
- Seek adequate financial support, practical guidance, knowledge transfer, training and upskilling support to help you reduce emissions, while still driving up food production.
- Tie this in with our lobbying work on issues such as breeding techniques, planning law relating to renewables, and integrated land use. ♦



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We will:

- Challenge policies and support systems that encourage binary choices between farming and tree planting, peatland restoration or biodiversity.
- Encourage government to shift tree planting targets towards farm woodlands, rather than wholesale migration to forestry.
- Lobby for taxation, inheritance laws and land reform legislation to support sustainable intergenerational farming.



Climate change
Recognition and reward for your climate actions

You often tell us you feel demonised or side-lined in the chat about climate change. On the one hand, the finger is pointed at farming's role in producing emissions; on the other, the positive role you can play in supporting Scotland's climate and environmental goals is often overlooked. A double whammy, in other words.

Our Eight Priority Themes



Climate Change



Future Support



Rural Economy



Optimal Land Use

A Sustainable & Profitable Future for Scottish Agriculture



Better Regulation



Effective Conservation



Fairer Supply Chains



Public Engagement

📣 Get your own views heard

Our team at NFU Scotland will put your needs, wants, concerns and bugbears in front of government, regulators, media and others, and we'll report back to you on progress on specific goals and issues. We'll also raise other new issues as they arise or as you tell us about them.

That last point, about telling us about your issues, is crucial.

We want to hear your views and experiences on any of the themes above, so we can get them heard at the heart of government. Everything we do on this takes us

a step closer to a profitable and sustainable future for Scottish farmers and crofters.

To tell us your views, contact Jonnie Hall, Director of Policy, at jonathan.hall@nfus.org.uk. We look forward to hearing from you.