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A NATURE-POSITIVE PATHWAY TO DECARBONISE UK AGRICULTURE AND LAND USE

COUNTRY FOCUS – SCOTLAND

UK landscapes, and the way that our food is produced and consumed, need to transform urgently in order to help meet net zero, restore nature and reduce our global environmental footprint. Simply put, there is no way to meet our climate and nature commitments as one, without coming together to radically reshape our food system.

WWF has set out an overarching vision for what the agriculture and land use sectors in the UK can achieve this decade to put us on a low emission, high nature journey towards net zero food production and consumption.¹ In taking the actions we recommend, based on independent analysis, we see a credible and positive pathway for the UK as a whole to:

- **Reduce UK direct agricultural greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 35% by 2030 and 51% by 2050 on 2018 levels**
- **Switch UK land from a net source of emissions to a net sink by 2040 at the very latest**
- **Halt and reverse the loss of UK nature by 2030**
- **Cut UK farming's overseas carbon footprint relating to soy feed and fertiliser inputs by at least 31% by 2030 and 57% by 2050 on 2018 levels**

In Scotland, agriculture is the dominant land use and is responsible for almost a quarter of the country's greenhouse gas emissions.² Farmers are impacted by climate change but also have a huge role to play in reducing emissions, storing carbon and restoring nature. Yet emissions from agriculture have not fallen in the last decade. Various recent reports have outlined the actions farmers could take to reduce emissions, but a recent report for WWF Scotland³ showed that these proposals would take us less than halfway towards the emissions cuts we need from agriculture. This makes wider system level changes, such as a transition to agroecology, even more important. However, current commitments from the Scottish Government suggest that we may not see the transformative change we need in rural policy to support this transition.

To restore nature and meet Scotland's ambitious climate targets, the Scottish Government should:

1. Ensure that Scotland's next Climate Change Plan contains a comprehensive package of policies and proposals that secure a reduction of direct agricultural emissions, from a 2019 baseline of 7.7MtCO₂e to 5.3MtCO₂e by 2032.
2. Ensure that the Good Food Nation Bill and resulting Good Food Nation Plan exemplify development of integrated food policy and cross department working, including a duty to measure the environmental footprint of food and set a target for its significant reduction.
3. Use the forthcoming Nitrogen Balance Sheet to establish a baseline for nitrogen use efficiency and to identify an appropriate target for its improvement, in order to halve nitrogen waste by 2030, compared with 2020 levels.
4. Finalise proposals for a new rural support system by the end of 2022, that phases out area-based direct payments and supports a transition to agroecology. This should be legally underpinned by the Agriculture Bill expected in 2023, and supported by pilot schemes to trial new schemes before wider role out beyond 2024.
5. Increase and consolidate the resources available for government-funded advice. This should include upskilling existing advisors and training new ones, accreditation of environmental and climate specialists and investment in regional hubs, linked to the Regional Land Use Partnerships.
6. Provide a clear purpose, mandate and funding to the emerging Regional Land Use Partnerships, to ensure they result in the delivery of effective Regional Land Use Frameworks across Scotland to secure nature- and climate-positive land use.
7. Put a deadline on its commitment to ban the sale of peat for horticulture of no later than 2023, and bring forward new legislation to underpin its commitment to ban burning on deep peat and introduce licencing of all other muirburn.
8. Develop a definition, criteria and public guidance for climate-friendly, sustainable and healthy diets by the end of 2022; test and implement the guidance through public procurement; and establish a multi-year programme of engagement with the public, farmers and food processors to apply it.



- 1 <https://www.wwf.org.uk/landofplenty>
- 2 <https://www.gov.scot/policies/agriculture-and-the-environment/>
- 3 [Ricardo GHG mitigation WWF Scotland 17Oct21.pdf](#)



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