

Beyond the CAP: policies to support better UK meat and dairy production post-Brexit

This Policy Briefing sets out a suite of recommendations from the Eating Better alliance for livestock's role within a sustainable food and farming system, that delivers better health, for the environment and tackling climate change, for farm animal welfare, and for providing livelihoods from sustainable farming.

Brexit provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for fresh thinking about the future of food and farming in the UK. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) with its £3bn support for UK farmers has played a key role in shaping our food and farming systems. Yet it is no longer fit for purpose. In particular it fails to adequately address the environmental and climate change impacts of livestock farming and the UK is not on track to meet its targets to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from agriculture – where livestock is a particular hotspot.

Future trade negotiations will be crucial but risk undermining UK standards of environmental protection, food safety and animal welfare and putting UK farmers out of business. Brexit provides the opportunity to create, and promote, a high standard Britain, one synonymous with globally leading production standards for animal welfare and the environment.

The status quo is not an option. Now is the time to develop a new strategy with policies and mechanisms to support the essential transition towards a fairer, greener and healthier food system. Central to achieving those goals is the transition to healthier and sustainable eating patterns: with more plant-based foods, less meat and dairy products particularly those from intensive, industrial systems, and towards farming systems that produce 'better' meat and dairy to higher animal welfare and environmental standards.

What we want to see

First, we need to step off the treadmill of industrially produced livestock that comes at such a cost to animal welfare and the environment. At the same time we cannot assume that more extensive systems are always more sustainable in all respects and they certainly cannot produce the same quantity of livestock products as intensive production systems, or replicate their cheap prices.

Yet we believe there is a way through this conundrum that provides win-wins, by a 'less and better' approach to livestock consumption and production. A shift to more extensive and mixed farming systems would result in a smaller quantity of livestock products, with higher economic and environmental value which would help support farmers. When combined with a shift to eating less but better meat, people will not need to pay more for their food overall, so the shift need not be more expensive for consumers.



Our analysis of the current agricultural support mechanism (CAP) and trade arrangements in relation to livestock shows:

1. The CAP is not fit for purpose for livestock against a range of measures.

For example, subsidies to livestock farmers are failing to address the climate change and environmental impacts of this sector and dietary and health issues are rarely addressed at all. Importantly, subsidies fail to adequately distinguish between livestock farming types that bring environmental and animal welfare benefits and those that do not.

2. Trade negotiations will be crucial.

The outcome of future trade negotiations will determine the extent to which the UK's markets in livestock products will be opened up to greater competition from abroad since currently EU trade agreements limit imports via tariffs. Trading relationships are particularly relevant for post-Brexit scenarios which focus heavily on export opportunities and favourable trade deals e.g. with the US.

3. The status quo is not an option.

Food and farming policies fit for the future will require more than tinkering with the CAP subsidies or favourable trade deals. Brexit provides an historic opportunity to develop a new vision that goes beyond the CAP's policy focus of agriculture, rural economies and land management to create integrated food and farming strategy and policies that deliver for environmental priorities and climate change, aligns with healthy and sustainable diets, and supports thriving rural livelihoods and high standards of animal welfare.

10 recommendations for livestock's role in a sustainable food and farming system

- **An integrated food and farming strategy to replace CAP** wider than the set of policies concerned with agriculture, rural economies and land management and which better integrates and drives progress towards climate change goals for agriculture and supports public health and restoring biodiversity.
- **A transition to healthy sustainable eating patterns** with less and better meat and dairy with more plant-based eating, including fully integrating this approach into healthy eating advice to the public, public sector food procurement and exploring all options, including fiscal levers, to encourage behaviour change.
- **High standards and enforcement for environmental protection, food safety, livestock antibiotic use and farm animal welfare** maintained and strengthened in international trade negotiations, new UK agricultural policy and support mechanisms. Imports must be required to meet UK standards in these areas.
- **Public money for the provision of public goods** such as wildlife, farm animal welfare, environmental and landscape benefits, including building healthy soils, enhanced biodiversity, flood alleviation and climate change mitigation where this cannot be achieved via the market or regulation.
- **Sustainable levels of livestock production** in line with the carrying capacity of land, climate change goals and environmental limits, the principles of sustainable diets and public expectations for high quality, high welfare, sustainably produced UK livestock products.
- **Protection for high quality permanent grassland and carbon-rich soils** including maintaining inventories and ensuring appropriate site-specific livestock stocking densities to avoid overgrazing and greater support for agroforestry.
- **Sustainably sourced animal feed** to reduce the UK's impact on climate change and biodiversity in other countries, particularly from South American soya production. Alternative feeds with lower impact should be developed including consideration of heat-treated, safe, food waste for omnivores such as pigs and chickens.
- **Economic support for sustainable livestock production systems** including more extensive pasture-based (where appropriate), agro-ecological, organic, high nature value (HNV) and mixed farming systems, helping farmers to transition away from damaging and cruel unsustainable systems.
- **Clear and honest labelling** including a mandatory method of production labelling for all livestock products to empower the public, level the playing field and reward farmers who shift from volume to quality production.
- **Sufficient transition funding for innovation, research and training to support the practical and cultural shift needed**, including research towards lower intensity, innovative and sustainable farming, with better understanding of soil carbon sequestration in different grazing systems.

Eating Better is an alliance of over 50 civil society organisations working to build consensus and develop collaborative practical approaches to engage policy makers, food businesses and civil society to catalyse shifts towards healthy and sustainable eating patterns.

Eating Better encourages a culture where we place greater value on the food we eat, the animals that provide it and the people who produce it. Eating Better supports farmers who produce meat and dairy in a sustainable way.

Moderating our dairy and meat consumption – whether red, white or processed meats – while also choosing 'better' meat and dairy that is naturally fed, has a known provenance and is produced to high animal welfare, environmental and quality standards can help support farmers without being more expensive for the public. A 'less but better' approach to meat and dairy with meals based around a greater variety of plant-based foods will ensure healthy, balanced diets that are better for the planet and for fairer food systems too.

This briefing is a summary of Eating Better's fully referenced Policy Report: *Beyond the CAP: policies to support better UK meat and dairy production post-Brexit*. The report and this briefing can be downloaded [here](#).

The recommendations outlined in this briefing paper have been developed in collaboration with civil society organisations and with farming interests. The views expressed in this briefing are those of Eating Better.

We are grateful to all those who contributed to its development and provided feedback including: Alliance to Save Our Antibiotics, Compassion in World Farming, Food Research Collaboration, Friends of the Earth, Institute for European Environmental Policy, European Public Health Alliance, Nourish Scotland, Pasture Fed Livestock Association, RSPB, Soil Association, Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming, Sustainable Food Trust, WWF-UK.