

Food & Farming

Tesco to require LEAF marque

All of Tesco's fresh produce suppliers will be required to adopt the LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) Marque environmental standards in order to continue to supply the supermarket. This is part of Tesco's action towards supporting climate-friendly farming through its supply chain. The requirements of LEAF Marque certification are underpinned by the principles of Integrated Farm Management, a whole farm business continuous improvement approach that combines the use of modern technology and sustainable methods to deliver more sustainable farming. To achieve certification farmers' actions could include implementing regenerative agriculture, improving their soil management, prioritising wildlife in their decision-making processes and reducing their carbon footprints. Tesco has said that all its UK farmers must be certified by the end of 2022. It then intends to begin the process of certifying its global supply base from 2023, with the aim of completing the LEAF certification of its entire supply chain by 2025. Caroline Drummond, CEO of LEAF has described the announcement as a "hugely significant and transformative moment" in LEAF's 30-year history.

Support for the pig industry announced

The temporary suspension of approval to export to China for some UK pork establishments and abattoir labour shortages reducing processing capacity have together led to a backlog of finished pigs on UK farms. Following news that pigs were being culled on farm, the government has intervened and announced temporary support measures for the sector:

- The introduction of processing of animals on Saturdays and longer working days where possible
- A private storage aid scheme in England which will enable meat processors to store slaughtered pigs for 3-6 months so that they can be preserved safely and processed at a later date
- Suspending the pork levy in England and Scotland for November, saving the sector nearly £1 million
- Until 31 December up to 800 pork butchers will be eligible to apply for visas from the existing allocation in the Seasonal Workers Pilot Scheme, allowing them to travel and work in the UK for a period of six months.

These are not long term solutions and, in return, the government expects business to invest in the UK domestic workforce to build a high-wage, high-skill economy, instead of relying on overseas labour. It wishes to see the pork sector offer improved training, career options and wages alongside investment in technology.

Farming Innovation Programme applications open

Applications open on 20 October for three types of project within the Farming Innovation Programme's Research and Development Partnerships Fund.

- [Research Starter Projects](#) - to help farmers, growers and foresters based in England develop bold, ambitious, early-stage ideas and build a collaborative team.
- [Feasibility Projects](#) - to test the feasibility of early-stage solutions and to inform decisions on subsequent, larger scale research and development projects
- [Small Research and Development Partnership Projects](#) - to carry out research for innovative solutions that have the potential to substantially improve the overall productivity, sustainability and resilience of the farming and forestry sectors.

The government is keen to ensure research is applied and focused on business priorities so projects applying for funding must be led by businesses rather than academics. Applications for the Research Starter Projects close on 24 November and the other two types of project close on 1 December.

Confusion over manure spreading rules

The Environment Agency has agreed to clarify the wording of a regulatory position statement (RPS) that it published in August, which relaxes the enforcement of manure and slurry spreading activities under the Farming Rules for Water. The RPS runs until February 2022 and stipulates that it is only valid if there is no water pollution risk. However, Salmon and Trout Conversation UK believes that despite this stipulation, surplus nitrogen from manure will inevitably end up in watercourses. Therefore, lawyers acting on behalf of the conservation charity wrote to the Environment Agency last month arguing that the RPS disappplied an offence, which the regulator could not lawfully do. In response, the Environment Agency has said it will amend the RPS 'to make clear that it does not alter the legal obligations on the land manager as set out in the regulations, but that enforcement action will not normally be

taken provided the conditions of the RPS are met'. When the RPS expires the industry needs clarity on the interpretation of the Farming Rules for Water so that it is clear how the soil and crop nutrient need should be assessed, when the need can be satisfied and how pollution risk is judged. These decisions could potentially require farmers to make further investment in farm infrastructure or spreading equipment to achieve compliance.

Policy

NFU calls for a delay in BPS reductions

The NFU is calling for a review of Defra's future farming programme for England, specifically a postponement of the intended Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) reductions in 2022 and 2023. It is concerned that farmers are facing a 'perfect storm' with a shortage of workers bringing a halt to the UK's just-in-time supply chains, plus rising inflation and a backdrop of disrupted trade flows. It is also worried after the National Audit Office reported that Defra has not yet published detailed objectives or ensured adequate incentive for farmers' participation in the Environmental Land Management schemes. The NFU is not asking for the cuts of 5%-25% in BPS in 2021 to be postponed, as it understands some cuts need to be made to free up funding for the development and trialling of new schemes, however it is calling for a postponement of BPS reductions in 2022 and 2023 as it does not feel the government's new agricultural policy schemes are as developed as they should be to meet the current transition timetable. NFU president, Minette Batters explained "I believe implementing a short delay now to BPS reductions will allow government the time it needs to deliver durable schemes and policies". In response the environment secretary George Eustice told a Conservative Party Conference fringe event that where the agricultural transition is concerned "delay is the enemy".

Animal Health and Welfare Review

Defra has published more information about the Animal Health and Welfare Review offer, a fully funded vet visit which farmers will receive for free on a yearly basis. The offer is available for all commercial cattle, pig and sheep farmers in England who are currently eligible for BPS. Farmers' own vets will carry out diagnostic testing, data collection and provide bespoke advice on management to improve the health and welfare of their animals. Farmers will also be signposted to other financial support to improve health and welfare, for example help to control endemic disease, invest in sustainable approaches to mitigate the animals' environmental impact, or improve the environment in which the animals live. The offer is due to launch in spring 2022, although application details have not yet been published.

Environment & Natural Capital

UK has a £97 billion nature-based finance gap

In order to assess the need for private investment the Green Finance Institute commissioned a report to calculate the size of the finance gap across the UK to achieve nature positive outcomes. The finance gap is the difference between required spending and committed spending associated with the delivery of a set of nature-related outcomes. The nature-based outcomes are based on public policies such as the 25 Year Environment Plan for England and equivalent ambitions for the rest of the UK. They include outcomes such as maintaining and enhancing the quality of water in the environment, protecting and restoring biodiversity, reducing flood risk through natural flood management, climate mitigation through nature-based carbon sequestration and improving access and engagement with the natural environment.

To meet the UK's nature-related outcomes, additional investment of £44 billion to £97 billion is required over the next 10 years with a central estimate of £56 billion. Within the report, the finance gap is split down by region and nature-based outcome. The Institute hopes the report will demonstrate how much funding is needed and where investors should focus that funding, building on the Green Finance Institute's premise that nature is underfunded and that private nature-based markets can play an important role in closing the funding gap.

Private investment into national park nature restoration

A partnership of private sector funders is aiming to raise almost £250 million by 2030 to fund landscape scale nature restoration across the UK's national parks. Initial private sector funders include Santander UK, Gatwick Airport, Capita and Southern Co-op, whilst additional funding has been secured from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Defra. The investment will fund the restoration of degraded peatland in the Cairngorms, the conversion of arable farmland in the South Downs to woodland pasture and habitat and natural flood defence restoration in the North York Moors. In the New Forest, arable land is being restored to woodland to generate nitrate reduction and improvements in biodiversity. Working with global impact firm Palladium, the national parks have launched Revere a nature restoration project development facility that will be used to secure investment. Within each project, the

ecosystem services and subsequent carbon or biodiversity credits that land managers create through nature restoration are being quantified, accredited and verified.

Property & Development

Caution over permitted development rights

A recent planning appeal involving a barn conversion in Cornwall has highlighted that completing extensive improvements to an agricultural building before seeking prior approval for a residential conversion using Class Q permitted development rights could result in the proposal being rejected. To use Class Q the building must have been in agricultural use on 20 March 2013, however in this case due to extensive repairs the building was deemed not to be the original structure and therefore ineligible for conversion using the permitted development rights.

Wildbelt land use designation and Local Nature Recovery Strategies

The Wildlife Trusts have published a report on the future of the planning system. Within the report, there are a series of recommendations, including that the government's forthcoming Planning Bill makes it a legal requirement for local planning authorities to contribute to the implementation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), and to act in accordance with the LNRS when making land use planning decisions and considering planning applications. The report also recommends the inclusion of a new 'wildbelt' land use designation in the planning system. Wildbelt would be a permanent designation that would protect land in the process of being managed to bring nature back. The Wildlife Trusts suggest that wildbelt sites should be identified as part of the LNRS process, with recommendations made to Defra for designation. Another recommendation within the report is that the Planning Bill should set a legally binding target for access to nature, with local planning authorities required to report progress towards this target annually. It is suggested that the target should also include a measure of inclusivity in terms of how easy it is for people to access green space.

Business & Economy

Scotland's Heat in Buildings Strategy

Scotland has launched its Heat in Buildings Strategy, which sets out a pathway for cutting greenhouse gas emissions from its homes and buildings by more than two thirds by 2030. Emissions from buildings currently account for 20% of Scotland's emissions, and in order to reach this target, over a million homes and 50,000 non-domestic buildings will need to convert to zero emissions heat by 2030. To make this possible at least £1.8 billion of funding will be made available over the course of this parliament. This investment will 'kick start the energy transition', accelerating energy efficiency upgrades and renewable heating deployment, and importantly ensure the transition is a just transition and does not leave the most vulnerable people behind. The Scottish government has estimated that the transition to zero emissions heat could support 16,400 jobs across Scotland's economy in 2030.

Other Rural News

And finally...

Going going gone, again and again!

A pedigree Charollais ram has been sold 11 times at the same auction, to raise money for two charity marathon runners. The ram, known as lot number 61, was given to the livestock sale in Market Drayton, Shropshire, by one of the runners, Chris Jones. Chris was running the London marathon to raise money for the Meningitis Research Foundation. The first two buyers paid £1,000 each for the ram and immediately put him back up for sale; the auction house, Barbers Auctions, then bought him for £950, and they were followed by eight subsequent buyers, paying between £300 and £700 each. The sales eventually raised £7,000 for the marathon runners.

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Landscape | Issues shaping the future of rural estates, agriculture and land management

The Savills logo, consisting of the word "savills" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, with the 's' and 'a' in a darker shade of blue and the remaining letters in a lighter shade of blue.

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