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*The UK statutory
conservation, countryside
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Comparison of the emerging agricultural policy frameworks in the four countries



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Introduction

This briefing provides a comparison of the emerging agricultural policy frameworks in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, with a focus on their environmental components¹. The text provides an overview of the policy processes currently underway, the timetable for the introduction of the new frameworks and a brief summary of some of the key similarities and differences between the approaches taken. This is followed by a table which summarises the content of the latest proposals in the four UK countries against a number of headings to ease comparison of the different approaches taken.

Policy development processes

During 2018, each of the four UK countries has been, or is in the process of, consulting on the structure and content of their future agricultural policies and the process of transition away from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy. The consultations are still open in Wales and Northern Ireland. The Scottish consultation closed very recently (August) and the England one closed in the Spring (May 2018). Only in England has the Government subsequently set out its response and further details on the content of the framework proposed².

On 12 September the UK Government presented its draft Agriculture Bill³ to Parliament, setting out the powers to be conferred on the Government to make delegated legislation. This was accompanied by a policy paper providing further information on the way in which Defra intends to use these powers in England¹. The main body of the Bill relates to powers for England. Schedules 3 and 4 include powers taken on behalf of Welsh and Northern Ireland Ministers that are transitional and enable them to introduce new schemes while they are putting in place their own primary legislation. Scotland declined to avail itself of this option. In both cases the powers are slightly broader than those to be made available for England. For Wales these place greater emphasis on supporting rural communities and businesses involved in supply chains. For Northern Ireland there is the ability to reintroduce

¹ Briefing prepared for the Land Use Policy Group.

² See Defra's policy statement '[Health and Harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a Green Brexit, updated 14 September 2014](#)'

³ The text of the Agriculture Bill can be found here: <https://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/agriculture.html>

and modify the articles of the Direct Payments regulation in relation to Areas of Natural Constraint due to the 'specific environment of Northern Ireland'⁴.

Although the Agriculture Bill does set out the areas where public funding is justified, with an emphasis on public goods, it does not set out detailed objectives or binding targets to be met, nor does it set out the proposed funding allocation required to deliver the desired outcomes. One other missing element is any powers to develop the environmental baseline of standards which farmers are required to meet before receiving public money. It is thought that these powers will be provided via the forthcoming Environment Act, although the timing of this is unclear and its provisions currently look likely to be for England only.

Transition and timings

In all countries a commitment has been made that the current CAP measures and payments will continue to apply until December 2020 (with some simplifications where this is feasible). After this, each country has proposed different timeframes within which their new framework will come into operation. However each country has provided a different level of detail which makes direct comparison between what is proposed difficult. For example, in England, where it looks as if the most significant change is proposed away from direct payments towards a system where payments are made in return for the provision of public goods (under the Environmental Land Management Scheme), a detailed outline of the seven year transitional period is set out until the new ELMS is fully operational and direct payments completely phased out from 2028. In Wales they intend to have completed the phased introduction of the new framework earlier, by 2025. Scotland states that it will begin implementation of the new policy and support framework from April 2024, which presumably indicates the start of a phasing in process. In contrast Northern Ireland states that the new arrangements would start to apply from 2022 under a managed transition.

Comparison of the different approaches being taken

Table 1 below sets out the proposals from each of the four UK countries, bearing in mind their different status in relation to consultation processes. It highlights the key areas of focus for the policy, an overview of the schemes or measures proposed, with further details provided on the environmental elements of the proposals and supporting measures, such as the provision of advice to farmers and land managers.

Some of the key points to highlight are as follows:

- Moving towards more sustainable agricultural systems which look after natural resources and promote natural capital is a theme that is articulated in all four countries' proposals to a greater or lesser extent. However only in England is the principle of 'public money for public goods' fully followed through into policy design. All four countries include a reference to the fact that looking after the environment / natural resources and productivity go hand in hand.
- In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, there is a clear focus on prioritising keeping farmers on the land and minimising any structural change (in Scotland there is a particular emphasis on keeping farming going in upland areas), on ensuring that the

⁴ [Delegated Powers Memorandum for Defra to the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee](#)

farming sector is economically resilient to enable it to deal with climatic as well as market shocks, alongside measures to promote environmental management.

- Different approaches to supporting environmental land management are proposed. Outcome focussed approaches are highlighted as desirable in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and landscape-scale delivery is emphasised in Wales and Northern Ireland. In Scotland there is a desire to pilot approaches to shift emphasis towards outcomes. Collaboration and cooperation between farmers and other stakeholders are also emphasised in all four countries. In England, more details are available which identify that ELMS will take a plan-based approach, whereby all farmers/land managers will be required to develop a farm plan in which they will have the flexibility to determine what outcomes they wish to achieve and how they will go about doing this.
- England, Wales and Northern Ireland stress their commitment to some form of environmental baseline, although the details are not set out and therefore it is unclear if this would consist of adherence to environmental legislation or whether additional standards would be put in place for those issues where there is no current legislative baseline (e.g. soils). In addition, the absence of any powers to develop the environmental baseline for agriculture in the Agriculture Bill leaves continued uncertainty until it is seen what is proposed under the Environment Bill for England and where the powers to introduce such standards will sit in the other three countries. In Scotland this is also mentioned with a more specific reference in the consultation document to the need to maintain environmental standards and meet climate change targets (no rolling back of environmental standards).
- Wales and Northern Ireland expressed the need for payment levels to go beyond the income foregone and additional costs calculation, highlighting the need for an additional incentive element. In England, the policy paper is less explicit and refers to the need to “value environmental benefits appropriately” while “maximising value for money”, despite the ongoing debate in England about the role of natural capital and ecosystem service concepts in determining future payment calculation models.
- All four countries highlight the importance of advice. The funding source for this is not identified and in England at least there is an ongoing debate about whether or not this should be publicly funded.
- All four countries anticipate using pilots and trials to test the new policy frameworks they are proposing before rolling them out at national level. This will start in the 2020–2021 scheme years in Northern Ireland and possibly Wales as well (although this is not clear), in the Jan 2021-March 2024 transition period in Scotland and during the 2021-2027 Agricultural Transition period in England.

Table 1: Comparison of the emerging agricultural policy frameworks in the four UK countries

	England	Wales	Northern Ireland	Scotland
Stage in the policy process	‘Health and Harmony’ consultation closed (Feb-May 2018) UK Agriculture Bill and Policy paper published 12 Sept 2018	‘Brexit and our land’ consultation open (July-30 Oct 2018)	‘NI Future Agricultural Policy Framework’ consultation open (July-10 Oct 2018)	‘Stability and Simplicity’ consultation closed (June-Aug 2018) Strategy document from Agriculture Champions published May 2018
Key themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public money for public goods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic resilience Public goods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Productivity Economic resilience An environmentally sustainable agriculture sector Supply chains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural capital Production efficiency Simplification during the transition Maintain environmental standards
Proposed key schemes / measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental Land Management scheme, which “could comprise multi-annual payments, capital grants, and/or payments for collaboration and for local engagement” Time-limited investments in farming equipment, technology and infrastructure to support innovation Schemes for farmers to improve animal welfare beyond the regulatory baseline 	<p>The proposed Land Management Programme for Wales would consist of “two large and flexible schemes”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Resilience scheme (investments in physical and human capital) Public Goods scheme 	<p>A range of schemes/measures are proposed, the main elements of which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic Farm Resilience Support Income Protection or Anti-Cyclical Measures Environmental outcome-based schemes Investment and Restructuring aid Training credit scheme to encourage CPD 	<p>A range of schemes/measures are proposed, the main elements of which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income support schemes like LFASS and the Scottish Upland Sheep Support Scheme Additional support to Natural Capital, to be delivered through a menu of targeted options Production Efficiency scheme Farm investment support
Details of environmental scheme proposed	<p>ELMS: Contracts to be based on a land management plan developed by the farmer/ land manager, with close involvement of advisers.</p> <p>Significant flexibility for land managers to decide what outcomes and associated actions they wish to pursue.</p> <p>The intention is to implement new and innovative delivery mechanisms, e.g. payment by results and reverse auctions.</p>	<p>Proposed Public Goods scheme: ongoing payments to support the delivery of specific PG outcomes arising from active land management (‘additionality’). It would apply to both farming and forestry.</p> <p>Baseline to be established building on Env Act.</p> <p>Scheme would be a mix of compulsory measures (to maintain existing PG provision: “existing options”) and voluntary measures</p>	<p>The proposed scheme/measures would combine a regulatory baseline and incentives, which would be outcome-based (where evidence allows it) and delivered, wherever possible, at the landscape level.</p> <p>This would require facilitation, advice, education/ professional development and investments in research (e.g. behavioural science, to develop a strong evidence base, to facilitate practical knowledge transfer).</p> <p>The proposal foresees a stronger role for</p>	<p>It is proposed that environmental outcomes would be delivered through a menu of targeted and locally tailored options based on natural capital considerations. Scotland want a multi objective set of land use and management policies, so these options would include the promotion of other land uses beyond farming, such as forestry, peatland restoration, tourism or habitat preservation.</p> <p>The future policy should aim at the</p>

	<p>The policy paper includes a commitment to maintaining a strong environmental baseline but there are no powers currently in the Agriculture Bill for the development of this.</p> <p>Calculation of ELMS payments to “value environmental benefits appropriately” while “maximising value for money”.</p> <p>England takes a long term approach to productivity recognising that “production today should not come at the expense of tomorrow’s productivity”, hence a focus on “safeguarding the assets that support domestic production”.</p>	<p>(to enhance or create PG outcomes: “potential options”).</p> <p>Landscape scale/joint delivery could be encouraged through extra incentives. Collaboration with other actors for advice delivery or investments for PG delivery would be favoured.</p> <p>Payment calculation - proposed to go beyond income foregone and additional costs to provide "meaningful funding to land managers".</p> <p>High-quality natural resources and healthy ecosystems considered to be the foundation of Wales’ productive capacity for food and forestry, as well as for the tourism sector.</p>	<p>the industry e.g. private funding and market-led initiatives to improve environmental performance on farms. Strong focus on the need for other objectives - i.e. productivity, resilience and supply chains - to contribute to the environment objective.</p> <p>No mention of forestry.</p> <p>Payment calculation - Income foregone and additional costs calculation may be insufficient to achieve desired uptake, therefore the need for an additional incentive element is anticipated (which could be targeted to specific areas, habitats, water catchments).</p> <p>Emphasis on the need for productivity growth in NI is strong although the consultation specifies that these gains cannot be at the expense of environmental sustainability and that these twin objectives should be delivered synergistically.</p>	<p>twin objectives of enhancing Natural Capital and improving Production Efficiency. Soil health is proposed as a central Natural Capital element to protect as “food security for future generations [is] underwritten by the capacity of soils to function.”</p>
<p>Cross-cutting comments on knowledge transfer, advice, skills development</p>	<p>Advice would be needed by farmers to develop their land management plans and to help review progress in delivering agreed outcomes, but it is not yet clear if this would be publicly funded or at the farmers’ own expense.</p> <p>Beyond this, attracting the appropriately skilled workforce would be helped by a new pilot to bring migrant workers to the UK.</p>	<p>A step change in the advice offer is foreseen.</p> <p>A greater degree of collaboration, involvement of private/other types of actors, e.g. National Park Authorities, is foreseen.</p>	<p>CPD, advice, facilitation and investment in research underpin the 4 areas on which the future NI agriculture policy would focus. It is a priority to develop a skilled farm workforce.</p> <p>Multi-actor approaches and collaboration in different areas is highlighted as important for environmental performance, productivity and supply chains.</p>	<p>Investment in knowledge transfer, advice and training are foreseen to develop digital skills, technical farming and land management skills, as well as careers in agriculture and related sectors.</p> <p>More collaborative ways for working to be promoted, including within the supply chain.</p>

Financial aspects	During the transition period (2021-2027), pilots and new schemes would be funded from the money made available through the gradual reduction of direct payments.	No decision has been taken on the balance of funding between the Economic Resilience and Public Goods schemes, which will likely vary over time.	No information found	During the transition period (2021-2024), the overall total received by individual farms would be capped to free up budget to trial new policies and schemes.
Transition	<p>April 2019-Dec 2020 – Implementation period: no change in payments; CAP rules apply. Some simplifications could be introduced where feasible.</p> <p>Jan 2021-Dec 2027 - Agricultural Transition. Progressive reduction of DPs. 2021 - 2024 pilots for new ELMS. 2022 – 2024 – Final CS agreements start</p> <p>2025: full implementation of the ELMS</p>	<p>April 2019-Dec 2019: no change in payments; CAP rules apply.</p> <p>Jan 2020 onwards: UK legislation applies so transition to new arrangements can begin. Ambition is to complete this process by 2025.</p>	<p>April 2019 - Dec 2021 - Transitional Agricultural Support Regime:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2019: no change in payments; CAP rules apply for 2019; • Jan 2020 - Dec 2021: limited changes introduced in 2020 and 2021 scheme years, piloting of new approaches. <p>Jan 2022 onwards: new arrangements of the Agricultural Policy Framework apply (a managed transition within this period is foreseen).</p>	<p>April 2019 - Dec 2020 - Implementation period: no change in payments; CAP rules apply.</p> <p>Jan 2021 - March 2024 – Transition period: simplifications and improvements to be introduced to CAP rules/system; piloting of new approaches.</p> <p>April 2024 onwards – start of the implementation of the new arrangements of the Scottish Agriculture Policy.</p>