



Welsh farming:

# GROWING FORWARD

NFU Cymru 2026 Senedd Election manifesto





# President's Foreword



I am delighted to share with you NFU Cymru's Senedd Election 2026 manifesto, which contains a series of bold and ambitious asks for those who will serve in the next Senedd and those who will form the new government.

The principles detailed over the next two pages set out the union's Growing Forward vision for a policy landscape that supports Welsh farmers in producing high quality, high welfare, climate-friendly food. Moreover, the delivery of this core role is complemented by maintaining and enhancing our farmed environment and spectacular scenery.

Welsh agriculture is an industry that delivers growth and benefits not only for those living rurally, but for the whole of Wales. The skills and knowledge forged over generations on our rural family farms deliver the sustainable raw ingredients that spearhead the success of the Welsh food and drink industry, a sector with a turnover of more than £9.3 billion. In total the Welsh food and drink industry employs 228,500 people – around 17% of Wales' workforce.

Those whose income and spending is reliant on a thriving Welsh agricultural industry do not just reside on Welsh farms, but they live and work in villages, towns and cities across the country.

Looking ahead to the upcoming Senedd election and the subsequent seventh Senedd, NFU Cymru is motivated by working alongside political representatives from across the spectrum to help the industry meet its ambitions and further realise its future potential. I am proud that NFU Cymru continues to give a platform to its Next Generation Development Group – a band of enthusiastic young farmers from all corners of Wales who will help form the union's policy priorities and aspirations. It is these industrious individuals – and their counterparts from across Wales – who will ensure we remain a world-leader in sustainable food production, together with delivering for the environment, economy, our culture and language, all while actively tackling the effects of climate change. Helping these active farmers deliver these multiple societal benefits should be a priority for us all.

From 2026 the Senedd will be expanded to become a 96-seat parliament, with MSs elected purely on a proportional basis. Some of the newly-formed 16 Senedd constituencies may have few farms, but every constituency will, however, be home to many residents who work within Wales' food and farming supply chain. What is beyond doubt is that the overwhelming majority of those constituents will be reliant on Welsh farmers for the food they eat.

Between now and the election in May 2026 we will be engaging with candidates across all political parties and, beyond that, with those fortunate enough to secure seats in Cardiff Bay. We look forward to working with you all to achieve our ambitions.

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NFU Cymru President  
Aled Jones

## A COMPREHENSIVE FARM TO FORK FOOD STRATEGY

Recognising the foundational role that Welsh farming and food production plays in our economy, the challenges to global food production and political instability and conflict in Europe and beyond, NFU Cymru is calling for the development of a comprehensive farm to fork strategy with ambitious targets backed up by policies and strategies for the sustainable growth of the food and farming sector in Wales. This strategy should secure the continued supply of safe, high quality and affordable food from Wales.

## AGRICULTURAL POLICIES THAT UNDERPIN FOOD, NATURE, CLIMATE AND COMMUNITIES

NFU Cymru is clear that future agricultural policy must underpin food production, our farmed environment, our communities, our landscape, our language and culture for our generation and those that will follow in our footsteps. The next Welsh Government must ensure that policies support investment on farm and provide at least the same level of stability to farm businesses, our rural communities and the supply chain as the Basic Payment Scheme has done.

## A RING FENCED, MULTI-ANNUAL BUDGET TO SUPPORT THE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF WELSH FOOD AND FARMING

The next government must commit to providing a ring-fenced, multi-annual budget to meet our ambitions for the sustainable growth of the sector, underpinning the financial resilience of our family farms and rural communities,

alongside and in harmony with our environmental and climate obligations and ambitions. A budget in excess of £500m per annum with the bulk of the funding directed to providing stability and supporting productivity and efficiency gains on farm.

## A COMMITMENT TO SOURCE AN INCREASING AMOUNT OF FOOD INTO THE PUBLIC SECTOR FROM WELSH FARMERS

The next government can back Welsh farming by ensuring great tasting, healthy and nutritious, sustainable food from Wales is served in our hospitals, schools and across the public sector.

## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT REVIEW GROUP TO CONSIDER THE CUMULATIVE BURDEN OF REGULATIONS AND POLICIES ON WELSH FARMING.

One of the first actions of a new Welsh Government must be to commission an Independent Review Group to consider the cumulative burden of regulation and red-tape and bureaucracy facing the agricultural sector, with a view to identifying unnecessary, pointless and overlapping bureaucracy and remove it. Such a review needs to be ambitious and all-encompassing encouraging and supporting an enabling policy regulatory and planning framework for Welsh farming.

## A SCIENCE AND EVIDENCE LED APPROACH TO WATER QUALITY

NFU Cymru recognises the role that farmers have to play in maintaining and enhancing water quality in Wales, but we have long-standing concerns about the Control of Agricultural

Pollution Regulations, a blunt, inefficient, bureaucratic instrument with high costs to agriculture and unintended consequences for the environment. The review of the regulations has failed to understand the sheer desperation of farmers in Wales in grappling with the impracticality and complexity of the regulations. A farming by calendar approach does not work and a workable derogation to the 170 kg organic nitrogen / hectare limit must be introduced to preserve employment both on farm and within the supply chain. Legislative change is urgently required, addressing the most challenging aspects so they are proportionate and targeted addressing water quality issues where they are shown to be needed.

## IMPROVING BORDER BIOSECURITY

Exotic diseases, including Foot and Mouth Disease and African Swine Fever are circulating in continental Europe. The incursion into GB of a notifiable disease could only happen via a biosecurity breach, and in Wales border biosecurity at our ports is the devolved responsibility of Welsh Ministers. We look to Welsh Government to be vigilant and ensure that we always maintain the highest possible biosecurity enforcement standards at all ports of entry into Wales, and to ensure that all those bodies charged with keeping exotic diseases out of Wales are properly resourced. Failure to do so will have a devastating impact not only for individual farm businesses but for the whole country.





## **A GENUINE BOVINE TB ERADICATION STRATEGY FOR WALES**

Over 13,000 cattle were slaughtered in Wales in 2024 due to bovine TB – a truly shocking statistic. This was an increase of 27% on the previous year, representing the largest ever number of cattle culled due to bovine TB in Wales over any 12-month period. These figures paint a sobering picture of the total anguish being experienced by farming families across Wales affected by the hugely damaging impacts of this disease. We cannot continue in this vein. If the next generation are to have any hope of farming in Wales without the threat of bTB, then we need significant change. We need the next Welsh Government to implement a comprehensive TB eradication strategy that actively tackles the disease in all its vectors.

There is clear evidence that there is a link between bovine TB in wildlife, notably badgers, and cattle. International recognition of TB freedom requires not only stringent cattle surveillance and control measures, but also measures to actively prevent the transmission of disease from wildlife to cattle.

Bovine TB is a complex disease and if we are to ever have a hope of eradicating it, we must use a targeted and holistic epidemiological-led strategy, one which deploys the right intervention in the right way and at the right time, guided by the local disease picture on the ground, targeting the disease wherever it exists. In this context, local ownership of solutions is key.

Recent research from the cull in England has shown a 56% reduction in herd incidence achieved in the fourth year of culling, this reduction in disease is incredibly powerful and cannot be

ignored. Alongside culling there is a role for badger vaccination, especially in parts of Wales where the disease is not endemic in the wildlife. In addition, good biosecurity has an incredibly important role to play, and its positive benefits cannot be overstated for the 95% of herds that are TB free in Wales.

As well as placing massive emotional stress on farming families, TB breakdowns also lead to very significant financial strain. NFU Cymru continues to stress that the only fair way to value cattle compulsorily slaughtered by Welsh Government as a result of bovine TB is through a system of individual valuations.

## **ADOPTING PRECISION BREEDING TO BOLSTER CLIMATE-FRIENDLY FOOD PRODUCTION**

Biotechnology is by no means a panacea to the challenges we all face, but having access to more targeted precision breeding tools for our crops and livestock could offer a range of benefits to Wales. Gene editing could for example help bolster climate-friendly food production by combating pest and disease pressures on crops and farm animals, improving animal health and welfare, enabling better use of inputs and resources on farm and increase crops' resilience to extreme weather events, such as flooding and drought.

Wales has been at the forefront of plant breeding for over a century, we need the next Senedd and Welsh Government to ensure that Wales is able to realise the benefits of new precision breeding techniques.

## **SCRAPPING THE AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY PANEL**

The Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales was established following the abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board for England and

Wales in 2013. No other sector has such an arrangement in place and NFU Cymru is clear that the role of an advisory panel in setting wage rates is obsolete as a result of developments such as the National Minimum Wage, National Living Wage, Working Time Regulations, and other legislative safeguards. The additional complexity of a wages order is not required in Wales.

## **LARGE SCALE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS MUST PRESERVE OUR LANDSCAPES AND NOT NEGATIVELY IMPACT ON THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF COMMUNITIES**

There should be no automatic presumption that agricultural land should be sacrificed for large scale infrastructure projects. Large scale connection projects threaten the beauty and landscape of many areas of Wales, the historic and amenity value of the areas as well as the mental health and well-being of those that live and work in the vicinity of these projects. Technologies around undergrounding of cables have advanced significantly in recent years and must become the norm for current and future proposed connection projects.

## **PLACING WELSH FARMING FAMILIES AT THE CENTRE OF RURAL POLICY**

There are now multiple, competing pressures on land use in Wales. NFU Cymru wants to see a balanced approach to land use change that considers the long term economic, environmental, social and cultural impacts of such change. Land use change must not be done at the expense of food production or the fragmentation or destruction of our rural communities.

